



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

INFOSAN Advisory Group



**INTERNATIONAL FOOD
SAFETY AUTHORITIES
NETWORK**

1 May 2020

INFOSAN Advisory Group members bring unique knowledge, skills and experiences to complement the knowledge and skills of the Secretariat to more effectively govern the Network by offering innovative advice and dynamic perspectives. The purpose of the INFOSAN Advisory Group is to support INFOSAN activities by advising on ways to strengthen the network, including: contributing to strategic planning; guiding quality improvement; advocating for the network; supporting the Secretariat for technical consultation; and resource mobilization.

FAO and WHO through the FAO/WHO INFOSAN Management Group are responsible for selecting members by considering expertise related to INFOSAN activities and strategic planning ability. INFOSAN Advisory Group members act in their own capacity and do not represent their countries or institutions. The term for the INFOSAN Advisory Group members is set to be 4-years, renewable without limitation upon expression of continued interest by the Advisory Group Member, FAO and WHO.

The current INFOSAN Advisory Group members are introduced below.



Advisory Group



Mr Jan Baele

Mr Jan Baele started his career in 1994 in the Belgian food inspection service. In 2000 he left Belgium for Ireland and joined the European Commission at the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) where he was mainly responsible for the FVO's information management. At the end of 2002 he continued his career in Brussels at the Directorate-General for Health and Consumers (DG SANCO) of the European Commission as part of the RASFF (Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed) team taking on the further development of the RASFF system on the "three i's": information technology, implementing measures and international cooperation. In early 2011 he became responsible for the management of the RASFF as Head of Sector for RASFF in DG SANCO. In 2016, after DG SANCO turned into the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) and with subsequent reorganizations, he also became responsible for managing the Administrative Assistance and Cooperation and Food Fraud Networks.



Ms Jenny Bishop

Ms Jenny Bishop is the Team Manager Food Compliance Services Group – Liaison & Coordination, at the Ministry for Primary Industries, New Zealand. Her role is to assist in the delivery of effective food safety and suitability related compliance and enforcement services. This includes the coordination of food safety incidents and food recalls, developing and maintaining operating procedures, guidelines and enforcement processes and working with other New Zealand and international agencies on food safety and suitability issues. Prior to her position at the Ministry for Primary Industries, Ms Bishop was a member of the Food Safety and Zoonoses team at the World Health Organization (WHO), working at headquarters, regional and sub-regional/country levels.

Regional and sub-regional and country responsibilities focused on strengthening national food control systems in partnership with national agencies responsible for food safety. This included facilitating the development and implementation of the Western Pacific Regional Food Safety Strategy 2011-2015. Ms Bishop's position at WHO headquarters included the management and further development of INFOSAN with regard to strengthening the network and emergency response systems.



Advisory Group



Dr Peter Gerner-Smidt

Dr Peter Gerner-Smidt is a Danish MD, DSc, with specialty in clinical microbiology. Until his retirement in 2020, Peter was the chief of the Enteric Diseases Laboratory Branch in the Division for Foodborne, Waterborne and Environmental Diseases at Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, USA. In that capacity, he led the laboratory surveillance of bacterial foodborne infections in the United States. Before moving to the United States in 2004, he was the Head of the Danish Reference Centre for Enteric Pathogens and Listeria at Statens Serum Institut in Copenhagen. His research interests are the epidemiology, including subtyping and identification, of foodborne, zoonotic and enteric bacterial pathogens.

At CDC, he was leading the effort to implement whole genome sequencing for surveillance of bacterial foodborne infections and was involved in its implementation globally through the Global Microbial Identifier initiative and PulseNet International.



Dr Anne Gravett

Dr Anne Gravett, MSc, PhD, is the Head of a Stakeholder Engagement Receipt and Management Team in the Incidents unit of the United Kingdom (UK) Food Standards Agency (FSA).

She started her working life in the sphere of plant physiology and agronomy and then moved to food safety where she has stayed ever since. Within Government, Anne has had detailed policy roles, helping develop regulations, and operational roles, making sure businesses comply with the regulations. For example, she now runs a team whose role is to detect and respond to potential incidents and outbreaks impacting the UK.

Dr Gravett has a keen interest in information management systems / platforms and ran a national programme to develop and operate a system for collecting official control sample data across the UK, Local Authorities and control laboratories. More recently she has helped define UK mechanisms for cross border communication on food safety issues and the role of RASFF and INFOSAN. She has also been closely involved in the development of a UK food safety horizon scanning function, and has overseen the development of FSA systems to allow the receipt, management and exchange of information to provide a clearer view of risks in ever increasingly complex and global supply chains.



