



European Food Safety Authority

The European Food Safety Authority

GEOFFREY PODGER
Executive Director EFSA



European Food Safety Authority

RISK PERCEPTION AND THE ROLE OF EFSA Regulatory Requirements

To ensure that the public and interested parties receive rapid, reliable, objective and comprehensible information in the fields within its mission (Article 23)

The Authority shall communicate on its own initiative in the fields within its mission without prejudice to the Commission's competence to communicate its risk management decisions

The Authority shall act in close collaboration with the Commission and the Member States to promote the necessary coherence in the risk communication process (Article 40)

Effective Risk Communication

To be effective the communication must

- (i) explain and contextualise the risk
- (ii) advise the recipient whether he/she needs to take action
- (iii) set out clearly steps for any necessary government/industry action
- (iv) Cover (i) to (iii) above in a way which is culturally sensitive

EFSA's Role in Risk Communication

- ❖ Independent of political process
- ❖ Open and transparent
- ❖ Coordination with national authorities
- ❖ Support to Commission over food 'scares'/emergencies



CHALLENGES FOR EFSA IN RISK COMMUNICATION

- 1) **Stakeholder Involvement**
- 2) **Cultural Sensitivity**
- 3) **Liaison with Member States**
- 4) **Liaison with the Commission**



European Food Safety Authority

EFSA Risk Communication – What are we trying to achieve?

- 1) Europe-wide reference service largely via website (www.efsa.eu.int)
- 2) Timely and accurate public announcements on key EU-wide issues
- 3) Close coordination of communications with Member States to achieve more consistent culturally sensitive output

SEMICARBAZIDE : A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

The Issues

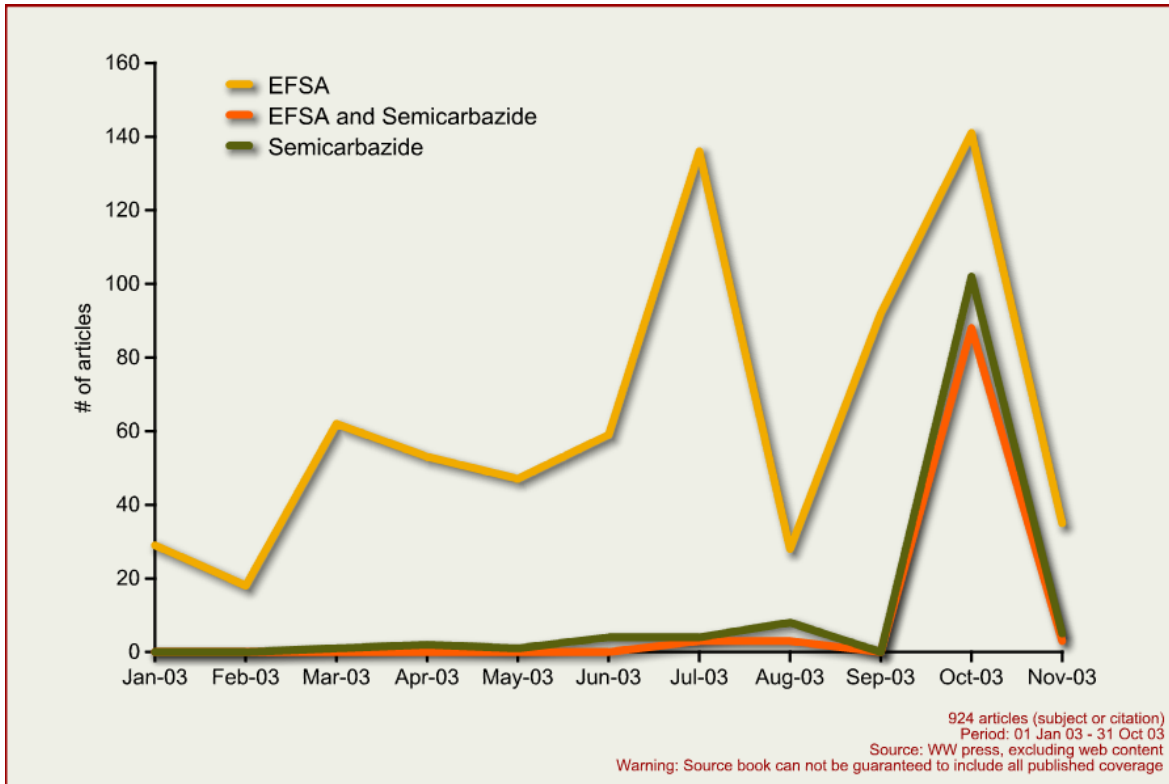
- 1) Highly sensitive in relation to baby food jars
- 2) Potentially carcinogenic
- 3) Scientific uncertainty
- 4) Substitution dangers

