



**Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations**



**World Health
Organization**

JOINT FAO/WHO EXPERT COMMITTEE ON FOOD ADDITIVES

General information on FAO/WHO calls for experts

Background

The Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) is an international expert scientific committee that is administered jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). It has been meeting since 1956, initially to evaluate the safety of food additives. Its work now also includes the evaluation of contaminants, naturally occurring toxicants and residues of veterinary drugs in food.

To date, JECFA has evaluated more than 1400 food additives, approximately 35 contaminants and naturally occurring toxicants, and residues of approximately 90 veterinary drugs. The Committee has also developed principles for the safety assessment of chemicals in food that are consistent with current thinking on risk assessment and take account of recent developments in toxicology and other relevant sciences.

General Areas of Expertise Required

For food additives, contaminants and naturally occurring toxicants, the Committee

- (i) elaborates principles for evaluating their safety;
- (ii) conducts toxicological evaluations and establishes acceptable daily intakes (ADIs) or tolerable intakes;
- (iii) prepares specifications of purity for food additives; and
- (iv) assesses intake.

For residues of veterinary drugs in food, the Committee

- (i) elaborates principles for evaluating their safety;
- (ii) establishes ADIs and recommends maximum residue limits (MRLs); and
- (iii) determines criteria for the appropriate methods of analysis for detecting and/or quantifying residues in food.

Co-ordinated Selection of Experts

FAO and WHO have complementary functions in selecting members for JECFA. FAO is responsible for selecting members to deal with the development of specifications for the identity and purity of food additives and the assessment of residue levels of veterinary drugs in food. WHO is responsible for selecting members to deal with the toxicological evaluations of the substances under consideration. Both FAO and WHO invite members who are responsible for assessing intake. The selection of members is made only after a careful consideration of the scientific credentials of the various candidates, and a balance of scientific expertise and other experience is considered essential. The selection process respects as well FAO and WHO policies on regional representation and gender balance. FAO and WHO meet the costs of experts' attendance at JECFA meetings.

Being a joint committee of FAO and WHO, the organizational framework of JECFA complies with the rules of both organizations. The selection process for experts is undertaken in mutual consultation by the Joint Secretariats. When calling for and selecting experts, FAO and WHO assure that selections complement each other.

Both organizations establish listings of experts, called *rosters*; appointments are for a period of four years. Experts are selected from those rosters for each meeting, in which capacity they either attend the meeting as members or assist the Secretariat with preparatory work before the meeting and usually participate in the meeting itself. Each member invited by WHO must also be a member of a WHO Expert Panel.

Categories and Definitions

- Members serve as full members of the Committee who assess draft documents, agree on safety assessments, and decide the content of the final report of a meeting of JECFA. Chairperson, vice-chairperson, and rapporteurs will be elected from this group.
- Drafting Experts assess available data and documentation, prepare drafts and contribute to the discussion during the meeting. According to WHO rules they are called *Temporary Advisers*, while FAO calls them as *FAO Consultants*.
- Resource Experts prepare on request of either Joint Secretary specific documents which will support the Committee in its preparatory work and during the meeting. They usually will not participate to the meeting itself.

Calls for Experts by Areas of Expertise

Interested individuals are invited to consult the following specific calls for experts, which are available either by clicking on them or by going to the respective web sites given below under *further information*.

- WHO: [Toxicological experts on food additives, contaminants, natural toxins, and residues of veterinary drugs](#)
- FAO: [Experts on manufacture and quality of food additives, determination and prevention of contaminants and toxins, definition of MRLs of residues of veterinary drugs](#)
- FAO/WHO: [Experts on exposure assessment for estimating dietary intake of chemicals in food](#)

Further information

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