

Open Government Status: *Fully Open*

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL LIAISON GROUP ON RISK ASSESSMENT

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

A Paper by the Secretariat

Summary

1. This paper updates members on current developments.

Environment Agency

Climate change adaptation: risks, uncertainty and decision-making

2. This report has been developed by staff at the EA's National Centre for Risk Analysis and Options Appraisal for the DEFRA funded UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP). The report is scheduled for release as a UKCIP Technical Report in July 2002.
3. The objective of the work is to ascertain how to identify and evaluate the risks and uncertainties posed by a changing climate and make the best use of the available information to make appropriate decisions. The report emphasises that climate change is one of the many risks and/or sources of uncertainty that decision-makers may need to take into account in making decisions. Further details are attached at Annex 1.

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Office of Science and Technology

Code of Practice Database

4. The Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees was published in December 2001. A list of 84 committees that have agreed to follow the Code was published in January 2002. OST is developing a database of these Code committees. It will hold secretariat contact information and the names and expertise of committee members. The database can also be used to monitor progress on implementation of the Code, including a committee's communication strategy, current and future programmes of work, horizon scanning activity, procedure for risk assessment, training and development of members and how conflicts of interest are handled. The database could be made available to departments and in due course put on the web.

5. The draft database was welcomed by Departmental Coordinators responsible for the Guidelines 2000 and the Code of Practice at a meeting hosted by OST in March. OST will develop the database, working with partners to secure the co-operation of individual committees and their sponsoring departments. The launch and maintenance of the database will be discussed at a Code of Practice Seminar scheduled for September 2002. OST will produce a report on Code implementation in 2003.

Chief Scientific Adviser's Letters

6. The Chief Scientific Adviser will be setting up a flexible system of 'Chief Scientific Adviser's letters' to Permanent Secretaries, to promote best practice and support greater cross-departmental consistency of standards in science policy. A CSA letter on obtaining the best scientific expertise through learned bodies or from outside the UK will be published later this year.

Workshop on Communication of Science Policy to the Media

7. Discussion in the SCI Ministerial meeting of December 2001 on Public Confidence in Science and further discussion at the CSAC meeting of 17th January 2002 considered the need for:

- strong systems for identifying and managing risks associated with new technologies and applications of science;
- proactive communication of the Government's approach to science, including controversial issues.

8. There is clearly a key role for the CSA and departmental Scientific Advisors alongside Ministers to get the facts across in a balanced way.

9. It is proposed that OST will organise a workshop to be held in September 2002 to consider best practice in Government communication of science and scientific issues. The workshop will:

- explore existing relationships between science policy makers and scientific advisors, and the media;
- establish a future workplan of actions to improve contacts and relations between the media and science policy makers;
- explore ideas on how the image of government science policy in the media can be improved;
- explore the access of science policy makers to independent experts;
- aim to establish best practice code or guidelines for Government, drawing on the work already done by the Royal Society, Royal Institution & SIRC;
- set up a continuing network to exchange experience and best practice in science communication by Government and public bodies.

10. The workshop will be aimed at members of Scientific Advisory Committees, Directors of Communications in government departments, units or individuals with

experience of dealing with the media, members of the media, policy makers in departments and others.

11. In order to develop this workshop, OST will set up a steering committee for the workshop to advise on content, target audience and outputs. The steering committee is proposing to include the following people/organisations:

Chair – Jo Durning (OST)
Leonie Austin(Cabinet Office, Director of Communication)
Monica Winstanley(Research Council)
Ailsa White(DoH)
Fiona Fox(RI Media Centre, Director)
Pallab Ghosh(BBC Science Corresp)
Neil Martin(DEFRA, Director of Communication)
Graham Jordan(MOD)

12. The first meeting is due to take place in June and will discuss items such as format, content and outcomes of the workshop.