SEMICARBAZIDE : A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

The Solution

- 1) Stakeholder involvement**
- 2) Commission agreement for EFSA to give scientific advice on risk management options**
- 3) Co-operation with national authorities**
- 4) EFSA Scientific advice went beyond normal Panel statement and included advice to the consumer**
- 5) EFSA practice of openness**

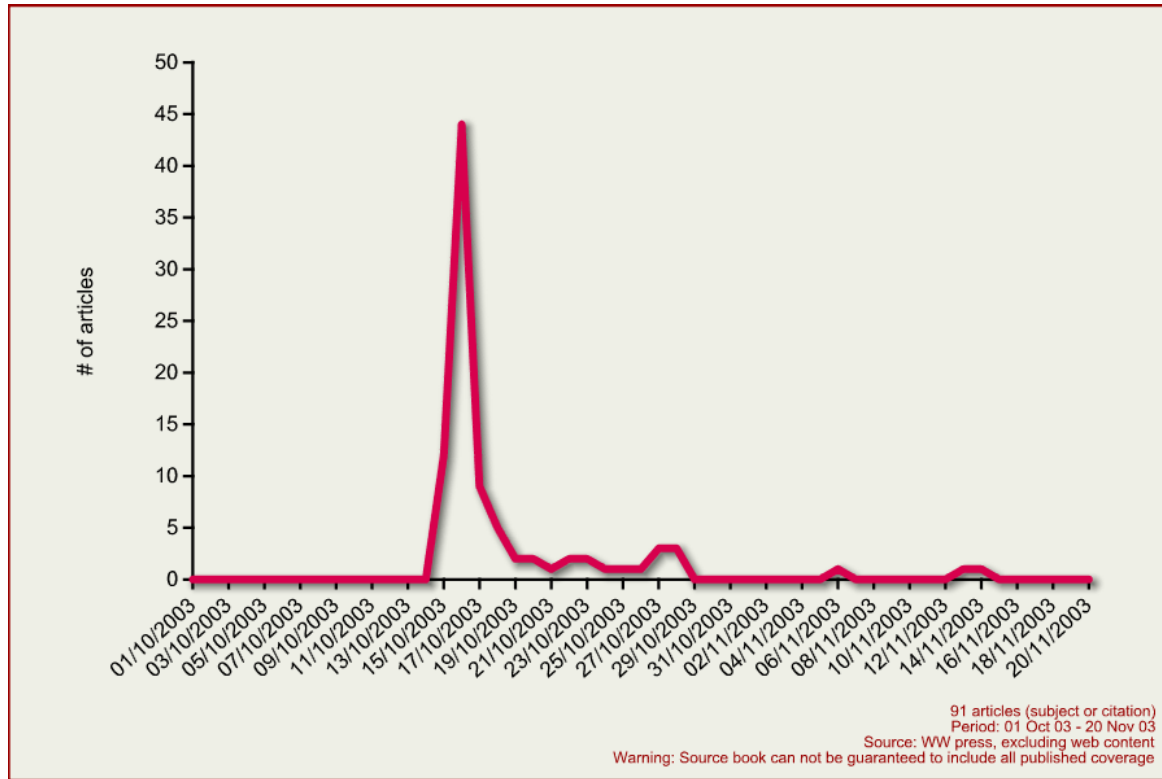
Global media coverage



Overview:

