



**CONCLUSIONS OF THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS ON THE  
PROVISION OF SCIENTIFIC ADVICE  
AND  
GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR FOOD-RELATED SCIENTIFIC ADVICE  
(GIFSA)**

**SIDE EVENT  
30<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission**

**6 July 2007  
Plenary Hall, FAO HQ, Rome**

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**Chairperson: Jose Maria Sumpsi, Assistant Director-General, Agriculture and Consumer  
Protection Department**

**Secretariat: Ezzeddine Boutrif and Maria de Lourdes Costarrica (FAO)  
Jorgen Schlundt (WHO)**

**1. Introduction**

FAO and WHO, jointly and in partnership with other international organizations and institutions, provide scientific advice on food safety and nutrition through expert panels and committees, such as the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food additives (JECFA), the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meetings on Microbiological Risk Assessment (JEMRA) and the Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR), and through expert consultations on specific topics as required (e.g. food fortification, probiotics, foods derived from biotechnology and emerging issues).

At the request of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, FAO and WHO undertook a consultative process to consider way and means to improve the provision of scientific advice to Codex and to FAO/WHO Member Countries, and to assess the effectiveness of FAO/WHO responses. This process examined in particular issues related to the independence, transparency, timeliness, efficiency, integrity, sustainability and quality of scientific advice provided by the two organizations.

The aim of this side event was to present the results of the consultative process and to launch the Global Initiative for Food-related Scientific Advice (GIFSA) that would ensure the consolidation and sustainable funding of this activity in the coming years.

The side event permitted an open exchange of view and opinions on this important issue between FAO/WHO and delegates from member countries, member organizations and observers attending the 30<sup>th</sup> Session of the CAC.

The meeting agenda was adopted as attached in Annex 1.

Mr. Jose Maria Sumpasi gave the opening comments on behalf of FAO and WHO as attached in Annex 2.

Dr. Maria de Lourdes Costarrica presented the results of the FAO/WHO consultative process on the provision of scientific advice (Annex 3). Delegates were informed of the *FAO/WHO Framework for the Provision of Scientific Advice on Food Safety and Nutrition* which documents FAO/WHO procedures and practices in developing scientific advice.

Dr. Jorgen Schlundt provided information on the FAO/WHO Global Initiative for Food-related Scientific Advice, as attached in Annex 4.

Delegates were reminded that relevant information on the FAO/WHO programme for scientific advice was available in Codex/CAC documents ALINORM 07/30/9G - Other Matters arising from FAO and WHO; and in INF 3 – information on the FAO/WHO budget for 2006-07 and 2008-09 for the provision of scientific advice.

## **2. Summary of Discussion**

*USA:* Clarification was sought on the source of possible funds to the GIFSA – noting funds from foundations are not acceptable for the Codex Trust Fund but seem to be welcome for GIFSA.

*Secretariat reply:* It was confirmed that both funds were considered differently, and that funds from foundations will be possible to GIFSA as long as we have assurance that funds are completely independent (no conditions attached).

*EC:* Expressed high appreciation for FAO/WHO scientific advice and noted the extensive number of projects undertaken and wide range of advice – representing good value for money. The budget constraints facing FAO and WHO is a concern for the EC, as the lack of funds may compromise the quality of the scientific advice. FAO/WHO scientific advice is the life blood of many Codex standards. The EC gives high priority to the scientific advice aspect of Codex work and therefore can support the orientation to a more stable funding structure (through GIFSA), however the need for reassurance that this would not displace current and existing FAO and WHO sources of funding, be they regular programme or extra-budgetary was highlighted. FAO and WHO were encouraged to look at improved cooperation with EFSA and other similar bodies. Currently, EFSA is looking at the extent to which licence fees can be changed to private companies – it may be an option for FAO and WHO also.

*Secretariat reply:* Thanked the EC Representative for the support and welcomed further collaboration with EFSA. The issue of licence fees merits further consideration which would need to be checked with FAO and WHO legal offices. Funds to GIFSA should be in addition to the current funds available to FAO and WHO.

*Mali:* Expressed thanks for the information provided through the side event meeting. A challenge faced at national level in relation to scientific advice is holding meetings of local experts, and difficulty in organising local studies by experts to collect data and relevant information. Requested if technical assistance could be provided through the GIFSA fund.

*Secretariat reply:* Appreciated the concerns raised by Mali and confirmed that part of GIFSA funds may be used for capacity building activities related to data generation and collection, if agreed with donors. However it is not intended that GIFSA support broader capacity building activities to strengthen scientists as this is covered by FAO and WHO capacity building programmes and outside the scope of GIFSA.

