

25 September 2012

Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure for the FAO/WHO Joint Expert Meetings on Nutrition (JEMNU)

Purpose: The Joint Expert Meetings on Nutrition (JEMNU) is established to provide scientific information and advice to the committees of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme (i.e. Codex) or Member Countries. JEMNU aims to provide relevant information in a timely and cost effective manner; therefore, the meetings will be convened when there is a specific request from a Codex body or Member Countries. There will not be a permanent secretariat or expert body.

Secretariat: FAO and WHO will provide a joint secretariat to undertake the necessary evidence review and prepare and convene JEMNU meetings. Each organization will contribute professional and administrative staff and meeting facilities. Secretariat members shall be FAO and WHO employees on regular posts; consultants hired to work on the preparation for the meeting will not be considered as members of the secretariat or experts. Non-staff may be listed in the report as advisors or resource persons and they shall provide the declaration of interest described below.

Funding: With the exception of the secretariat services described above, evidence reviews and JEMNU meetings will be funded through extra budgetary funds. The Codex committees or Member Countries which are requesting advice shall collaborate with FAO/WHO in identifying sources of funds for a meeting. Travel or other expenses incurred by the secretariat and experts will be paid through the extra budgetary funds.

Procedures are set up as a series of steps.

Step 1: A Codex body or Member Countries may request information and scientific advice from JEMNU. The request should be formulated in a standard format by the concerned Codex Committees or Member Countries. FAO/WHO will assist in formulating the PICO (Population, Intervention/indicator, Comparator, and Outcomes) questions to answer the request by the concerned Codex Committee or Member Countries and discuss the feasibility of the proposal with those requesting the information and scientific advice.

Step 2: Extra budgetary funds will be sought through the joint efforts of the Codex committee and FAO/WHO. Funds may be obtained from the Global Initiative for Food-related Scientific Advice (GIFSA) or other sources. The sources of funding for each meeting must be accepted by both FAO and WHO. Following receipt of the funds, the FAO/WHO joint secretariat will then be set up to make a work plan and budget. Funds for the required systematic reviews and evidence retrievals, and joint meeting will be obtained and deposited with FAO/WHO.

Step 3: FAO/WHO will jointly identify the relevant experts needed to provide guidance for responding to the request for specific scientific advice. A call for experts will be sent out through FAO and WHO channels (e.g. websites, Codex focal points). All applications will be screened by the FAO/WHO joint secretariat. All potential experts must fill in the declaration

of interest forms which will be reviewed and evaluated by both FAO/WHO including respective Legal Offices before they are considered to be the members of the JEMNU to carry out the work required to respond to the request by the Codex Committees or Member Countries. All of the experts must be accepted by both FAO and WHO. In selecting experts, consideration will be given to geographic representativeness and gender.

Step 4: When necessary the FAO/WHO joint secretariat will convene a meeting to plan the systematic review of the evidence and gathering of data to address the questions. Expenses incurred for the work will be paid through the extra budgetary funds.

Step 5: The FAO/WHO joint secretariat will convene a meeting of JEMNU to review the evidence and provide an objective assessment of the quality of the evidence through GRADE. See WHO manual for further details (add link).

Step 6: The secretariat will prepare a report summarizing the evidence and conclusions of the JEMNU.

Step 7: The experts will review the report through electronic means and teleconferences, if required.

Step 8: The JEMNU secretariat will provide the Codex committee or Member Countries with the final report. The Codex committee will consider the conclusions and scientific advice provided by JEMNU for formulating Codex guidelines and standards, where appropriate.

Step 9: The report or aspects of the report may be used for Codex. FAO and WHO may establish an agreement to produce a separate report.

Step 10: The JEMNU will be disbanded when the requested work by the Codex or Member Countries is fulfilled. No experts will be considered as a permanent member of JEMNU.

Step 11: A record of the process will be kept by each organization.