

anses
French agency for food, environmental
and occupational health & safety



*French cuisine,
risk assessment
and
communication*

***BfR
June 2014***

ANSES: creation and missions

- ANSES was created on the 1st of July 2010 through the merger of AFSSA (French food safety agency) with AFSSET (French agency for occupational and environmental health)



How French cuisine impacts risk communication (and risk assessment)



The French eat strange foods

- **French consumption survey (INCA 2, 2006)**
 - **% of snail eaters:**
 - **1.6%**
 - **Average: 50g/week**
 - **P 95: 150g/week**
 - **% of frogs leg eaters:**
 - **0.4%**
 - **Mean: 71g/week**
 - **P 95: 168g/week**

The French eat lots of wine and cheese



- **French consumption survey (INCA 2, 2006)**
 - **% of cheese eaters:**
 - **90%**
 - **Average: 235g/week**
 - **P 95: 600g/week**
 - **% of wine drinkers:**
 - **55%**
 - **Mean: 1L/week**
 - **P 95: 3.5L/week**

Three assertions

1. All the French eat gourmet meals
2. Food is more than just food
3. Food is a "secular religion"
4. Can risk communication on food be strictly scientific?

French gourmet meal assertion no.1



- All the French eat gourmet meals
 - Not just the "happy few"
 - A legacy of the French Revolution:
 - Ideal of "happiness for all"
 - The elegant manners of the high society meal have trickled down to the working classes.

French gourmet meal assertion no.2



- Food is more than just food
 - The French gourmet meal is a social practice, bringing together groups to celebrate important moments in life.
 - Strengthens social ties;
 - A feeling of belonging and continuity with French tradition;
 - Reinforced by the view of foreigners, who consider food as a marker of French identity.

French gourmet meal assertion no.3



- Food is a "secular religion"
 - A search for purity
 - The "unadulterated" product
 - The "essence of nature"
 - A ritual
 - Numerous courses/
aesthetic considerations
 - Food and wine pairing

From the gourmet meal to the everyday meal



- Rare data
 - What is the influence of gastronomy?
 - Few international comparisons between food practices exist
- Hypothesis
 - Strong influence and consequences

French food conservatism

- **Recent study on eating habits by 2020**

(Vitagora, unpublished)

- The Germans will eat more raw foods,
- The Japanese will eat more "cosmeto-foods",
- The French won't change anything!
 - » Tradition, local products
 - » See no need for innovation in food

- **Highly conservative:**

- Distrust of new products (GMOs, industrial foods, etc.)
- Dietary minorities (vegetarians, etc.) and new eating trends (snacking, etc.) seen as a threat to the French identity
 - They hinder convivial meal-sharing practices