*Morocco:* Complimented and thanked FAO/WHO for the work on the consultative process on scientific advice since 2004, and for the provision of scientific advice which is an important activity. Issue on involvement of experts from developing countries at FAO/WHO expert meetings – where they attend one meeting – are they likely to attend additional meetings?

*Secretariat reply:* Experts for a given meeting are selected in order to fulfil the terms of reference of the given meeting and ensure geographical and gender balance. Experts can be selected to attend more than one FAO/WHO expert meeting where their expertise is required. To maintain geographical representation, FAO/WHO are aware of the need to target and search for more experts from all countries who are interested in contributing to FAO/WHO expert meetings, and also meet the required selection criteria. This would include looking at innovative ways to improve rosters and disseminate calls for experts.

*Colombia:* One of the major concerns is data generation – quality, procedures and basic criteria followed. Not all data is of adequate quality and developing countries need to be aware of means to assure quality of all data.

*Secretariat reply:* FAO is currently assisting in data generation and further work in this area may be possible through the GIFSA fund to ensure there is a global basis for international scientific advice.

### **3. Concluding remarks from FAO/WHO Secretariat**

All delegates were thanked for their advice and useful comments. FAO and WHO will consider these in strengthening the FAO/WHO scientific advice programme, including the management of the GIFSA.

FAO/WHO scientific advice is good value, in part because it relies on the availability of experts released by their governments and institutions to contribute to FAO/WHO expert meetings. Together, they provide high quality scientific advice FAO and WHO collaborate with several institutions such as FDA, CDC, USDA, EFSA, but reiterate that data from all over the world is important. FAO and WHO in general have fewer experts from developing countries in the available pool of experts. There is a wish to rectify this, calls for experts are also disseminated to many Universities and professional societies. The possibility of licence fees would need to be checked with the WHO legal department.



**Informal Meeting on the Provision of Scientific Advice  
and its Sustainable Funding by FAO and WHO.**

**SIDE EVENT  
FAO HQ, Rome, 6 July, 16:45 – 17:30  
Plenary Room**

**Chairperson - Mr. José Maria Sumpsi, Assistant Director General,  
Agriculture Department, FAO**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Presented by</b>
<b>16:45 - 17:00</b>	<b>Introduction</b> <i>– Scope of Joint FAO/WHO scientific advice activities</i> <i>- Outputs of the FAO/WHO Consultative process</i> <i>- FAO/WHO Framework for the Provision of Scientific advice</i>	<b>FAO</b>
<b>17:00 - 17:10</b>	<b>Global Initiative for Food-related Scientific Advice (GIFSA)</b>	<b>WHO</b>
<b>17:10 – 17:30</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	

**Supporting documents –**

1. ALINORM 07/30/9G - Other Matters arising from FAO and WHO
2. FAO/WHO Framework for the Provision of Scientific Advice to Codex and member countries (available in English, French and Spanish)
3. FAO/WHO information note on GIFSA

**FAO/WHO SIDE EVENT ON THE PROVISION OF SCIENTIFIC ADVICE AND ITS SUSTAINABLE  
FUNDING BY FAO AND WHO.**

Draft Introduction remarks by J. M. Sumpsi, ADG-AG  
on behalf of FAO and WHO

**INTRODUCTION**

Distinguished Delegates;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

On behalf of FAO and WHO, I would like to welcome you to this meeting in which we will inform you about the results of the consultative process on scientific advice carried out by FAO and WHO and the new approaches that both organizations are taking, jointly to enhance this activity.

For over 50 years, FAO and WHO have been the international sources of scientific advice on matter related to food safety in food. The advice provides the essential scientific basis for the standards, guidelines and codes of practice developed by the *Codex Alimentarius* Commission and FAO and WHO member countries. Its relevance as a basis for policy and decision making in Codex is fully recognised and it is of paramount importance for the future work of Codex that you are planning to undertake.

The scientific advice is provided through expert panels and committees such as the Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants (JECFA), the Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR) and the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meetings on Microbiological Hazards in Food (JEMRA). However, the increased demand for scientific advice and diversification of the subject matters to be addressed in recent years, led to need for the consultative process to improve the FAO/WHO responses.

Therefore the 24<sup>th</sup> session of the *Codex Alimentarius* Commission requested FAO/WHO to implement a consultative process in an open and transparent manner, considering the opinion of all interested parties on this matter. This consultative process started in 2003, and resulted in the development of a framework for the provision of scientific advice through the harmonization of scientific approaches and operating procedures followed by both organizations. A Framework Document was developed to document principles, practices and procedures currently applied by both Organizations in preparing for and conducting expert meetings and consultations. This document further strengthens the independence, transparency and the scientific underpinning of the advice provided to Codex.

