

Terms of Reference - Risk Communications Working Group

Members

- Chair – Julie Barnett
- Julie Hill
- Prof. George Gaskell
- John McTernan
- Dr Seda Erdem
- Prof. Spencer Henson
- Prof. Dan Rigby

FSA secretariat

- Michelle Patel
- Sarah Kovacs

Dates

01/08/2018 – 01/04/2019

Summary

To advise the FSA on the development of a practical framework for risk communications.

Background

It is often the role of Government bodies to communicate to influence behaviour or empower choice through communicating the evidence base and assessment of risk of certain choices. However, to be scientifically defensible we must speak in relative terms and with a degree of honest uncertainty; difficult within a political

and media environment that lends itself to misinterpretation and reductionism. Added to this, talking about people's food tends to elicit highly emotional responses. There is little that is closer to home.

Once we leave the EU and responsibility for risk assessment devolves to the FSA/FSS, it will be more important than ever to have a robust framework for the communication of food risk.

Objectives

1. To ensure that the best possible evidence base supports the development of a risk communication framework for the FSA.

Activities

- Gap analysis of the Science Council principles, and advice on how best to turn them into a workable framework.
- Academic support on a review of the existing risk communications frameworks, understanding their evolution, how they are used, and what are the learning points one might take forward
- Advice on a draft risk communications framework and how we can make this most usable, identifying the questions and checks required to communicate risk in the best known way in a range of probable situations and the organisational practices required to do so.