

# Research into policy – the UK FSA experience

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# Background to the FSA

- **Non ministerial Government Dept**
- **Governed by a Board – Chair, Deputy Chair + 10**
  - Open selection, members of general public
  - open and transparent operation
  - c800 staff in London, Belfast, Aberdeen, Cardiff
    - Almost half are qualified scientists
- **Executive agency – Meat Hygiene Service**
  - 1,500 staff incl Meat Inspectors and vets in abattoirs
- **Network of scientific advisory committees**
  - 10 independent committees; draw on expertise of ~140 eminent scientists
- **Budget £140 million/year - c £20m pa on research**
- **Remit**                      Food safety, nutrition, choice

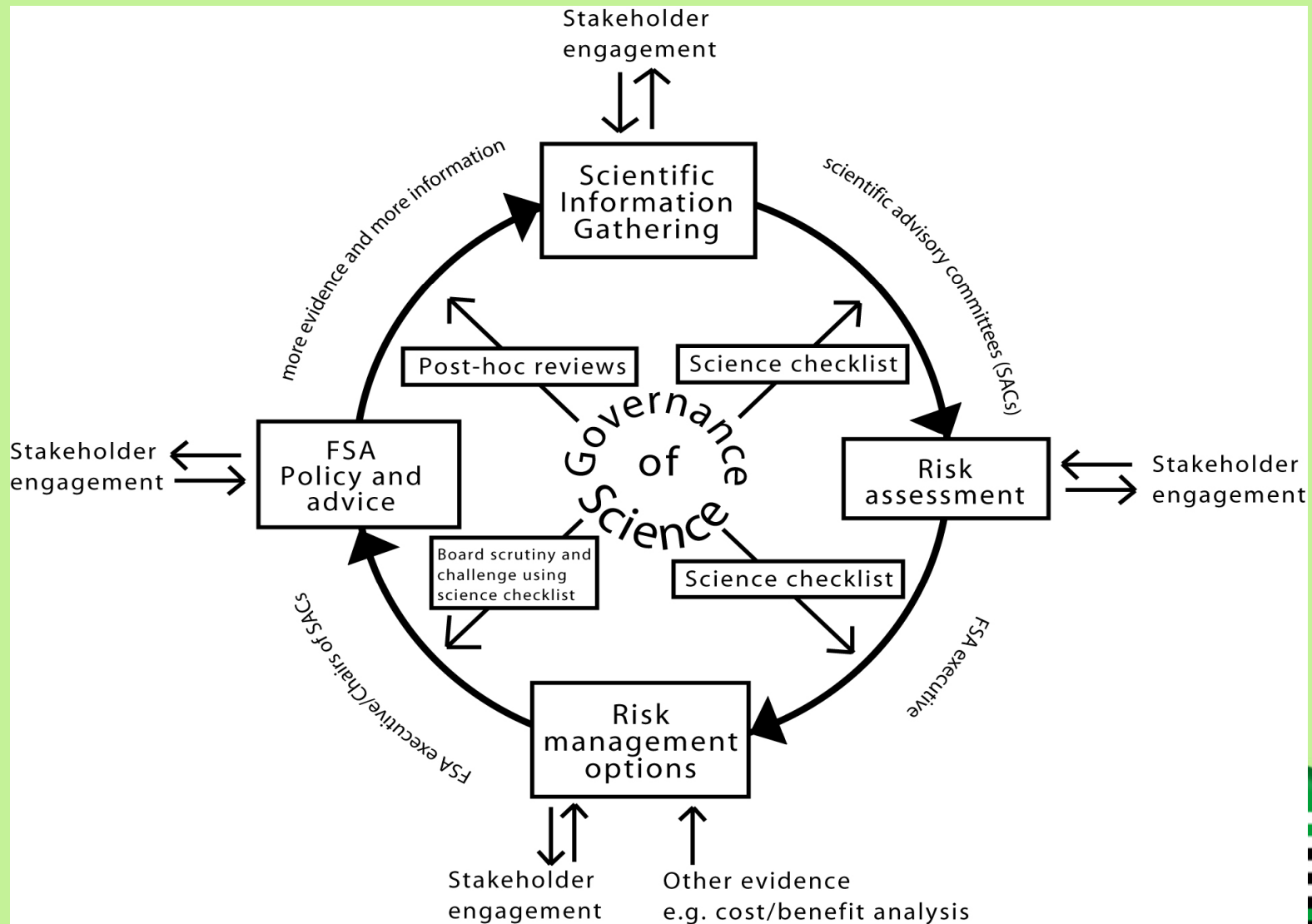


# Handling Risks: Lessons Learned

- Seek advice and challenge from independent scientists
- Acknowledge uncertainty
- Recognise risk appetite of consumers
- Help consumers to make their own judgements
- Actively engage with stakeholders at all key stages