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Food Standards Agency

A Framework for Measuring Food Risk Management Against Phillips' Lessons

13. The FSA Board agreed in February 2001 that FSA should develop a framework for measuring the performance of the Agency against the Phillips' lessons. The framework and a checklist for use by FSA has now been put to the Board, who suggested that it be brought to the attention of other Government Departments and Agencies in case they wish to use similar frameworks. The FSA Board paper is attached at Annex 2.

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Climate change adaptation: risks, uncertainty and decision-making

Summary

1. Climate change adaptation: risks, uncertainty and decision-making. The report has been developed by staff at the EA's National Centre for Risk Analysis and Options Appraisal for the DEFRA-funded UK Climate Impacts Programme. The report is scheduled for release as a UKCIP Technical Report in July 2002.

The subject of this report is how to identify and evaluate the risks and uncertainties posed by a changing climate and make the best use of the available information to make appropriate decisions. The report emphasises that climate change is one of many risks and / or sources of uncertainty that decision-makers may need to take into account in making decisions.

The report outlines a process and provides guidance for decision-makers to identify and evaluate the risks associated with climate change, adaptation measures and options that comprise part of an adaptation strategy. It proposes a staged approach based on the use of a decision-making framework, and describes available tools and techniques that may help in each stage.

The overall objective of this report is to provide guidance that will be suitable to a wide range of decision-makers whose decisions might be sensitive to climate variability and climate change. In particular on:

- (i) risk and uncertainties associated with climate variability and future climate change;
- (ii) the identification and appraisal of climate change adaptation options, taking account of (i)
- (iii) the use of this information to make appropriate decisions.

There will be a Technical Annex to the report, which will describe in more detail the range of tools and techniques that can be used to inform each stage of the decision-making process.

The intended audience for the main report is decision-makers and their advisors:

- (i) who are responsible for business areas that are sensitive to changes in climate, or who are responsible for managing the consequences of variability in weather or climate;
- (ii) who make investment and other decisions with long-term consequences and pay-offs. In particular for decisions that concern the use of extensive areas of land, nationally important sites, or population groups, or their prosperity;
- (iii) whose decisions might be vulnerable to assumptions about the risks associated with present-day and future climate variability;
- (iv) who are responsible for commissioning or overseeing technical assessments of climate change vulnerability, impacts and associated adaptation options, or

- (v) who are assessing the robustness of a proposed decision to the assumptions associated with the nature of the future climate.

A copy of the draft and information on the consultation process and deadlines may be obtained from the Richenda Connell in the UKCIP office (Tel: 01865 432076, richenda.connel@ukcip.org.uk).

A FRAMEWORK FOR MEASURING FOOD RISK MANAGEMENT AGAINST PHILLIPS' LESSONS

Executive summary

1. In 2001 the Board discussed how the lessons to be learned from the BSE Inquiry should be taken forward in the work of the Agency. As agreed by the Board, this paper presents a framework for measuring the performance of the Agency against the Phillips lessons.

2. The Board is asked to:
 - **note** the framework and checklist at Annexes 1 and 2; and

 - **note** the ways in which the framework will be used.

Corporate Secretariat and Consumer Issues Division

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A FRAMEWORK FOR MEASURING FOOD RISK MANAGEMENT AGAINST PHILLIPS' LESSONS

Issue

1. The development of a formal framework for measuring the Agency's food risk management against Phillips' lessons.

Background

2. In February 2001 the Board discussed how the lessons to be learned from the BSE Inquiry should be taken forward in the work of the Agency. It agreed that a framework should be developed for measuring the performance of the Agency against the Phillips lessons. This would entail considering the decisions of the Board as well as the work of the Agency's staff.
3. This paper, which takes account of comments made by the Board in earlier discussions, presents a framework and checklist for use for this purpose.

