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**SCIENCE COUNCIL  
SECOND MEETING**

13/12/17  
Working Group 2

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**OVERALL PACKAGE TO  
DELIVER**  
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## Question set by FSA Chairman Heather Hancock on 16 June 2017

**What** - What does the Council advise to be best practice in establishing and communicating risk and certainty?

**Why** – In the future, the FSA needs to have established a strategic framework for making risk assessment and management judgments, and to be better at communicating risk and uncertainty to stakeholders, including the general public. Advice on this will help us to deal with the consequences of EU exit, and will enable us to be more deliberate and clear in building consumer understanding about public health risks from food.

**When** – Council to provide advice in next six months maximum.

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## Ways of working

1. The Working Group is Chaired by Mark Woolhouse and the members are Sandy Thomas, Sarah O'Brien, John O'Brien, Mark Rolfe and Paul Turner.
2. The Council Chair, Working Group Chair and FSA Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) developed the Terms of Reference for the Working Group.
3. The Working Group is taking an iterative approach working with the CSA and FSA officials, including FSA Risk Assessment Unit and Science and Policy teams led by Director of Food Policy Steve Wearne.
4. The Working Group has consulted the FSA's other Scientific Advisory Committees on the draft best practice principles for Phase 1.
5. The Working Group met on 4 October and held a teleconference on 14 November, and it also works by correspondence. The details of its meetings are on the Science Council website.

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## Overall package to deliver

The Working Group is taking a phased approach so that the Council can deliver useful outputs as it works. **Phase 1** will focus on principles and how FSA establishes risk and certainty, and **Phase 2** will look at how this is communicated. In **Phase 1** the Working Group will consider the key things that will need to be communicated *about*, to ensure these are covered in the approach to establishing risk and uncertainty.

### In Phase 1 the Working Group will:

- Advise on best practice principles on establishing risk and uncertainty
- Recommend how FSA can strengthen its approach to establishing risk and uncertainty

### In Phase 2 the Working Group will:

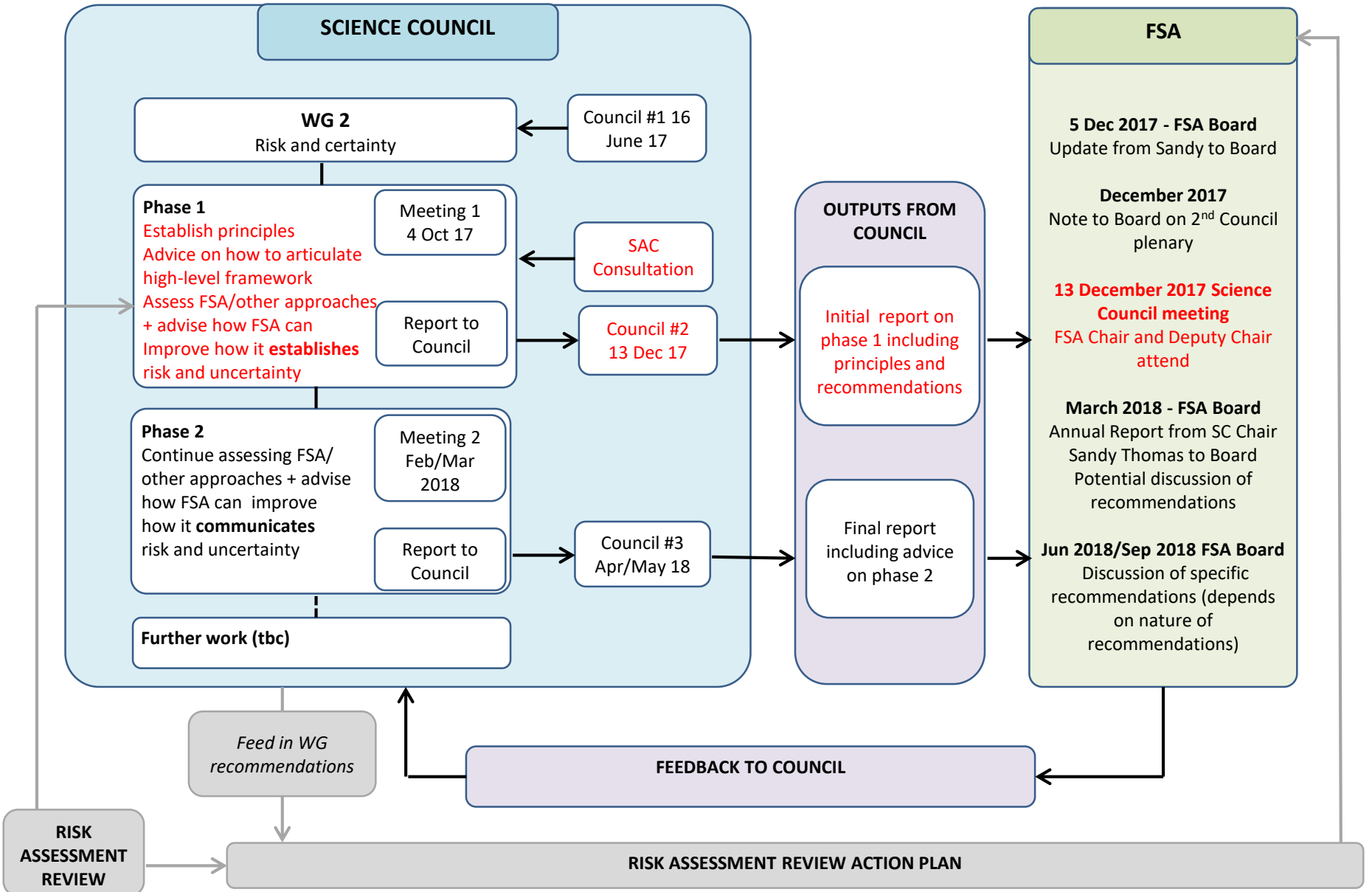
- Advise on what is best practice on communicating risk and uncertainty
- Recommend how FSA can strengthen its approach to communicating risk and uncertainty