Advisory Group



Dr Mariam Alyousuf Alsuwaidi

Dr Mariam Alyousuf Alsuwaidi has been the Executive Director of the Control sector at the Abu Dhabi Agriculture and Food Safety Authority (ADAFSA) in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) since 2017. She was previously the Executive Director of the Policy and Regulation sector in ADAFSA for 8 years (2008-2016). She has led the establishment of the policy and regulatory platform pertaining to the agriculture and food safety domains within the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and effectively contributed in developing the strategic plan for the Authority as well as capacity building.

Dr Mariam has played an important role on the national and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) level in the food safety domain. Mariam has been a board member of the Zoo and Aquarium Public Institution in Al Ain in UAE since 2017. She has previously occupied the post of the Assistant Director General of the Food Safety Sector during 2006-2007. In 2005 she was the Executive Director of the Drug Division in ADAFSA. In 2004 she worked as Director of Research in Zayed Complex for Herbal Research and Traditional Medicine. In 2002, she worked in the United Arab Emirates University as Assistant Professor in the College of Science, Department of Chemistry.

Dr Mariam received her BSc in Chemistry and Physics from the UAE University in 1989, her MSc in Environmental Sciences from the UAE University in 1995 and her PhD in Chemistry of Medicinal Plants from the University of Portsmouth, United Kingdom, School of Pharmacy and Biomedical Sciences, in 2002. Mariam received her second Masters degree in Security and Strategic Studies, from the National Defense College in the UAE in 2016.



Dr Stic Harris

Stic Harris, DVM, MPH, joined the United States (US) Food & Drug Administration (FDA) in August 2017 as the new Director of the Coordinated Outbreak Response and Evaluation (CORE) Network. In this role, Dr Harris will oversee FDA's full-time staff dedicated to preventing, detecting, and investigating outbreaks related to human food, cosmetics, and dietary supplements.

Distinguishing himself as a leader in the world of outbreak response, Dr Harris brings with him an invaluable mix of clinical and policy experience. Formerly with the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch (AFHSB), the central epidemiologic resource for the US military, he was part of the Alert and Response Operations Team in the Integrated Biosurveillance division, where the work is focused on monitoring infectious diseases. Dr Harris' team was responsible for identifying, verifying, and delivering the latest information and assessments of outbreaks affecting the Department of Defense.

Prior to his four years at AFHSB, Dr Harris was a veterinary medical officer at the Department of Homeland Security. He was based in the Office of Health Affairs, where he was the liaison to One Health, the global initiative to unite human and veterinary medicine. He also worked on strategy for the National Biosurveillance Integration Center, which integrates information about biological threats to human, animal, plant and environmental health, and served as the acting Biodefense Advisor.

Dr Harris has a Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine from the University of Georgia, US, and a Master's in Public Health in molecular epidemiology and public health genetics from the University of Michigan, US.



Advisory Group



Dr Zainab Jallow

Dr Zainab Jallow is a molecular biologist and the Director General of the Food Safety and Quality Authority of The Gambia which is responsible for the overall official control of food safety and quality in The Gambia including imports and exports. Dr Jallow holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, USA, with a major in Biology (1998) and completed a Master's degree in Molecular Biology from Vrije Universiteit Brussels, Belgium (2002) before proceeding to the Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands for her PhD at the Department of Molecular Biology (2006).

Dr Jallow has been in her current position since January 2014. She leads a staff of thirty-four and is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Authority which is mandated to ensure the safety and quality of foods and animal feed, and is the current Codex Contact Point for The Gambia.



Ms Isabelle Laberge

Ms Isabelle Laberge is the Director of the Office of Food Safety and Recall of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). Her office coordinates national responses to food safety incidents in Canada in collaboration with Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada, and is the official liaison with international partners and organizations.

Ms Laberge holds a BSc and an MSc in food science, from Laval University and the University of Guelph, respectively. She has been with the CFIA for most of her career where she has had the opportunity to be involved in a broad range of activities such as the safety of fresh and processed fruits and vegetables; the development of regulatory programs, import controls, and good agricultural practices; and contributing to a number of guidelines and codes of practice of the Codex Alimentarius Commission as part of the Canadian delegation.



Advisory Group



Dr Caroline Merten

Dr Caroline Merten, a veterinarian specialised in food sciences, currently holds a position as Scientific Officer at the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in the Scientific Committee and Emerging risk unit in Parma, Italy. She is coordinating EFSA's Emerging Risk Exchange Network (EREN) and oversees multiple methodological research projects to identify emerging risks in the remit of EFSA's mandate. Before joining EFSA she has worked in the Emergency Prevention System for food safety (EMPRES) group at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome, Italy.

