

Risk Management in the 21st Century

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In this talk I will:

- Give some examples of falling levels of public trust in Europe
- Discuss how policy makers have reacted to this;
- Analyse these reactions;

Policy background:

Europeans have had their fair share of regulatory scandals

- Dioxins in Belgian chicken feed
- Tainted blood in France
- Mad Cow disease in UK and elsewhere
- Foot and Mouth Disease
- The UK MMR fiasco
- Led to public distrust towards policy makers

Led to a change in the making of regulation from:

* Old "consensus" model:

- Policymakers and industrialists met behind closed doors and made regulatory decisions.
- Elitist in nature because meetings involved heads of industry, senior representatives from unions, etc...
- Scientists had important role to play outlining the pros and cons of regulatory actions for elites.
- Citizen and stakeholder groups rarely consulted.

To a new model is based on:

- Greater use of precaution
- Greater focus on regulatory impact analysis
- Greater public and stakeholder participation
- Greater consideration for environmental and social values
- Greater transparency in regulatory strategies and decisions
- More accountability of the regulator
- More thought-out risk communication strategies
- Science plays less of a role, as scientific results are increasingly under question - scientists seen as just another stakeholder

A number of teething problems

Greater public and stakeholder participation

Self selection process

GM Nation?

North Black Forest (3.5% participated)

Involving stakeholders can lead to greater public trust

Feel ownership of the outcome

Stakeholders are also listened to

Yet involving stakeholders can lead to decrease in public trust

NGOs may have separate agendas

Swedish Chemical Inspectorate example

Regulatory strategies should be open and transparent

Seen as a need as many regulatory scandals are caused by a lack of transparency

However, transparency can also lead to:

Outsourcing of risk communication

Public having to make their own decisions

Transparency leads to policy vacuums (old days there was a consensus)

Regulators are slow off their feet (fire fighting)

NGOs issue managers

Transparency leads to scientific pluralism

New model: use of the precautionary principle and growth of risk aversion

New scandal around the corner - better safe than sorry

In some cases over regulation prevails
Commission's decision to ban imports of ground nuts

Leads to problems associated with risk-risk paradigm

Role of science

Should scientists be just another stakeholder?

Demotion of science caused by past scandals-e.g.

BSE

Policy makers in the past have not adequately taken into account lay knowledge;

Yet:

By not focusing on the scientific dimension sufficiently:

- Manufactured uncertainty

- MMR scare

- Ghost ship debate

- Farmed salmon scare

Conclusions

A new model of regulation is taking shape

This model has teething problems

- * Deliberation
- * Transparency
- * Precautionary principle
- * Role of science

We as academics now have to address these teething problems