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**WORKING GROUP PROGRESS  
PHASE 1**

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# Science Council process – WG 2





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# Progress

## The Working Group has produced:

- Advice on drafting best practice principles on establishing risk and uncertainty
- Recommendations on how the FSA can strengthen its approach to establishing risk and uncertainty

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## Background

- The Working Group noted that the FSA is already following globally recognised frameworks (notably the Codex Principles) but agrees there was a need to draw together an overarching FSA framework to show how it does this and demonstrate consistency in approach across different types of risks.
- The Working Group concurs with the FSA view that its current system is not broken but that there is:
  - an opportunity for continuous improvement and
  - a need to ensure that the FSA's approach is clearly set out and formally documented.

Drawing up principles will make it evident that the approach has a sound basis in established good practice and help provide benchmarks against which FSA and others can assess how well it is performing in practice.

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## Background (continued)

- The scientific principles for risk assessment/risk analysis should be compatible with/have regard to and support the 5 principles of better regulation: Proportionality; Accountability; Consistency; Transparency; Targeting. We would add Agility and Adaptability to these.



# Draft Risk & Uncertainty Principles

## Governance of Risk Analysis

1. There should be a functional separation of risk assessment and risk management.
2. There should be effective dialogue between risk assessment, risk management and risk communication, There should be shared understanding of the question, possible answers and possible consequences across risk assessors, managers and communicators.
3. The primary objective of the risk analysis process is the proportionate protection of health of consumers  
The primary objective of Risk Assessment is to determine the magnitude of the risk, the nature of the risk, the comparative risk or to establish health- based guidance values.
4. Different types of risks are managed and communicated differently, in line with guidance developed across government. The management and communication of risks, within the overarching framework of risk analysis, framework will reflect the characteristics of the risks; the risk analysis will need to set out the relevant factors, conclusions and assumptions and uncertainties, and their effects, in order to inform this process.

## Conduct of Risk Assessment

5. Risk assessment, should be fit for purpose and the process should be fully verified, validated and fully documented in a transparent manner.

## Uncertainty and Acceptability in Risk Analysis

6. FSA will handle all types of uncertainty according to a consistent documented process, as appropriate according to the level of assessed risk and the available risk management options, and in line with agreed approaches.
7. The FSA articulates and follows a consistent and transparent approach to considering acceptability of risk in risk management.

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## Phase 1 recommendations

The Working Group recommends that the FSA:

1. Adopts and publishes (once finalised) the principles on best practice on establishing risk and uncertainty tailored for the FSA, produced by the FSA with input from the Working Group.
2. Develops an overarching, harmonised approach to operationalising these principles in practice for food safety risk assessment.
3. Ask its principal risk assessment Scientific Advisory Committees, COT and ACMSF, to work together to advise the FSA on the development of the overarching, harmonised operational approach to food safety risk assessment, working with others as needed.
4. Develop an appropriate form of documenting compliance with the overarching approach for establishing risk and certainty to ensure operational transparency, consistency and quality management.

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## Phase 1 recommendations

5. Increases the regularity and depth of communication and iteration between risk assessors and risk managers on the robustness and uncertainties with regards the risk assessment tools used, and in comparing/ranking risks to inform risk management and communication.
6. Develop a strategy for monitoring and – where appropriate – adopting changes to current state-of-the-art in approaches to risk analysis, both conceptual and technical.
7. Ensure activities relating to risk analysis are fully joined up across the FSA, including its advisory committees, for example by holding an annual workshop.
8. Consider types of risk other than that directly relate to impacts on health (such as related to food authenticity and fraud) in the wider application of its advice and consider whether the principles for health risks might apply or be adaptable to these other risks.

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## Commentary from the Working Group

- The WG has not been specific about *how* the Principles should be made operational. Use of the Science Checklist was mentioned, as was developing Standard Operating Procedures and/or an Operating Manual.
- The FSA needs to recognise that the methodology, assumptions and outputs of a complex risk analysis process will always be subject to challenge, even if procedures have been followed to the letter. FSA needs capacity to anticipate and respond to such challenges. The WG agrees that the intensity of scrutiny and challenge may increase post-Brexit.

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## Commentary from the Working Group (continued)

- The FSA needs to look beyond the application of the existing tools (best practice), but also to adopt new innovations quickly. Technical capabilities are always evolving and standard approaches may change. FSA needs capacity to monitor and adopt state-of-the-art approaches to risk analysis. This requires attention be given to maintaining a high level of technical competence.
- *If* the FSA aspires to be a world leader in risk analysis in the context of food-related risk then it needs to consider whether it has the technical capacity to support this aspiration (especially in risk modelling).



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## **NEXT STEPS**

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## To do

- FSA to develop and articulate its approach to **acceptability** of risk
- FSA to develop an approach to **operationalise** the best practice principles

For both of these areas **the Working Group will have a role** in providing advice on high-level objectives and key issues these approaches should reflect and to provide ‘critical friend’ input on draft material developed by FSA.

**The Working Group will progress phase 2** at its second meeting (date to be confirmed for February/March 2018).

**In Phase 2 the Working Group will:**

- Work with the FSA to develop and articulate the FSA’s approach to identifying, describing and dealing with **uncertainty** in food safety risk analysis.
- Advise on what is best practice on **communicating** risk and uncertainty
- Recommend how FSA can strengthen its approach to **communicating** risk and uncertainty