



European Cooperation on crisis response

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- **Crisis preparedness and response**
- **Urgent requests for advice**
- **An example: *E. coli* O104:H4**



Crisis preparedness

Two crisis preparedness activities

- **Established procedures:**
 - ✓ Published on EFSA's website; « ESFA Procedures for responding to urgent advice needs »
 - ✓ Revised each year (or as necessary)
- **Training exercises**
 - ✓ Take place every year

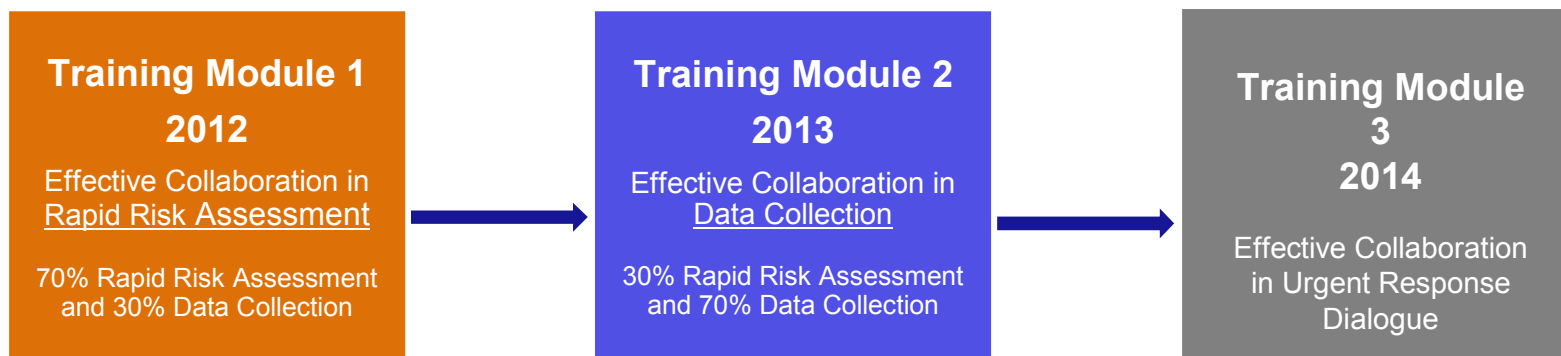
- Activation of urgent advice structure and response levels
- Participants, roles and responsibilities
- Information management and record keeping
- Facilities, including the crisis room
- Staffing issues and business continuity
- Downgrading response levels
- Evaluation

- Organised in peacetime by EFSA
- To improve its interaction with EC, MS and sister agencies (ECDC, ECHA, JRC, EURL) to address urgent issues
- Continuous programme of exercises
- Each exercise designed to explore functioning of different aspects of “crisis” response
- Prepared and executed by a contractor with scientific support from an expert Working Group

Our four-year training strategy

Effective Collaboration

Overall training theme



Training Module 4 (2015)
End-to-end exercise encompassing all three aspects above

EFSA's communications on urgent information requests

- Timely advice can help calm a crisis and aid risk managers, as well as reassure consumers
 - ✓ Importance of framing, provision of background information
 - ✓ E.g. EFSA's thematic approach to zoonoses
- Independent scientific advice and pro-active, coordinated risk communications both play an important role
- EFSA's rapid reaction procedures show how cooperation on communication between MS / EFSA / European Commission can work to the benefit of all stakeholders



Urgent requests to EFSA

Eleven urgent requests received

	Response (days)
Melamine in food and feed (2007)	30
Mineral oil in sunflower oil (2008)	<1
Melamine in infant milk (2008)	5
Dioxins in pork meat (2008)	2
4-methylbenzophenone in breakfast cereals (2009)	13
Nicotine in wild mushrooms (2009)	10
Chlormequat in table grapes (2010)	1
Volcanic ash (2010)	6
<i>Escherichia coli</i> in sprouted seeds (2011)	7
Schmallenberg Virus (2012)	10
2 year feeding trial on GMO maize and glyphosate	9 and ongoing