This new Framework for the provision of scientific advice is launched here today and is available for consideration of all interested parties.

In addition to this, FAO/WHO has established a top level management Group to guide and monitor the activities to be undertaken in the field of scientific advice, as well as their cost/efficiency. This, in addition to the regular contacts between the Joint FAO/WHO secretariats of committees and expert meetings, will enhance the quality, quantity and timeliness of scientific advice provided to Codex and member countries.

FAO and WHO are also looking into opportunities for enhancing the participation of experts from developing countries in expert meetings and consultations dealing with food safety and quality, including nutrition, and in the use of data from these countries in the elaboration of international scientific advice. We consider this as a crucial element in ensuring the global relevance of the advice provided. FAO and WHO are searching for new opportunities to create partnerships with governments and civil society in order to accomplish this objective.

One strategy in place for this purpose and which will also improve the timeliness of the advice to be provided, is the creation of the Global Initiative for Food-related Scientific Advice (GIFSA) that will also be presented to you in this session.

FAO and WHO welcome your valuable contribution on this matter.

Slide 1

*Provision of Scientific Advice  
for Food-related issues, and  
its Sustainable Funding  
through GIFSA*

A Joint FAO/WHO Initiative



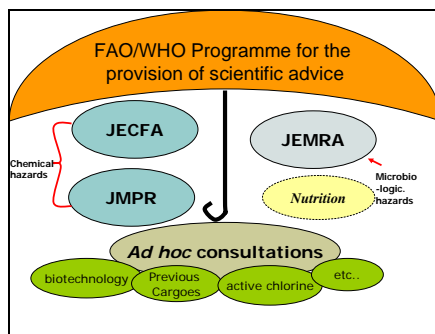
Slide 4

The process

- FAO/WHO planning meeting (May 2003)
- Electronic Forum (1 October – 14 November 2003)
- Joint FAO/WHO Workshop on the provision of scientific advice to Codex and member countries, January 2004
- Joint meeting "Enhancing developing country participation in FAO/WHO scientific advice activities", December 2004

In-depth process, stakeholder input

Slide 2



Slide 5

FAO/WHO Consultative Process

Requested by the 24<sup>th</sup> session CAC to FAO and WHO to conduct a "consultative process" to improve the quality, quantity and timeliness of scientific advice:

**OUTPUTS – to strengthen process and procedures**

1. **FAO/WHO Framework** on the provision of scientific advice on food safety and nutrition (general and specific procedures) – developed in collaboration with AGP, AGA, FIU, and relevant units in WHO
2. **Management** of requests for scientific advice and criteria for the prioritization
3. New approaches to **enhance participation of experts and data** from developing countries
4. Establishment of **GIFSA (Global Initiative for Food-related scientific advice)**

Slide 3

FAO/WHO provision of scientific advice to Codex and member countries


**Joint program managed and implemented by FAO and WHO**

- ✓ brings together experts to undertake risk assessments and provide scientific advice on relevant food safety issues
- ✓ a planned series of meetings, and ability to respond to emerging issues
- ✓ ensures diversity of scientific opinion, geographical, socioeconomic, and gender balance
- ✓ interacts with Codex committees and relevant working groups
- ✓ follows established procedures to ensure independence, reliability and transparency of the FAO/WHO scientific advice

Slide 6

Framework (1)  
– standard procedures

- Identification and prioritization of issues
- Call for data
- Selection of experts
- Implementation of meetings coordinated by FAO/WHO secretariat
- Final reports adopted at end of each session
- Distribution and subsequent use of the expert advice



**FAO/WHO Framework for the Provision of Scientific Advice on Food Safety and Nutrition**  
[http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/advice\\_en.asp](http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/advice_en.asp)

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Framework (2)  
- Core Principles

1. **Soundness** (experts and process)
2. **Responsibility** (accountability)
3. **Objectivity** (neutrality)
4. **Fairness** (throughout process and to all views)
5. **Transparency**
6. **Inclusiveness** (group balance – minority scientific opinion, skills and expertise)

Ref: Joint FAO/WHO Workshop on provision of scientific advice to Codex and member countries, January 2004

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GIFSA – Global Initiative for Food-related Scientific advice

*To ensure sustainable support for FAO/WHO work on scientific advice*

Slide 8

Improved FAO/WHO management

- **Criteria for prioritization of requests**
  - significance and urgency to advancing Codex texts
  - available scientific knowledge and data
  - definition of scope and request
  - indication of how advice to be used by Codex
- **Table** describing pending requests and ongoing actions
- **FAO/WHO senior management meetings**
- **Regular reports to CAC and CCEXEC** on FAO/WHO scientific advice