Dr Merten's responsibilities included planning and managing programs to strengthening prevention and response to food safety emergencies in developing countries, mainly in Africa and Asia and provided the FAO secretariat for INFOSAN. In her previous positions she worked as an exposure assessor in the Data Collection and Monitoring unit at EFSA and coordinated developmental programs to improve food safety in West Africa.



Professor Alan Reilly

Professor Alan Reilly has worked in the agri-food sector for over 40 years in the areas of food safety and official food control. He joined the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) in 1999 where he was responsible for setting up and managing this national food regulatory authority. Has was Chief Executive of the Authority from 2008 to 2015. Under his leadership, the FSAI became one of the most successful and effective food safety authorities responsible for inter-agency coordination of Irish national food control programme from production to consumption. Before joining the FSAI, he worked in the Food Safety Programme of the WHO in Geneva. He has also worked at the Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich, UK, and as a visiting associate professor at the College of Fisheries, University of the Philippines.

A graduate of University College Dublin (Ireland) and of Brunel University (UK), he is an Adjunct Professor at the Institute of Food and Health, University College Dublin and also an Adjunct Professor at the School of Food Science and Environmental Health, Technological University of Dublin, Ireland. He is a former member of the Advisory Forum of EFSA and a former Board Member of the Irish National Accreditation Board. He is the chairman of the Scientific Advisory Board of the European Food Information Council (EUFIC). He acts as an adviser to national and international food safety organizations such as the WHO, and FAO. From 2015 to 2018 he was a Senior Technical Advisor with the FAO Bangladesh Country Office assisting with the setting up and operationalization of the Bangladesh Food Safety Authority and setting up an undergraduate BSc course in food safety management at the Bangladesh Agricultural University. Professor Reilly is also a Fellow of the Institute of Food Science and Technology of Ireland.



Advisory Group



Mr Mark Samadhin

Mr Mark Samadhin is the Director of the Outbreak Management Division of the Centre for Foodborne, Environmental and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases, of the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). In consultation with federal, provincial and territorial partners, PHAC is responsible for providing coordination on enteric illness investigations that cross provincial or territorial boundaries, or includes Canada and another country or countries.

Mr Samadhin has spent most of his career in federal public service, engaged in work in a range of food safety priority areas, public health emergency management, and public health capacity and leadership development. Mr Samadhin also has an active interest in public health and food safety in the context of international development. Mark is a graduate of the University of Toronto and the University of Manitoba, Canada.



Dr Jørgen Schlundt

Dr Jørgen Schlundt has a Veterinary Degree (DVM) as well as a PhD in microbiology from Copenhagen University, Denmark. He has worked nationally and internationally on food science and food safety issues from 1983 to 1999, with a focus on microbiological risk assessment and the use of biotechnology in food production. For 3 years in this period Dr Schlundt headed the Bacteriology Section of the Veterinary Research Laboratory in Zimbabwe. From 1999-2010 he was Director of the Department of Food Safety and Zoonoses at the WHO, Geneva. From 2011-2014 he was Director, National Food Institute in Denmark, and from 2015 he has been Professor, Food Science and head of the Food Technology Centre at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

Dr Schlundt has participated in the international development of food safety Risk analysis principles, the development of the "WHO Five Keys to Safer Food", the creation of the Joint FAO/WHO expert meetings on microbiological risk assessment (JEMRA), the initiation of INFOSAN, the start-up of the WHO Advisory Group on Integrated Surveillance of Antimicrobial Resistance (AGISAR) and the first-ever estimation of the global burden of foodborne diseases. At NTU Jørgen continues his international activities, including as Chair of the Steering Committee of the Global Microbial Identifier, a new DNA-sequence-based system that has the potential to revolutionize microbiology.



Advisory Group



Mr Diego Varela

Mr Diego Varela started his professional careers as a food safety and quality consultant for the FAO regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. In that position he was part of a team that worked for the development of cooperation projects and provided advice and training to the 34 countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region on issues related to safe consumption of food, food legislation and trade, and fisheries and aquaculture development. Later he moved to the Chilean International Cooperation Agency, located in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, coordinating cooperation activities with Latin American and Caribbean countries in many fields, with a special focus on agriculture and food production.

Mr Varela is now the international affairs coordinator at the Chilean Food Safety and Quality Agency (ACHIPIA), which is located under the Chilean Ministry of Agriculture. His role includes overseeing the functioning of Codex at the national level, liaising with foreign agencies dealing with food safety, as well as with multilateral organizations such as FAO, WHO, Codex, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO), among others, and coordinating international cooperation for food safety. He currently chairs the Codex Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean and serves as a Focal Point for INFOSAN in Chile.