

SuConDa: Project to support the development of a European food consumption database

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Exposure assessments, based on knowledge about the eating habits of consumers, are an important precondition for the health assessment of substances and germs. Only when up-to-date and differentiated food consumption data are available can health risks be realistically assessed, risk groups or high risk eating habits identified, maximum levels established and the marketing authorisation applications for substances and products correctly evaluated. For that reason the Member States of the European Union record national food consumption data which the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) would like to input into a database. BfR was commissioned by EFSA to carry work forward on the setting up and development of the "EFSA European Food Consumption Concise Database" in its research project "Support to complete EFSA's Food Consumption Concise Database (SuConDa)". In this project BfR supports the provision of food consumption data for exposure assessments on the EU level and gives its backing to high quality exposure assessment on the international level based on the actual eating habits of consumers.

Project description

The Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) works closely with the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in order to co-ordinate Community assessments on the EU level and to develop harmonised foundations like, for instance, data on risk assessment. This co-operation is to be further extended and intensified through the BfR project "Support to complete EFSA's Food Consumption Concise Database (SuConDa)".

The starting point for the SuConDa-project is the development of an EU based food consumption database which is constructed by EFSA together with its working group "Expert Group on Food Consumption". The objective of the "EFSA European Food Consumption Concise Database" is to collect and store national food consumption data available in the Member States based on risk assessment standards accepted on the EU level. The aim is to improve the quality and reliability of exposure assessments by means of harmonised food consumption data. At present, harmonisation takes place on the first general level resulting in a "screening tool" for exposure assessment that can be used both by EFSA's scientific panels and European Member States.

For various reasons not all European Member States, in which food consumption data are available, used the standard format for the submission of their data to EFSA. In order to ensure a data basis that is as broad as possible, EFSA issued an official call for proposal. With the SuConDa-project BfR responded successfully to that call. Starting on 15 November 2007, it is to support EFSA over a period of one year in completing this concise database and in developing the first steps towards a more comprehensive database. The main goal is to provide support for those European Member States which need professional and technical help in the refinement and transfer of their data.

Furthermore, BfR will stage an international workshop from May 14-16, 2008 on the SuConDa project.

BfR will provide a detailed description of the methods and tools used to collect appropriate food consumption data in order to ensure that EFSA's European Food Consumption Concise Database is transparent.

The SuConDa-project enables BfR to provide expert advice at international level. Furthermore, BfR can contribute to high quality exposure assessments which are the basis for the risk assessment of contaminants, food additives, pesticides and micro-organisms in food, and of substances that migrate from food contact materials.