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Where to find further information

**Scientific Advice Programme**  
[http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/advice\\_en.asp](http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/advice_en.asp)

**Micro-organisms in Food (JEMRA)**  
[http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/micro\\_en.asp](http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/micro_en.asp)  
<http://www.who.int/foodsafety/micro/en/>

**Chemicals in Food (JECFA)**  
[http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/chemicals\\_en.asp](http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/chemicals_en.asp)  
<http://www.who.int/foodsafety/chem/en/>

**Biotechnology(GM foods)**  
[http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/biotechnology\\_en.asp](http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/biotechnology_en.asp)  
<http://www.who.int/foodsafety/biotech/en/>

Contact: [proscad@fao.org](mailto:proscad@fao.org) or [food\\_safety@who.int](mailto:food_safety@who.int)

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Developing country input – experts and data

- Awareness raising – targeted campaign
- Data issues – focus on requests from Codex and identified data needs to access existing data and identify data gaps
- Strengthen experts – focussing on rosters
- Networks, twinning, mentoring, reference centres

# Establishment of the FAO/WHO Global Initiative for Food-related Scientific Advice (GIFSA)

### Background

For over 50 years WHO and FAO have been the international source of scientific advice on matters related to the safety of food. The advice provides the essential scientific basis to food standards, guidelines and codes of practice developed by the Codex Alimentarius Commission. In addition, FAO/WHO scientific advice is used extensively by those responsible for food safety in FAO and WHO member countries. The preeminence of this advice is implicitly acknowledged by the World Trade Organization in its recognition of Codex standards, guidelines and other recommendations as the international benchmark for food safety requirements within the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures.

### New challenges

WHO and FAO devote significant resources to the provision of scientific advice in relation to food. However, in recent years there has been an increase in the demand for scientific advice for which WHO and FAO require additional resources in order to continue to fully respond in a timely manner with high quality scientific advice. This increase in requests is occurring at a time when both organizations are facing decreases in regular budget resources as well as in extrabudgetary contributions. In addition, the growing cost of providing global scientific advice and the broadening of the scope of such advice to include zoonotic diseases, biotechnology and nutrition as well as new emerging priority issues has not been adequately compensated for with either regular or extrabudgetary resources.

### Moving forward

As a result, FAO and WHO need to overcome a number of challenges in order to continue to support the technical consultations, workshops and related activities, which form the basis of FAO/WHO scientific advice. Over the past few years FAO and WHO have undertaken an evaluation ("consultative process") of their work on scientific advice in consultation with the relevant stakeholders. Now completed, the outputs of this evaluation aim to ensure the independence, quality, timeliness and sustainability of the FAO/WHO program on the provision of scientific advice. In order to specifically address the issue of sustainability of the provision of scientific advice, FAO and WHO are establishing a Global Initiative for Food-related Scientific Advice (GIFSA).

## **GIFSA**

The specific objectives of the GIFSA are:

- To mobilise technical, financial and human resources to support the FAO/WHO activities on the provision of scientific advice in food safety and nutrition
- To promote the timeliness of the provision of scientific advice by WHO and FAO, while ensuring the continuation of the highest level of integrity and quality; and
- To increase awareness of the FAO/WHO program of work on the provision of scientific advice, thereby ensuring broader participation from countries in the program and greater application of its outputs.

## **Characteristics of the Fund**

The main focus of GIFSA will be to establish a mechanism to facilitate the provision of extrabudgetary resources for scientific advice activities. Contributions will be accepted from governments, organizations and foundations in accordance with WHO and FAO rules. Two separate accounts will be maintained, one at WHO and one at FAO. A Committee will be formed to manage the GIFSA, and procedures are being developed to ensure that all resources provided through GIFSA will be allocated to activities in an independent and transparent manner, taking into consideration the criteria for prioritization of activities already agreed by Codex, FAO and WHO and the specific needs of FAO and WHO member countries.

## **For further information**

If you require additional information, or wish to contribute to the fund, please contact:

Maria de Lourdes Costarrica  
Senior Officer  
Food Quality and Standards Service  
Nutrition and Consumer Protection  
Division  
Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations  
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla,  
00185, Rome Italy  
Fax: + 39 06 570 54593  
Email: [proscad@fao.org](mailto:proscad@fao.org)

Jorgen Schlundt  
Director  
Department of Food Safety,  
Zoonoses and Foodborne Diseases  
World Health Organization  
20, Avenue Appia, CH-1211  
Geneva 27, Switzerland  
Fax: +41 22 7914807  
Email: [foodsafety@who.int](mailto:foodsafety@who.int)