

## **Science Council Working Group 2 Risk and Uncertainty Recommendations**

The Working Group recommends that the FSA:

1. Adopts and publishes 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 analysis, and asks its principal risk assessment Scientific Advisory Committees, COT and ACMSF, and others as appropriate, to work together to advise on this process.
3. Develops an appropriate form of documenting compliance with the overarching approach for establishing risk and certainty to ensure operational transparency, consistency and quality management.
4. Increases the frequency and depth of communication and iteration between risk assessors and risk managers.
5. Keeps under review the principles and the way the principles are implemented to ensure that they reflect changes in:
  - a. the state-of-the-art in approaches to risk analysis, both conceptual and technical;
  - b. the types of risk that need to be considered and the challenges these present such as increasing complexity;
  - c. the wider context in which the risk analysis takes place.
6. Looks beyond the application of the existing tools to the timely adoption of new innovations. 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.
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 those 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.
9. Develops a framework for communicating risk and uncertainty that reflects the principles developed by the Working Group.
10. Understands that the risk analysis process will always be subject to challenge, even if procedures have been followed to the letter and that this should not prevent the FSA from communicating risk; FSA needs capacity to anticipate, prepare for and respond to such challenges.
11. Ensures that its risk communication framework is informed by an understanding of its audiences in terms of how they understand risk, what they want from risk communication, and what works best for risk communication with them. This includes drawing on the evidence and expert advice on how

- people, businesses and others understand and accept risk and uncertainty and how this affects their decision-making.
12. Considers extending further its programme for testing approaches to risk communication with consumer focus groups, and with other stakeholder groups and audiences to inform its communication functions at a strategic level.
  13. Considers consultation with the public (and/or other target audiences) on planned communications to improve communications and help to reach intended audiences.
  14. Draws on other organisations' approaches and tools in considering its approach, and works with others in developing good practice. This should include:
    - i. Considering in detail the 'Defra Science Advisory Council Social Science Expert Group (SSEG) Task Group report: Communicating Risk<sup>1</sup>', in developing a practical risk communication framework for the FSA, including assessing the usefulness of a risk assessment checklist for FSA.
    - ii. Engaging with EFSA on its developing draft 'Guidance on Communication of Uncertainty in Scientific Assessments<sup>2</sup>' including through the public consultation by EFSA.
    - iii. Considering communications tools such as risk profiles.
  15. Continues to develop its evidence base on trust so that its communications enhance trust in the FSA.
  16. Ensures activities relating to risk communication are fully joined up across the FSA (drawing on relevant recommendations from Working Group 1 on use of science in FSA).
  17. Asks the Advisory Committee on Social Science (ACSS) and other SACs to assist the FSA in responding to and implementing the Working Group recommendations.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/science-advisory-council-communicating-risk-report>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/consultations/call/180504>