The Framework

4. As previously agreed, the framework at Annex 1 covers four key stages of action in the management of food risks, now supplemented by a fifth stage. These will, in practice, not necessarily occur in a linear progression. The stages are identified as:
 - (i) identifying a risk for attention;
 - (ii) assessing the risk;
 - (iii) deciding what action to take;
 - (iv) implementing the decision; and
 - (v) monitoring and reviewing the impact of the decision.
5. Five general principles, relevant to the Agency's work and drawn from the 'Phillips' lessons are then applied to each of these stages. The five principles are:

- (i) getting the facts right;
- (ii) keeping an open mind;
- (iii) applying rigour;
- (iv) acting openly; and
- (v) involving stakeholders.

6. A fuller checklist of specific questions, which might be posed at each of the five stages of food risk management, is provided at Annex 2.

Use of the framework

7. The framework will be used in two ways:

- (i) for external monitoring of the Agency's performance in specific policy areas by consultants with relevant public health or other expertise; and
- (ii) as a key part of the core module of the Agency's management training scheme, which is designed for all managers in the FSA, to help them better understand our core values and how these can be lived out in our day-to-day work.

Board Action Required

8. The Board is asked to:

- **note** the framework and checklist at Annexes 1 and 2; and
- **note** the ways in which the framework will be used.

