Risk Benefit Assessment of foods: Key findings from an international workshop

Whilst risk management measures, including food policy, are developed for the protection of public health and the environment, they may also lead to a reduction in health benefits. Policy decisions require then consideration of these necessary trade-offs, which leads to an increasing need to apply formal risk-benefit assessment (RBA) of foods. In this context, the European Food Safety Authority sponsored a Risk-Benefit Assessment Workshop on "past, current and future developments within the risk-benefit assessment of foods (RBA)" held in May 2017. The overall aims of the RBA Workshop were to discuss existing methods, challenges and needs within RBA, and to draft a roadmap for future development of RBA. The specific objectives were to i) identify RBA activities in Europe and globally; ii) discuss how to further develop and optimize RBA methodology; iii) identify challenges and opportunities within RBA; and iv) increase collaboration internationally. The two-day workshop gathered 28 participants from 16 institutions in 11 countries. It included technical presentations of RBA methods and case studies, and two break-out sessions for group discussions. All participants agreed that RBA has substantial potential to inform risk-management decisions in the areas of food safety, nutrition and public health. Several activities to optimize further developments within RBA were suggested. This paper provides a summary of workshop presentations, a discussion of challenges that limit progress in this area, and suggestions of next steps for this promising approach supporting a science-based decision process in the area of risk-benefit management of foods.

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