STEC 0104 outbreaks in Germany and France: EFSA's response and lessons learnt



- **Shiga-toxin producing Escherichia coli (STEC) serotype O104:H4 and carries substantial antibiotic resistance.**

- **Reservoir:** not clear

Shares virulence characteristics of STEC (animal reservoir) and of enteroaggregative E.coli (EAEC) (human reservoir) strains

- **Origin:** previously very rare in Europe

10 cases of STEC O104 infection reported to ECDC (2004-2010): only three were of serotype O104:H4 (Finland 2010, Italy 2009 and France 2004): travel in North Africa;

A review of the literature revealed that STEC O104:H4 has also been isolated in Germany, twice (2001). German isolates differed from the 2011 outbreak strain

Epidemic (I)

- Germany
 - First case **1st week of May**
 - Epidemic peak 200 cases per day: **22 May**
- European level
 - Germany reports to Commission and MS on **21 May**
 - First audio conference of Commission **24 May**
- France
 - 24 June** cluster in Bègles (near Bordeaux)
- 7 July end of the outbreak
 - 4000 cases, incl. 50 deaths**

- First phase (24 May – 8 June): Preparatory Review
 - ✓ EFSA/ECDC advice published 3 June
 - ✓ Literature Review: presence of enteric pathogens in plant material
 - ✓ Summarisation of STEC data previously reported in the EU
- Second phase (5 – 16 June): Support German Task Force leading Outbreak Investigation in Germany
 - ✓ Worked 'shoulder to shoulder' with the colleagues from the Federal Ministry and Research Institutes and the Länder to develop, set up and implement the tracing back and tracing forward investigations
 - ✓ Led to the identification of sprouts as the vehicle and Establishment A as the source of the sprouts

- Third phase (24 June – 5 July): Led the European Task Force to Investigate Common Cause between French and German outbreaks
 - ✓ Set up Task Force to trace common link: seeds used to produce sprouts
 - ✓ Identified a Lot of Fenugreek seeds imported from Egypt into Germany via Antwerp/Rotterdam.
- Fourth phase: follow-up mandate to BIOHAZ Panel (30 Oct) and:
 - Taking Stock
 - Lessons Learnt