ANNEX 1

APPLYING BSE LESSONS TO FOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

THE STAGES OF FOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

1. Setting the agenda

2. Assessing the risk

3. Deciding what action to take

4. Implementing the decision

5. Monitoring and reviewing the impact of the decision

APPLYING KEY PRINCIPLES

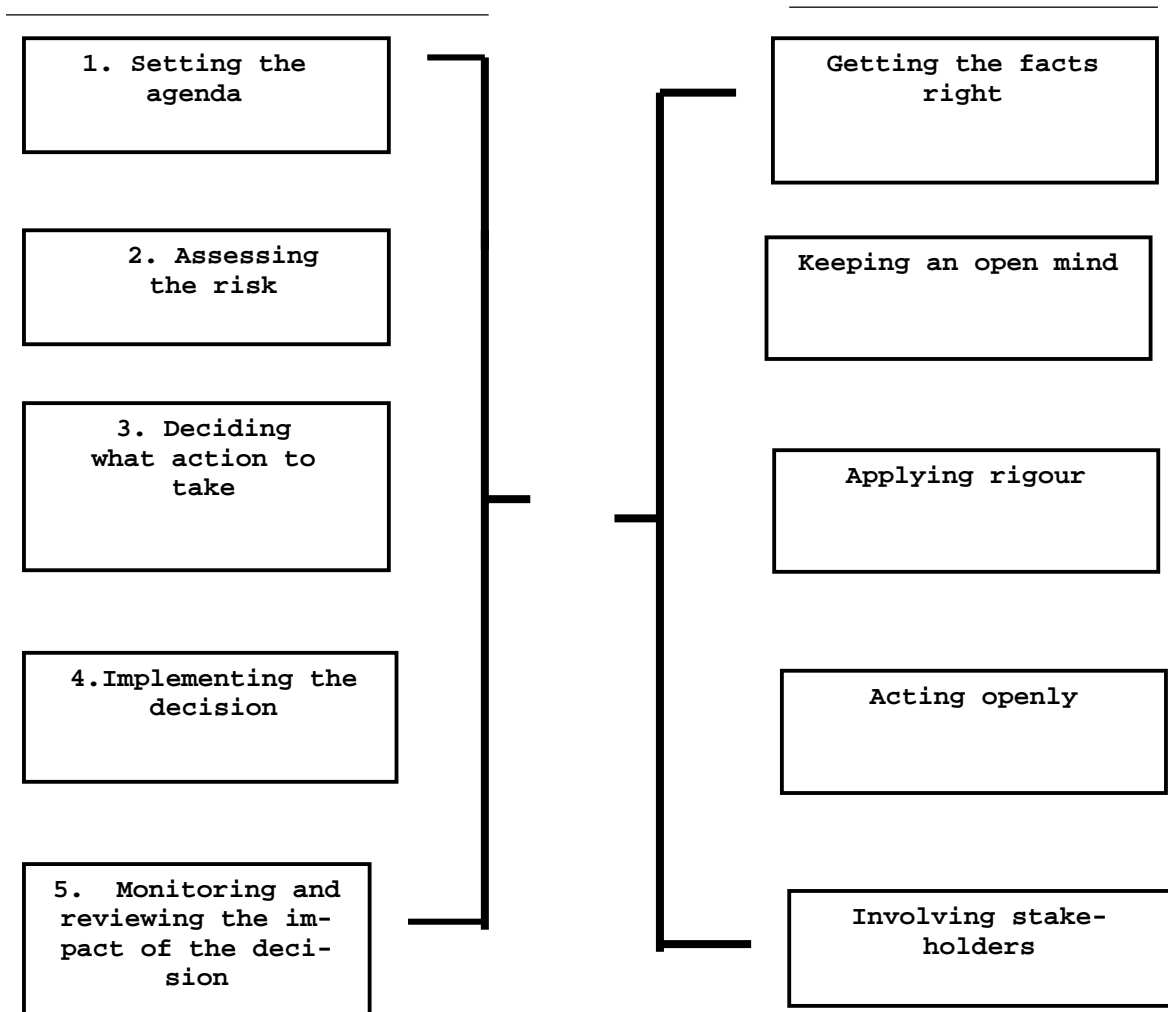
Getting the facts right

Keeping an open mind

Applying rigour

Acting openly

Involving stakeholders



ANNEX 2

THE CHECKLIST

NB Not all questions are applicable to every situation. On each occasion the question “Is this question appropriate to this particular issue/incident?” should be asked.

Key

1. Getting the facts right
2. Keeping an open mind
3. Applying rigour
4. Acting openly
5. Involving stakeholders

Identifying a risk

1. Are we being slow in identifying new risks?
Are we adequately tracking emerging information on known risks?
2. Are we taking account of those with different views to our own?
Are we prepared to reopen issues where new facts emerge?
3. Are we assessing priorities for attention, and allocating our time sensibly between them?
4. Are we being open and honest about our agenda?
5. Are we checking with relevant stakeholders what information they have?

Assessing the risk

1. Are we using our in-house scientific expertise?
Are we consulting scientific experts representing all major viewpoints?
Are we taking steps to clarify areas of scientific uncertainty?
2. Are we taking account of conflicting views?
3. Are we undertaking a formal risk assessment?
Are we distinguishing adequately between known risk and areas of scientific uncertainty?
4. Are we publishing our risk assessment, and the facts underpinning it?
Are we being open and honest about areas of uncertainty?
5. Are we asking stakeholders to contribute to the risk assessment?

Deciding what action to take

1. Do we have all the relevant (including economic) facts available?

2. Are we listening to all interest groups – consumers, enforcement agencies, producers, special interest groups – before deciding what action is appropriate?
Is there a case for reconsidering our decision? Do we need to do so?
3. Are we considering all the relevant options for action?
Are we weighing up their costs and benefits rigorously?
Are we considering their practicality and enforceability?
4. Are we publishing our decision, and the assessments underpinning it?
5. Are we explaining to stakeholders why we have decided on the particular action?

Implementing the decision

1. Are we taking steps to find out about the impact of our decision?
2. Are we allowing for changes in light of experience?
3. Are we following through our decision rigorously and effectively?
Are we ensuring that it is clearly understood by consumers, producers and enforcers?
4. Are we publishing our implementation plans?
5. Are we allowing for feedback from stakeholders?

Monitoring and reviewing the impact of the decision

1. Is the decision having the intended effect?
Do we need to review it?
2. If it is not having the intended effect, is that now important?
Have the circumstances which led to the decision changed since it was made?
3. Is the implementation of the decision being rigorously enforced if appropriate?
4. Are we publishing the results of the enforcement?
Are we being open about the impact of the decision?
5. Are we obtaining feedback from stakeholders on the impact of the decision?
Are we consulting stakeholders on any review of the decision?

NBAt the end of any review in which this checklist is used, the question “What lessons (if any) have we learnt which might affect our future management of food risks?” should be asked.