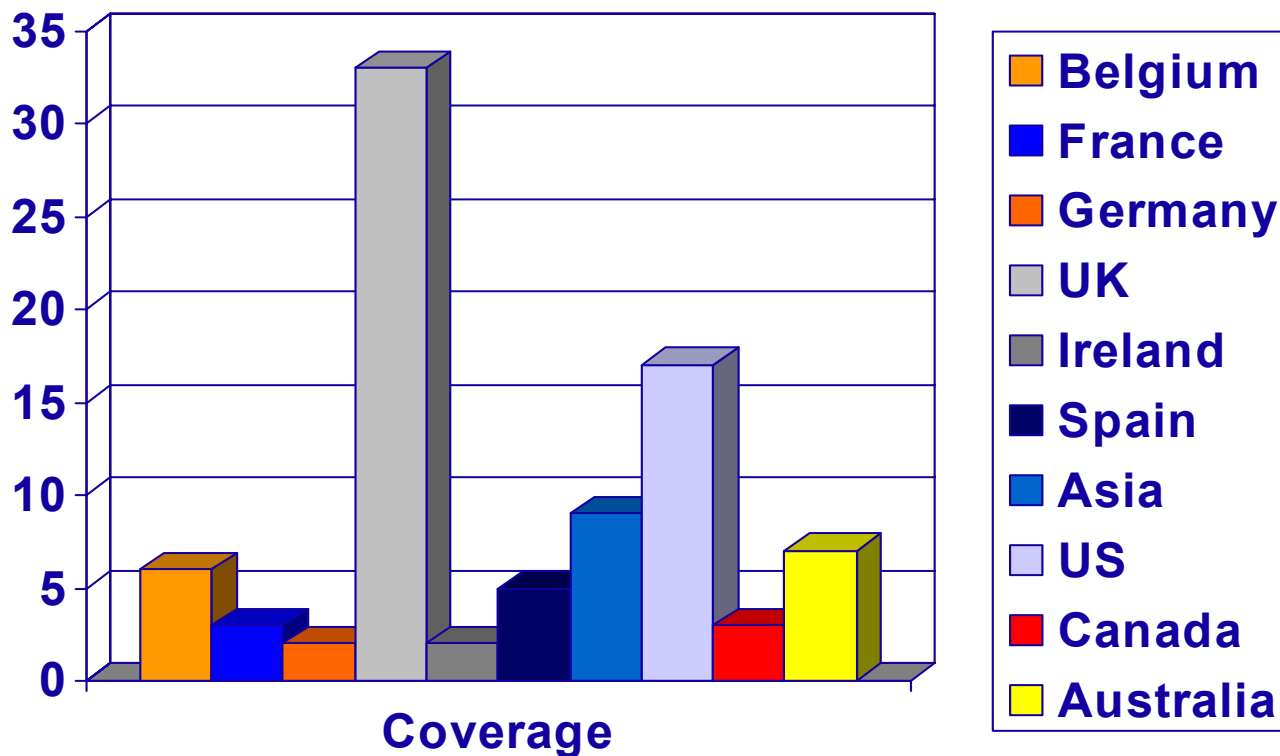
- » The graph indicates media visibility of EFSA, semicarbazide (SEM) and the mentions of EFSA and semicarbazide in the same articles.
- » Semicarbazide is mentioned mostly in conjunction with EFSA, with the peaks in October being directly connected to the Authorities updated scientific SEM news release
- » July 2003 - EFSA Press Release: EFSA issues GMO opinion
- » July 2003: EFSA Press Release: Expert Group looks at semicarbazide: too early for any conclusions

Global EFSA and Semicarbazide coverage in last 50 days



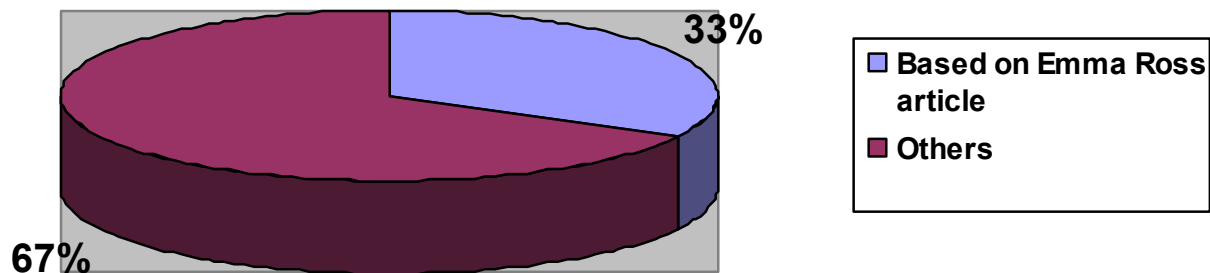
» This graph provides a clear overview of the life-span of the semicarbazide issue in global media

Regional media coverage – EFSA & SEM



Total amount of articles on SEM for the period of time of our exercise (3 October 2003 till 30 October 2003): 87 articles.

Amount of written coverage based on the AP article



Conclusions

- ❖ Fairly small amount of coverage for a potentially controversial issue.
- ❖ Large differences in regional coverage.
- ❖ Large differences in on-line and written press in terms of content.
- ❖ Important amount of articles based on one article.