

Food Additives Campaign: Scientists answer consumer's common questions this October

Brussels, 1 October 2022



Today, the EU-funded project [FoodSafety4EU](#) and the [European Food Information Council \(EUFIC\)](#) launched a social media campaign about food additives, based on an analysis of consumers' questions and concerns. Although food additives must prove a purpose and undergo strict safety evaluations, they are a source of concern for consumers. Therefore, the campaign features experts in the field who will answer consumers' most common questions throughout the month of October. The aim: raising general awareness of food additives, why they are used, their safety and labelling in the EU, and empowering consumers to take science-based decisions.

Food additives – a source of concern for consumers

Food additives are substances added to foods to perform certain functions, for example, to sweeten or help preserve them. Although they play an important role in our food supply, on average, 36% of Europeans report being concerned about additives like colours, preservatives and flavourings used in food and drinks, as highlighted in the [2022 Eurobarometer](#). In some EU countries like Lithuania, Estonia and Greece even more than 50% say they are concerned about food additives.

"In FoodSafety4EU we are strongly committed to understand risk perception in consumers and build our science-based messages accordingly. Together with EUFIC we will not just communicate but we will enjoy communicating!" said Veronica M.T. Lattanzio, Project Coordinator at the National Research Council of Italy (CNR).

Digital tools give insights into people's questions

To develop an impactful campaign that answers people's questions and concerns, EUFIC collected data about consumers' frequently asked questions about food additives in order to identify knowledge gaps and barriers.

A **keyword research analysis on Google** showed that people mostly have questions on specific food additives, like monosodium glutamate, nitrates or sulphites, or questions on groups of food additives, such as emulsifiers or sweeteners. When looking for general information on "food additives" or "e-numbers", consumers are more interested in the definition of these terms, their safety and health effects or in the functions of food additives.

Furthermore, EUFIC's community and website visitors had the **opportunity to submit their questions on food additives via different channels** (e.g., social media polls & website pop-ups). Most questions received were related to safety concerns, e.g., when an additive is allowed in one country but not in another.

Science-based advice easy to understand

The experts who will be featured throughout the campaign on the channels of EUFIC ([Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#)) and FS4EU ([Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#)) come from a variety of backgrounds, including food and chemical safety, and nutrition research. Posts with short video interviews, visuals, as well as a set of website articles will help make the scientific information about this topic more accessible to the public.

ENDS

Campaign overview

- The social media campaign about food additives on EUFIC and FS4EU's channels (listed above) takes place throughout October, launched by FoodSafety4EU and EUFIC.
 - **EUFIC articles on the topic (they will be uploaded on the EUFIC website 1 October in EN, FR, DE, IT, ES):**
 - [What is monosodium glutamate and is it bad for you?](#)
 - [What are nitrates and nitrites and what foods are high in them?](#)
 - [What are sulphites in wine and are they bad for you?](#)
 - [What are emulsifiers and what are common examples used in food?](#)
 - [What are preservatives and what are common examples used in food?](#)
- Already available online:**
- [Aspartame \(Q&A\): What is it and what foods contain this additive?](#)
 - [What are food additives and how are they regulated in the EU?](#)

- **Short video clips with experts for social media answering the following questions:**
 - What are food additives?
 - Is there a difference between ‘natural’ and ‘chemical’ food additives?
 - Why are food additives added to food/important?
 - What are the most common types of food additives?
 - In which products can we usually find food additives?
 - Are food additives safe?
 - How are food additives assessed for their safety?
 - We often hear people say that food additives can cause cancer or allergic reactions and affect our hormonal, immune or gut function... Is this true, should we be worried about the side effects of food additives?
 - Why are so many food additives allowed in the USA and not allowed in other countries? If they are safe, why are they so contested?
 - What are “E” numbers in food?

Statistics on consumer perceptions about food additives

- The [EFSA 2022 Eurobarometer](#) highlights that 36% of Europeans report being concerned about additives used in food and drinks, such as colours, preservatives and flavourings.
- The [BfR survey from 2021](#) says most Germans have negative perceptions of food additives. Moreover, 42% do not feel sufficiently informed about the labelling of additives, 49% about their functions and 58% about the health risks.
- [A 2016 EUFIC study](#) using the Vizzata™ tool for online consumer research found that UK consumers describe ‘additives’ as unfamiliar or unknown, have negative opinions towards them, consider them as a reason for not buying processed foods and believe that ‘too many’ additives are added to food.

About FoodSafety4EU

FoodSafety4EU is a collaborative action to support the European Commission (EC) in shaping the Food Safety System of the future, and to catalyse its transition through collaboration and engagement at different levels (global and local).

The overall goal is to design, develop and release a multi-stakeholder platform, and to establish a long-term Science-Policy-Society interface: a collaborative space where citizens, scientists, companies, EC, EFSA, and Food Safety Authorities will co-design new schemes to advance the FSS from a reactive system to an interactive one.

For more about FoodSafety4EU: <https://foodsafety4.eu/>

About the European Food Information Council (EUFIC)

EUFIC is a consumer-oriented non-profit organisation, founded to make the science behind food and health more accessible and easier to understand among the public. EUFIC’s mission is to produce



science-based content to inspire and empower healthier and more sustainable diets and lifestyles among European citizens.

For more about EUFIC: <https://www.eufic.org/>

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Foodsafety4EU: write us at <https://foodsafety4.eu/contact/>!



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