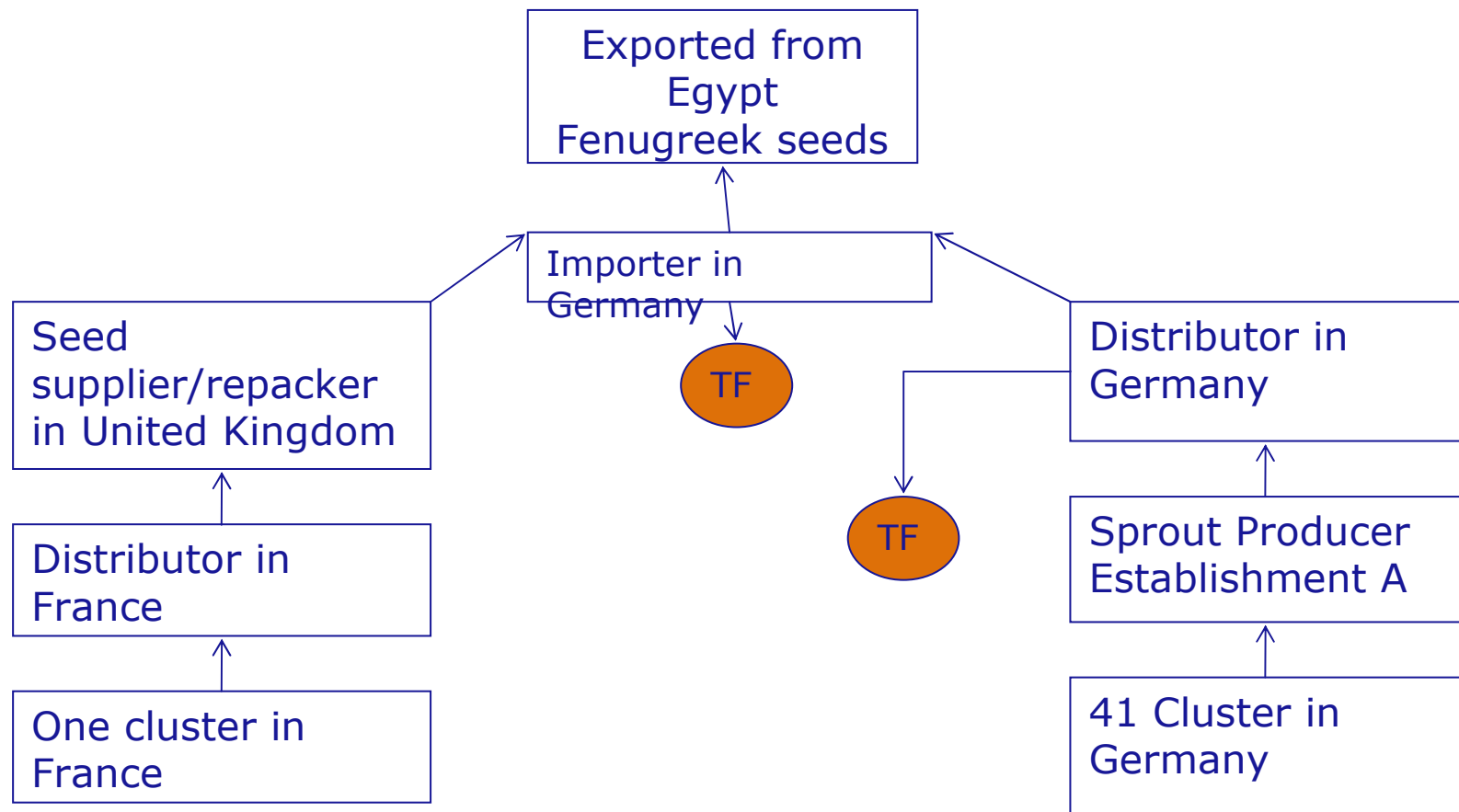
- **41** well described outbreak clusters with a common link to sprout producer
 - ✓ Further epidemiological investigations linked disease occurrence with **either of 2 sprouted seed mixtures:**
 - Mild blend: 4 types of sprouts
 - Spicely blend: 3 types of sprouts
- **Only lentil and fenugreek sprouts were common to both mixtures**

Epidemic - French outbreak

- Before French outbreak, 13 EU/EEA countries reported cases associated to the outbreak in Germany. **All cases linked to travel to northern Germany**
- **24th June France reported a cluster** of patients with bloody diarrhoea: none of the food handlers or guests had recently travelled to Germany or had contact with travellers from Germany
- **Microbiological characterization** of the isolates from **French outbreak: indistinguishable**



EFSA Task Force: Link between German and French outbreaks



Source: <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/supporting/doc/176e.pdf>

- EFSA first issued a brief statement informing interested parties that it was monitoring the German outbreak on 27 May 2011.
- A further seven news stories in the following five weeks addressing public health advice, the results of its urgent scientific advice as well as the role of the European Task Force.
- Public health advice was issued jointly with ECDC to ensure the European agencies were aligned.
- EFSA tried to align its communication efforts with other organisations and liaise with its Focal Point and Advisory Forum Communications Working Group networks.
- The Authority also briefed the Commission's Health & Security Committee's Communicator's Network on its on-going activities on an *ad hoc* basis.

- EFSA's investment in establishing strong links with MS, also from a communications perspective, proved important during the outbreak.
- Significantly, EFSA created a table with an overview of who was saying what and since when which was kept up-to-date and shared with MS. This proved a useful tool for both communicators and Risk Managers.

LESSONS LEARNED

- EFSA was **well prepared in peace time** to help with the outbreak investigation when it occurred
 - ✓ peace-time data collection networks, with ECDC
 - ✓ peace-time collaboration on communication (MS, EC, EU Agencies)
 - ✓ on-going cooperation with management of competent authorities through EFSA Advisory Forum
 - ✓ dedicated EmRisk unit, organised repeated crisis exercises
- EFSA had **staff** to offer with the technical competence (data collection) that mastered the language and knew the concerned institutions
- IT tools for food tracing could be further developed



Thank you very much for your attention!