

# Glossary

## **Ambiguity**

A state of knowledge under which incomplete information or divergent informed understandings preclude full confidence in the bounding, partitioning, characterising or prioritising of the possible *outcomes*.

## **Assessment**

The process of gathering relevant information for the purpose of informing decision making concerning the relative merits and drawbacks of a range of different possible decision *options*.

## **Certainty**

A state of knowledge under which there exists no *incertitude*. In other words, knowledge is judged to be definitive and complete concerning both the nature and the eventuation of the *outcome* in question.

## **Concern Assessment**

A systematic, scientific process of gathering and analysing data on social responses to *threats*, insights on risk perception, and information on other specific ‘secondary outcomes’.

## **Dose**

The magnitude of *exposure* to a potentially *hazardous* agent or property.

## **Dose–Response Assessment**

A step in *risk assessment* involving the determination of the magnitudes of the causal relationships between the *dose* and the *response*.

**Evaluation**

The process of determining the value-based components of making a judgement on a given *threat*, as informed by *assessment* and as necessary for *management*.

**Exposure**

The magnitude, *likelihood* or frequency of contact between a (human or environmental) system of interest and a potentially *hazardous* agent or process.

**Exposure Assessment**

A step in *risk assessment* involving determination of qualitative forms or quantitative magnitudes of possible types of contact between human or environmental systems and potentially *hazardous* agents or processes.

**Food Safety Governance**

Includes, but also extends beyond, the three conventionally recognised elements of *risk analysis* – risk assessment, risk management, and risk communication. It comprises matters of institutional design, technical methodology, administrative consultation, legislative procedure, and political accountability on the part of public bodies, and social or corporate responsibility on the part of private enterprises. It also includes more general provision on the part of government, commercial and civil society actors for building and using scientific knowledge, for fostering innovation and technical competences, for developing and refining competitive strategies, and for promoting social and organisational learning.

**Flexibility**

A property of an individual decision *option* relating to the degree to which this is subject to deliberate intervention in order to effect structural or functional change in the face of changing circumstances.

**Food Safety Communication**

The process of two-way communication with *stakeholders* and the wider public in order to frame, inform and convey the rationale and outcomes of *assessment*, *evaluation* and *management*.

**Framing**

Relates to ‘risk assessment policy’ (in the terminology adopted by Codex Alimentarius) and is made up of three activities – ‘*review*’ of the technical and institutional conditions relating to food safety in its broadest sense; ‘*referral*’ of specific *threats* to the *assessment* authority for the process of *screening*; and the setting of ‘*terms of reference*’, upon which the *assessment* authority will base the *assessment*.

**Hazard**

A possible source of harm to human beings or the environment.

**Hazard Characterisation**

A stage in *risk assessment* involving the qualitative and/or quantitative evaluation of the possible magnitudes of *hazards*.

**Hazard Identification**

A step in *risk assessment* involving the determination of biological, chemical, and physical agents or properties capable of causing adverse health or environmental effects.

**Ignorance**

A state of knowledge under which there exists both *uncertainty* about *probabilities* and *ambiguity* over possible *outcomes*. In particular, ignorance involves exposure to the possibility of surprise.

**Incertitude**

A term used in a precise and specific fashion to refer collectively to real-world combinations of states of *risk*, *uncertainty*, *ambiguity* and *ignorance*.

**Indeterminacy**

A particular set of conditions contributing to a state of *ignorance*, under which relevant causal processes of the phenomena in question are open, dynamic, recursively linked to the observer or otherwise incompletely understood.

**Interface Institution**

A collective term that refers to the innovative mechanisms allowing communication and co-ordination between *assessment* and *management* activities (specifically the ‘*Internet Forum*’ and the ‘*Interface Committee*’ in its two variants). In this regard, the term ‘institution’ is used in a broad sense and does not relate to the formal EU institutions of the European Parliament, Council, Commission and Court of Justice.

**Interface Committee**

A food safety governance committee made up of assessors, managers and stakeholders that serves to act as an interface between *assessment* and *management* governance stages. The two variants of such a committee highlighted in this book are named the ‘Interface Advisory Committee’ and the ‘Interface Steering Committee’.