# Handling Risks: The Processes



# ZERO RISK?

- What do consumers expect?
- What can the FSA deliver?
- Different types of risk, different appetites



# RISK ASSESSMENT

- Based on evidence from the scientific literature and work commissioned by the FSA.
- Risk assessments are carried out by in-house scientists with the support and challenge of independent scientific advisory committees.
- These in-house scientists are integral to the teams developing and implementing policy



# Managing Risks

- RM less easy to describe through accountable processes
- far wider evidence bases need to be considered, not only the science
- it's about judgement, but accountable through open, transparent processes



# Functional Separation of RA and RM?

- Yes, through the independent SACs (RA) and the FSA's Board (RM)
- But, integrated model of risk analysis that has public engagement at its heart
- Openness and transparency are key to accountability and winning trust





# Risk and Regulation: A Proportionate Response?

- FSA advice based on robust analysis of the best available evidence, setting out the uncertainties
- Regulation not always the answer
- respect the reality of **concerns** even when not supported by the evidence
- Trust in food safety work provides the mandate for FSA's work on healthy eating



# Why does the FSA fund research and surveys?

- Provides a basis for Agency policies.
- Ensures sound advice.
- Informs the UK negotiating position.
- Ensures staff are “intelligent customers”
- Influences other research funders.



# Strategic research priorities

Strategic Plan to 2010 sets three high-level priorities

## Food Safety

- continue to reduce foodborne illness
- reduce risks to consumers from chemical contamination of food

## Eating for health

- make it easier for all consumers to choose a healthy diet
- improve quality of life by reducing diet-related disease

## Choice

- enable consumers to make informed choices



# Content of research themes

- Themes covering major areas of work eg microbiological safety, diet and health etc
- Each theme is made up of several **programmes** on specific issues – (currently over 40 programmes)
- Some programmes carried forward from pre FSA origins and have evolved. Some “sunsetting” and new ones have been created.
- Programmes reviewed every 5 years (and often interim as well) – to check progress, direction
- Programmes combine research, surveys, literature reviews, other science activities as needed to achieve aims
- Majority are chemical/biological science based – some with social science aspects to a greater or lesser extent eg economics, nutrition programmes on food acceptability and choice, enforcement



# Social sciences – where do they fit in?

- Potentially across all programmes – particularly where interventions/implementation are important
- Statistical input to Agency surveys – at requirement generation, proposal evaluation, project management and report evaluation
- Other social sciences input to Agency requirements where appropriate as internal capability has developed.
- oversight and advice via Social Science Unit and advice from independent Social Science Research Committee



# Content of research themes

- Currently about 200 live projects
- Individual projects run for a few months to several years - most 1-3 years
- from £10k to £15m; most below £500k
- Annual research reports – now to be part of Annual Chief Scientist Report
- Open Access Repository - Foodbase

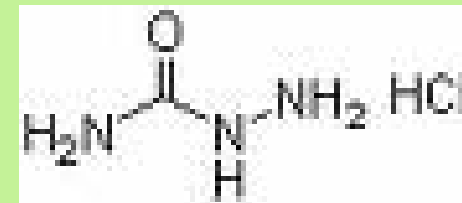


# Engagement with others

- Other government departments, Research Councils, industry, EU
- Co-ordinate at strategic level, and through funders groups in specific priority areas (TSE, microbiological safety, nutrition, nanotechnology).
- Specific funding schemes eg with UK Research Councils
- EU: shape priorities in Framework Programmes; links with funders in Europe/internationally, co-funding FP projects, partner in EU-funded ERA-NET project SAFEFOODERA
- Links to EFSA via Advisory Forum, Focal Point network and other initiatives
- In 2007/08, total of £3.8m funding to 28 co-funded projects (nearly 20% of Agency's total spend on research; highest ever annual spend on co-funded projects. Includes 2 largest projects (NDNS and the IID-2 study). For these 28 projects, total Agency spend is £22m, compared with a total value of £55m across all funders



