

Climate Change: Two Key Questions

The actions of humanity are inducing climate change. What can we do about it?
Climate change will have many consequences. How will we cope with them?

Mitigation

This is planning ways to try to minimise the actual changes in the climate. Mitigation includes devising ways of reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, such as green energy technologies, energy-saving measures and carbon capture.

Adaptation

This is planning ways in which people and societies can cope with the results of climate change. Adaptation is an even broader area than mitigation; it includes managing water supplies, droughts and flooding; the growing and distribution of food; controlling the spread of disease and so on.

A Web of Disciplines

Most climate scientists have a background in physics, chemistry, meteorology, geography or climate modelling. But trying to answer the key questions involves a much wider range of disciplines.

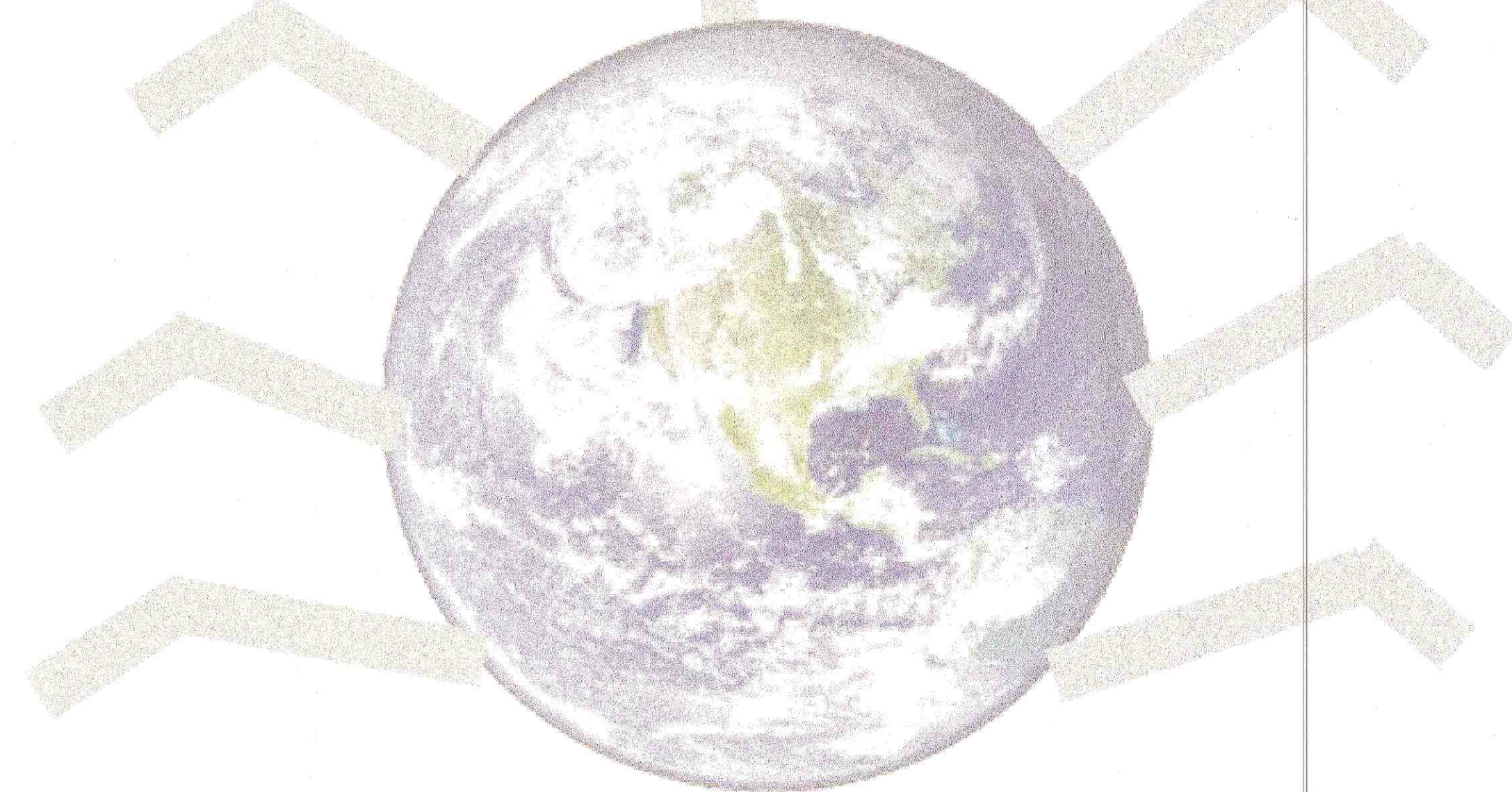
To interpret the science and the models, we need mathematicians, statisticians and philosophers.

To understand the implications of climate change for the societies we live in requires expertise in ecology, hydrology, agricultural science, medicine...

To understand how to tackle the problems we need economists, engineers, psychologists, social scientists.

None of these disciplines alone has enough information to understand the web of uncertainties and all their implications; this means that important uncertainties can get lost in translation. So it's very important to ensure that all the uncertainties are communicated between the various disciplines, and across the gap between science and policy.

Within the uncertainties about climate change, we can have sufficient confidence to support mitigation. But it is impossible to predict exactly what will be required of us in terms of adaptation. That's why we need to keep the lines of communication open throughout the vast web of disciplines that are necessary to understand and deal with the challenges of climate change.



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