



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



**World Health
Organization**

JOINT FAO/WHO EXPERT COMMITTEE ON FOOD ADDITIVES (JECFA)

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 2600 food additives, approximately 50 contaminants and naturally occurring toxicants, and residues of approximately 95 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 scientific areas such as microbiology, biotechnology, exposure assessment, food chemistry including analytical chemistry and assessment of maximum residue limits for veterinary drugs.

General Areas of Expertise Required

For food additives, including enzymes and flavouring agents, contaminants and naturally occurring toxicants, the Committee

- (i) elaborates principles for evaluating their safety and for quantifying their risks;
- (ii) conducts toxicological evaluations and establishes acceptable daily intakes (ADIs) or tolerable intakes for chronic exposure and other guidance values for acute exposure;
- (iii) assess the performance, quality and applicability of analytical methods;
- (iv) prepares specifications of purity for food additives; and
- (v) assesses exposure of populations to chemical substances in food.

For residues of veterinary drugs in food, the Committee

- (i) elaborates principles for evaluating their safety and for quantifying their risks;
- (ii) establishes ADIs and other guidance values for acute exposure
- (iii) recommends maximum residue limits (MRLs) for target tissues; and
- (iv) determines appropriate criteria for and evaluates methods of analysis for detecting and/or quantifying residues in food.

Co-ordinated Selection of Experts

FAO and WHO have complementary functions in selecting experts to serve on the Committee. FAO is responsible for selecting members with chemical expertise for the development of specifications for the identity and purity of food additives, for the assessment of residue levels of veterinary drugs in food, and to assess the quality of the monitoring data. WHO is responsible for selecting members for the toxicological evaluations of the substances under consideration, in order to establish ADIs or other relevant guidance values, or to give a quantitative estimate of the health risk. Both FAO and WHO invite members who are responsible for assessing exposure. JECFA is not a standing

committee. The selection of members for each meeting is made after a careful consideration of the scientific credentials of the various candidates, and a balance of scientific expertise and other experience that is considered essential considering the items on the agenda of the meeting. 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 five 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 Food Safety Advisory Panel and is appointed by the Director General of WHO.

Categories and Definitions

- Members** serve as full members of the Committee who assess draft documents, agree on safety assessments and other relevant decisions, 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 draft documents and contribute to the discussion during the meeting. According to WHO rules they are called *Temporary Advisers*, while FAO calls them as *FAO Experts*. These experts are part of the Secretariat.

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 (2011 – 2015, available at: <http://www.who.int/foodsafety/chem/jecfa/experts/en/index.html>)
- FAO: [Experts on manufacture and quality of food additives, determination and prevention of contaminants and toxins, determination of maximum residue limits \(MRLs\) 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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