Food is pleasure, not risk

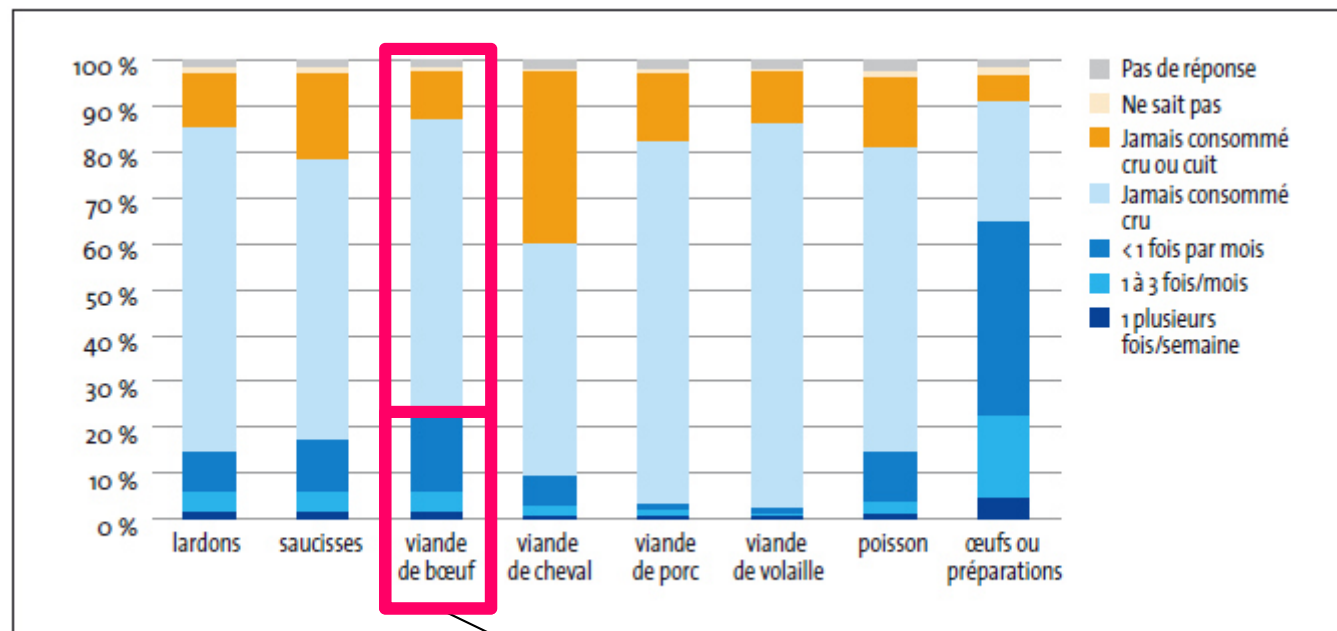
- Technical information and recommendations about food risks are often misinterpreted:
 - Seen as a "medicalization" of food practices
 - A loss of French identity
 - *The French Consumer Committee reports that TV spots on food hygiene are the only ones with negative feedback*
- When recommendations target a particular population subgroup, they are seen as isolating these individuals from the community
 - "pregnancy is not an illness!"
- Limited effects of "fish recommendation"

Raw/unprepared and cooked foods

- Seeking the unadulterated taste of foods
 - By cooking them to the extreme in order to extract their “essence”:
 - The art of sauce making
 - By presenting certain products as they are found in nature:
 - Raw or lightly cooked meats

Raw/unprepared and cooked foods

Figure 88. Consommation de denrées en absence de cuisson (%) chez les adultes de 18-79 ans (n= 2 617)



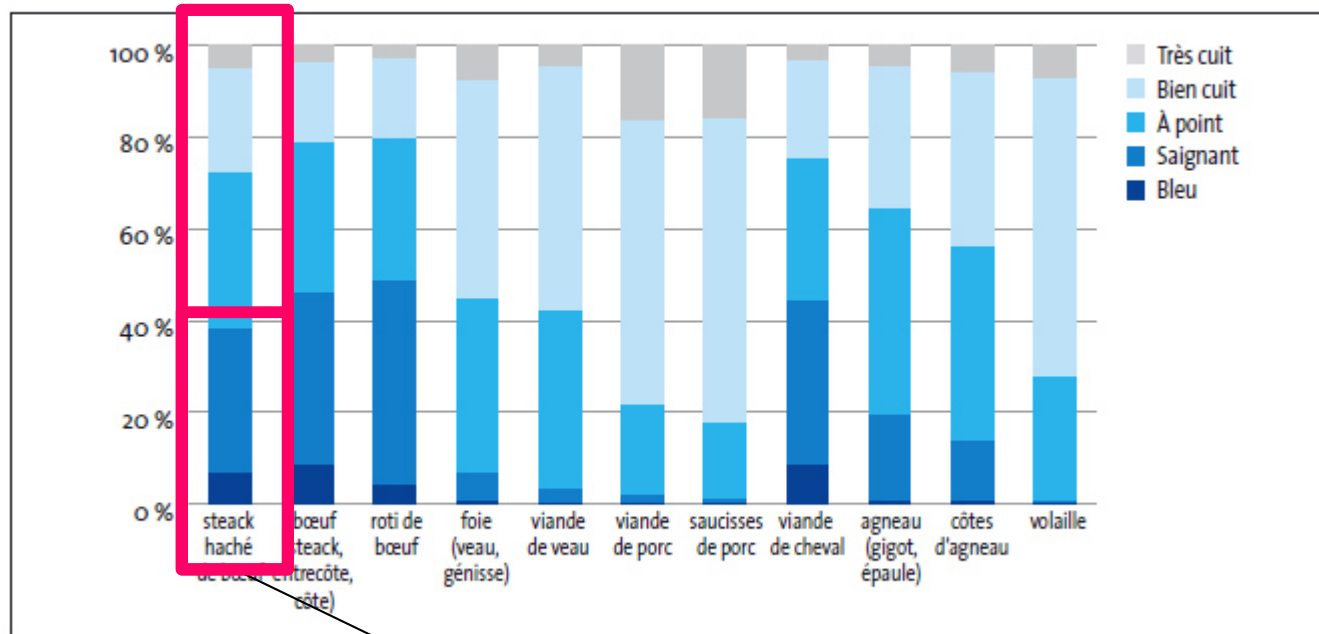
Source : Afssa, Étude INCA 2, 2006-07.

