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Safe food handling: How to reach the consumer?

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Estimates by the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) show that, each year, there are about 700,000 cases of gastrointestinal symptoms related to contaminated food in the Netherlands. In about 40% of foodborne infection clusters reported to the Centre for Infectious Disease Control (CIb), the food preparation site was stated to be 'home'. Therefore, because most of these foodborne infections occur in the home, consumers must focus on food safety when buying, washing, separating, heating and refrigerating food. This presentation underpins the Netherlands Nutrition Centre's recommendations to consumers for preventing foodborne infections. In 2015, 2016 and 2017 a campaign has been turned off which was funded by the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports. During this campaign not only information was provided and awareness created, but also tools were developed to help the consumer. Tools like a refrigerator thermometer were distributed by retailers to help

consumers improve their safe food handling practices. Besides providing practical information and tools to consumers regarding safe food handling, also topics are addressed that people are worried about. Take E-numbers (additives) or pesticides. Perception of risks by consumers can differ significantly from the scientific insights. During this presentation it will be presented how much this risk perception differs and how the Netherlands Nutrition Center communicates about these topics.

Speaker Biography

Wieke van der Vossen-Wijmenga has graduated as a food scientist in 1997 from Wageningen University & Research, Netherlands. She has specialized in food microbiology. Currently she works as an expert for food safety at the Netherlands Nutrition Centre. The Netherlands Nutrition Centre is the foremost authority consumers turn to for scientifically evidenced, independent information on healthy and safe food, as well as for making more sustainable food choices. She is responsible for accurate and up to date information and acts as the Nutrition Centre's spokesperson for food safety. Before joining the Netherlands Nutrition Centre she worked as a senior Lead Assessor and Food Safety Manager for various organizations within the food industry.

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