**Internet Forum**

The basic recommendation for creating a food safety interface structure; it is an online function which should act as a site for information dissemination and exchange of views associated with every stage in the governance process.

**Intrinsic property**

A quality that is intrinsic to a potentially *hazardous* agent or process and is of relevance in the *assessment* of the agent, but which is not necessarily of itself in any way *hazardous*.

**Irreversibility**

An *intrinsic property* of a potentially *hazardous* agent or process or its derivatives arising where one or more of the consequences of its use are not readily subject to restoration to the state preceding this use.

**Likelihood**

The frequency or plausibility of the chance that a defined outcome will in fact eventuate. Where this is expressed in quantitative terms, it is a *probability*.

**Management**

A term used to refer to the process informed by *assessment* of decision making, implementation of measures, and monitoring of how these measures perform in practice.

**Option**

A particular possible course of action that may be adopted in decision or policy making, either individually or as part of a *portfolio*.

**Outcome**

The consequences of a particular course of action or state of the world.

**Persistence**

An *intrinsic property* of a potentially *hazardous* agent or process or its derivatives arising from the propensity to be retained in the environment in an active form over long periods of time.

**Portfolio**

A mix of different decision *options* pursued concurrently.

**Precaution**

An approach to *assessment* and *management* prompted by the *precautionary principle*, under which deliberate attention is afforded as much to *uncertainty*, *ambiguity* and *ignorance* as to the narrower condition of *risk*.

**Precautionary Assessment**

The use of a wide variety of broad-based approaches at the earliest stages in an innovation or policy making process, extending beyond conventional quantitative, expert-based techniques of *risk assessment*.

**Precautionary Principle**

A legal and policy principle adopted in various forms under many national and international instruments, which holds important implications for the conduct of *assessment* and decision making under *uncertainty*.

**Presumption of Prevention**

The appropriate response to a certainly and unambiguously serious threat, in which *assessment* is bypassed and preventative *management* measures are prioritised.

**Probability**

A quantitative expression of the *likelihood* of some defined *outcome* in terms of a numerical value between 0 and 1, where 0 indicates impossibility and 1 indicates *certainty*.

**Resilience**

A property of a *portfolio* (or individual decision *option*) relating to the capability of sustaining functional value despite short term episodic shocks arising in the external environment.

**Response**

The severity and/or frequency of adverse environmental or health effects associated with an *exposure* to a potentially *hazardous* agent or property.

**Risk**

A state of knowledge under which the range of possible *outcomes* has been well characterised and there exists sufficient information confidently to determine the *probabilities* associated with these outcomes.

**Risk Analysis**

A term used (especially in the USA) to refer to the entire process of *hazard identification*, *risk assessment*, *risk management* and *risk communication*.

**Risk Assessment**

A range of *assessment* techniques involving systematic characterisation of *likelihoods* and *outcomes* (usually through the determination of *probabilities*) in order to inform the prioritising of different decision *options*.

**Risk Characterisation**

A step in *risk assessment* involving the collection and analysis of all relevant evidence deemed necessary for informed decision making on the tolerability or acceptability of a particular *risk*.

**Robustness**

A property of a *portfolio* (or individual decision *option*) relating to the capability of sustaining functional value despite long term enduring change in circumstances.

**Screening**

Involves the preliminary characterisation of the *threat* in question in order to select the most appropriate form(s) of *assessment*.

**Stakeholders**

The full range of social actors who stand to be affected by decision making or who perceive themselves to hold an interest in its *outcome*.

**Threat**

A term that may be used in a general sense such as to include reference to both *hazard* and *risk* depending on the context.

**Transparency**

A quality and principle of good governance such that the natures of motivating reasons and priorities, analytic–deliberative processes and *outcomes* are readily accessible to detailed scrutiny by stakeholders.

**Ubiquity**

An *intrinsic property* of a potentially *hazardous* agent or process or its derivatives arising from the quality of being widely distributed in space, across ecological systems, or throughout different environmental media.

**Uncertainty**

A state of knowledge under which the range of possible *outcomes* has been well characterised, but there exists insufficient information confidently to determine the *probabilities* associated with these outcomes.

**Vulnerability**

A propensity on the part of environmental or human systems, ecological taxa or social groups of being exposed to possible harm from a potentially *hazardous* agent or process.



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