beef

- **20% of French adults eat raw beef, and 15% eat raw fish, at least occasionally (from once a week to once a month)**

Raw/unprepared and cooked foods

Figure 89. Degré de cuisson habituel des viandes (%) par les adultes de 18-79 ans (seuls consommateurs)

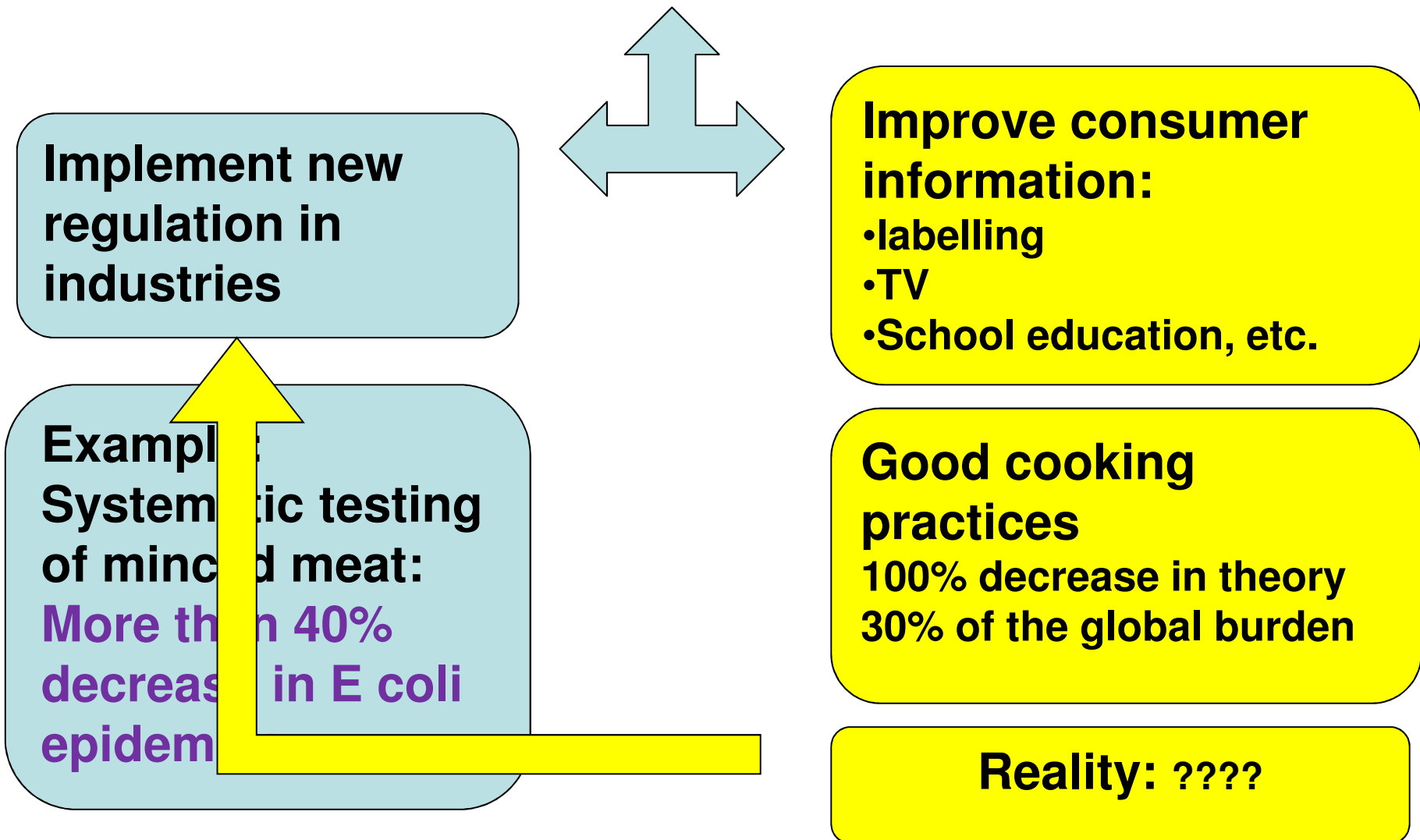


Source : Afssa, Étude INCA 2, 2006-07.

