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## Remove the difference



Consumers have experienced many food scares during the past ten years. Everyone will remember the excitement about mad cow disease [bovine spongiform encephalopathy, BSE] in Europe and the hazard of the suspected causative agents, prions, to be transmitted to humans, resulting in a variant of the much-feared Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease [CJD].

Although it looks like the main problem is under control due to measures taken by authorities, which have limited the number of human deaths to less than 200 [so far], similar prion-related diseases have cropped up in other places on the globe, and we do not know where it will end.

Other scares include Salmonella in eggs, acrylamide in French fries, Escherichia coli O157:H7 in meat and so on. These scares have urged governments to tighten legislation. In the EU this has led to Regulation [EC] 178/2002 [amended by [EC] 1642/2003] of which the implementation started in 2002 and is to be completed before 2007. The European Food Safety Authority [EFSA] has been established, and individual countries have set up their national mirror organisations.

Although governments work together in organisations such as Codex Alimentarius and the World Trade Organisation [WTO], regrettably there are often differences in regulations between countries. These differences may lead to the destruction of large amounts of foodstuffs or provide serious trade barriers.

In an attempt to eliminate these problems, the Food Science and Technology organisations in the USA and Europe, IFT and EFFoST, intend to make a survey of significant differences in legislation between countries on all continents and to produce recommendations to remove these differences, based on sound science and technology.

If the subject is of interest to you, you may consider attending the EFFoST conference 'Food Innovations for an Expanding Europe' [26-29 October 2004], where global harmonisation will also be on the agenda. Following these events, a series of workshops will be organised and working parties will be formed for which interested organisations outside Europe and the USA will be invited. You are welcome to participate in this initiative and suggestions are very welcome. Perhaps this initiative will contribute to a better world.

\* **EFFoST: European Federation of Food Science and Technology** [[www.fffost.org](http://www.fffost.org)].

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