

<i>Consumer communication and feedback</i>	<b>Consumer Acceptability Data Case Study: Lyonnaise des Eaux, France</b>	
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<b>Region:</b> Ile-de-France	<b>Water Supplier:</b> Lyonnaise des Eaux	<b>Size:</b> <i>Number of employees: 11,600</i> <i>Number of consumers: 12.3 million</i>
<b>Country:</b> France		

**Important Notes to users:**  
*This document provides practical experiences in water quality management which may be of interest to other water suppliers. The information is provided in good faith but users must ensure that any action taken based on this is assessed in the context of their own local situation and particularly any national or regional legal requirements.*

**Summary**  
 Consumer trust depends not only on the consistent delivery of good safe water but also how they perceive its quality. Consumer acceptability data can be extremely valuable in many steps in the development and implementation of a WSP. This case study provides an example of where a water supplier in France has established a system to collect consumer acceptability data via a group of volunteers. It provides one particular approach to the collection of opinions on the taste and odour of water supplied.

**Detailed information**  
 Lyonnaise des Eaux has developed a ‘Club of Water Tasters’ who are a specially trained group of customers who report on the taste of water directly to the water company. The Club in the Sud de l’Ile-de-France is made up of 600 volunteers and in 2008 they recorded more than 12 000 observations to enable Lyonnaise des Eaux to improve the taste of their water.

Their website “www.goutdeleau.com” (a registered name in France) is used to record and assess the tasters’ opinions, in terms of taste and odours, and to quickly identify water quality issues in the distribution system.



The volunteers:

- Are specially trained to recognise flavours in water; they taste water in their home and provide their observations on the website or by letter
- Give their opinions on the taste of tap water to improve the taste
- Create a partnership between consumers and the technicians from Lyonnaise des Eaux
- Lead to a better understanding of the perceptions of taste beyond the health issues
- React in real time to fluctuations in water quality in the distribution system

The volunteers are specially trained in the tasting of water by the professional water tasters in Lyonnaise des Eaux. They learn about the theory of tastes in the water (formation and origin of tastes) and learn about water treatment, its distribution, and its different quality and usages.

A series of tests allow the volunteers to assess their aptitude to detect tastes and flavours. The volunteers follow standard tasting techniques and recording of flavours and their only obligation is not to smoke, drink or eat for half an hour before the tasting.

Some advice is given to the volunteers to allow them to taste at home under optimum conditions.

- Allow the tap to run for some minutes before taking a sample
- Allow the water to aerate for some minutes in a glass or a carafe before drinking to allow the chlorine to evaporate
- Take care of the cups which are used to taste because calcium deposits can build up which give water a stale taste.

**Typical resources used:**

Water supplier tasting panel, Customer Services Department

**Contact for further information:**

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**Document status:**

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**Disclaimer**

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