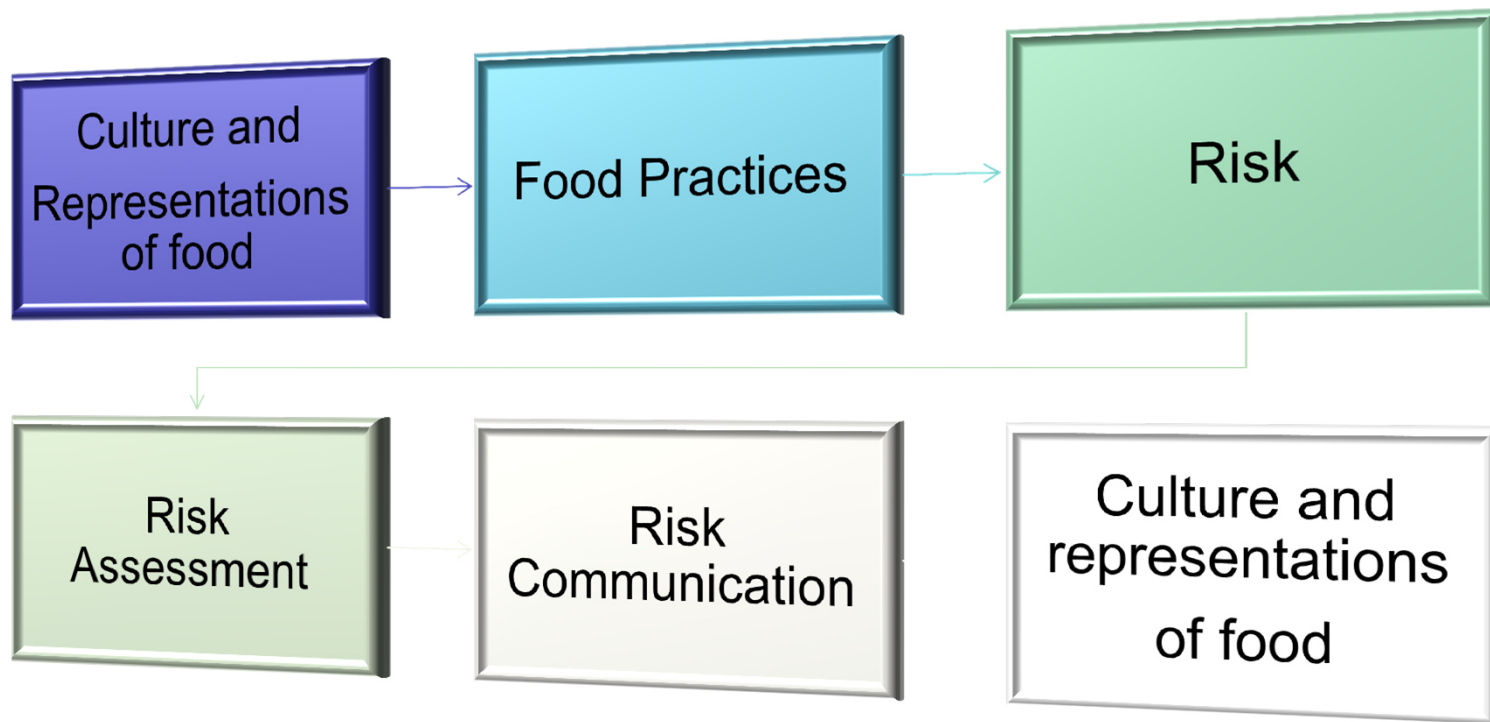
burgers

- 40% of the French eat beefburgers rare or medium rare (20% in the US)
- The better the cuts of meat, the less they are cooked

Reducing the health burden of E. Coli epidemics in France



A french tendancy?



For more information, please visit:

www.anses.fr