# Semicarbazide

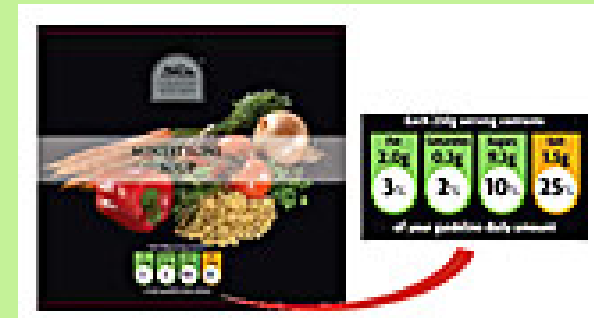




# Diet and health



# Traffic light labelling

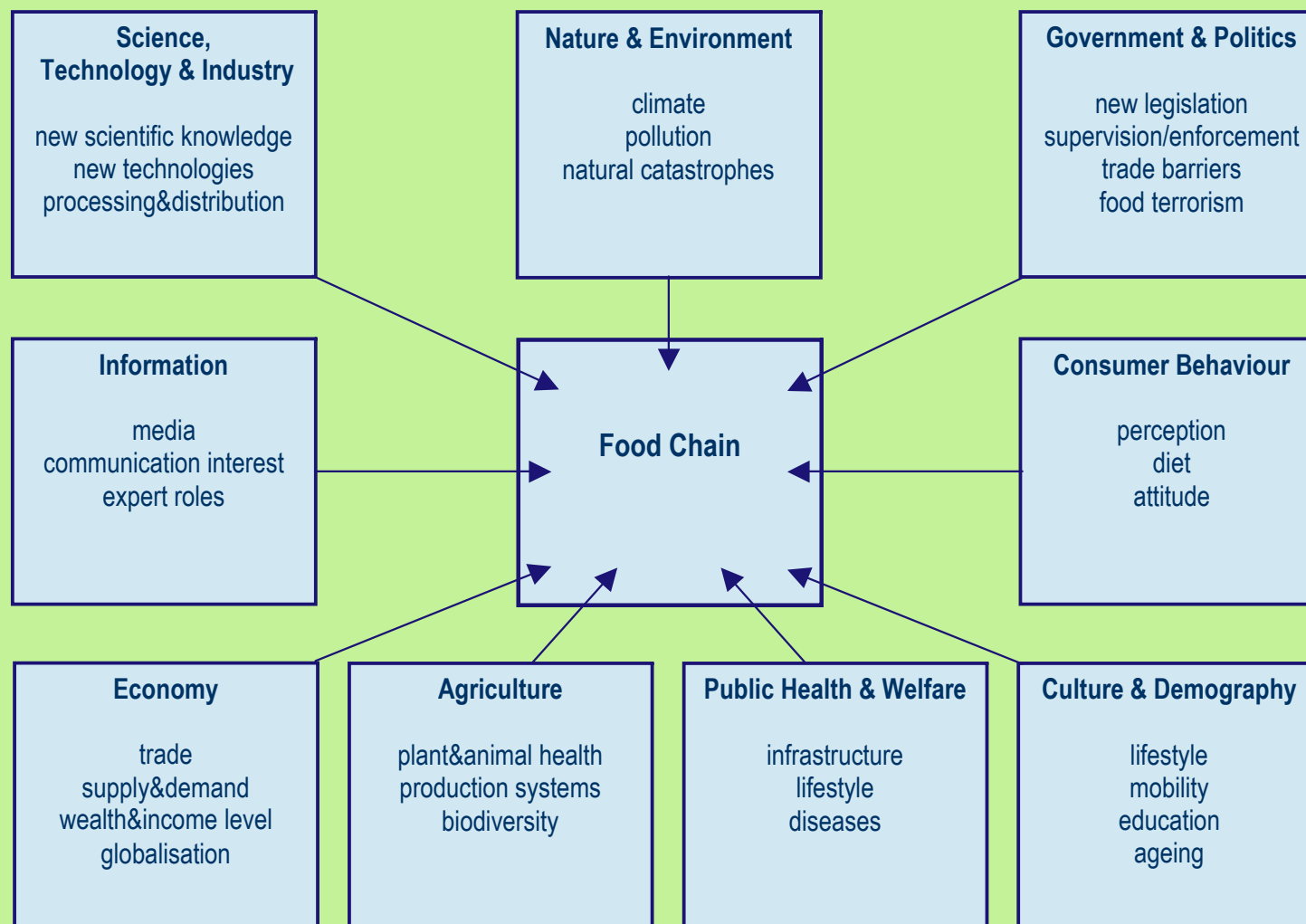


	Per serving
Fat	7.7g
Saturates	2.0g
Sugars	42.2g
Salt	2.0g

■ kcal ■ kcal/100g ■ kcal/100g



# Emerging Risks – the host environment (Ref Periapt project)



# Nanotechnology and food

