



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



**World Health
Organization**

Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on the Risks and Benefits of Fish Consumption

Call for Experts

Introduction

The 29th Session of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, Codex Alimentarius Commission held in Geneva, Switzerland, 3-7 July 2006, requested FAO and WHO to consider holding an FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on the health risks associated with methylmercury and dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs in fish and the health benefits of fish consumption, based on a recommendation from the 38th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants (CCFAC).

In order to better address the request from Codex, FAO/WHO held a small expert group meeting to get advice on these issues and the most appropriate way forward. The expert meeting noted that a large number of national studies and assessments were available and that these could form the basis for further development of assessment models and for the evaluation. However, a quantitative risk-benefit approach may not be possible at the international level, so other options may need to be explored.

FAO and WHO are now planning an Expert Consultation on the risks and benefits of fish consumption, and are seeking information and data, in particular relevant recent studies and benefit/risk assessments. Both published and unpublished technical information may be submitted.

Timing

The Expert Consultation is tentatively planned for 25th to 29th of January 2010.

A Call for Information and data has been published separately.

Confidential and/or unpublished data

FAO and WHO recognize that some of the information and relevant data which is now required may be unpublished or of a confidential nature. With regard to unpublished information and data, this remains the property of the author for subsequent publication by the owner as original material. Unpublished confidential studies that are submitted will be safeguarded in so far as it is possible to do so without compromising the work of FAO and

WHO. Specific issues relating to confidentiality should be discussed directly between the information and data owners and FAO/WHO. For these and other issues please contact FAO and WHO at the contacts provided below.

Scope of the Expert Consultation

Assessment of the health risks associated with consumption of fish, produced from marine and fresh waters by capture fisheries and aquaculture, with respect to risks from (methyl) mercury, dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs, such as neural and cardiovascular development of children as well as other vulnerable groups.

The main goals of the consultation are to consider the risks of dietary exposure to methyl mercury, dioxin and dioxin like PCBs from consumption of fish for vulnerable groups of the population, i.e. women of childbearing age, the foetus, infants and small children and high consumers, versus the nutritional and health benefits of consumption of fish.

The main aspects to be considered are:

Assessment of the health risks associated with of fish consumption with respect to methylmercury, dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs, including the neural and cardiovascular development in infants and children as well as other effects in the vulnerable groups of the population.

Assessment of the nutritional and health benefits associated with fish consumption, not only with focus on long chain polyunsaturated fatty acids (DHA and EPA), but also including knowledge regarding benefits of amino acids and micronutrients (vitamins, minerals) of marine origin, and knowledge of possible benefits of other nutrients (e.g. taurine).

Comparison of the health risks and health benefits of fish consumption in a systematic way, if possible by using quantitative risk/ benefit assessment models.

Previous work and assessments carried out on national/regional and international level will form the primary basis for the evaluation.

Objectives of the Expert Consultation

The Expert Consultation will assess the health benefits and risks associated with consumption of fish. Based on existing evidence, the main objective will be to give advice, targeted at vulnerable population subgroups, on a neutral basis, in order to assist countries and their institutions, policy makers, health authorities, fisheries bodies, public health advisors, etc., to balance the risks and the benefits of fish consumption.

The elements that should be considered by the Expert Consultation include:

- The human health risk of fish consumption related to neurological development and cardiovascular diseases, with focus on methylmercury but also considering the impact of dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs;
- The nutritional and health benefits of fish consumption, that may be related to the prevention of cardiovascular disease, prostate cancer, immunological disorders, osteoporosis and to the outcome of pregnancy and subsequent neurological and

cardiovascular development of infants and children, focusing on long chain n-3 fatty acids, other nutrients contained in fish and considering the interaction between nutrients from fish and nutrients in the background diet;

- Assessment of risks and benefits;
- Fish consumption patterns related to region, ethnic groups, culture, traditions, habits, economy, social factors, media, education, etc.; and
- Potential effects related to increased or reduced consumption of fish.

Expertise required for the consultation:

General requirements:

- Advanced university/college degree in epidemiology, biology, biochemistry, microbiology, food technology, food science, human nutrition, toxicology, analytical chemistry, organic chemistry, fisheries, public health, statistical/mathematical sciences, or other related scientific fields.
- Experience in risk/benefit analysis.
- At least five years experience in relevant fields.
- Scientific publications in peer-reviewed journals, in particular, relevant publications within the most recent ten years.
- Good knowledge of the English language, in writing and speech, as the Consultation language is English and no funds for translation or interpretation are available.
- Leadership or invited participation in national or international scientific bodies, committees, and other expert advisory bodies pertinent to the scope of the Consultation.

Specific requirements:

Experience / knowledge in one or more of the below areas:

- Qualitative and quantitative approaches in evaluating risks from exposure to contaminants in the diet, in particular methylmercury, dioxin and dioxin-like PCBs, from fish.
- Qualitative and quantitative approaches in evaluating risks and benefits of nutrient intakes on biochemical and physiological endpoints.
- Chemistry and toxic effects of methylmercury, dioxin and dioxin-like PCBs in the human body, particularly pre- and post-natal brain development, and including the physiological and psychological development of children.
- Benefit/risk analysis, in particular in relation to population-based dietary habits and health from both epidemiological and experimental perspectives.
- Communicating the risk/benefit of fish consumption.

Selection of Experts

FAO and WHO place great value on the technical quality and independence of the participating experts as well as on the transparency of its selection process. Both

organizations have developed well-defined procedures for selecting experts that promote the excellence and independence of opinions provided.

Applicants' curriculum vitae will be reviewed on the basis of the criteria listed above by a selection panel consisting of three or more individuals including at least two independent, internationally recognized external experts appointed by FAO or WHO. The highly qualified individuals selected from the applicants will be listed in an expert roster that will be used by FAO and WHO to invite experts to the Consultation.

In selecting experts FAO and WHO will consider, in addition to scientific and technical excellence, diversity and complementarity of scientific backgrounds, and balanced representation from geographic regions, including developing and developed countries as well as gender. Selected experts may be required to assist in the preparation of background papers.

Appointment of Experts

The experts will be invited to participate only in their individual scientific capacity. An expert will not represent the government of country of which he or she is a citizen, or the institution with which he or she is associated. The experts designated to participate in such meetings will not receive any remuneration, however, travel costs, subsistence allowance and other related expenses will be the exclusive responsibility of FAO and WHO.

Applications

Interested applicants should submit their curriculum vitae including a description of their education, work experience and a list of peer reviewed publications relevant to the factors indicated above (please do not include reprints in your submission unless specifically requested at a later date). Applicants must have a good working knowledge of English as the Expert Consultation and correspondence will be in English only.

Before participating in the Expert Consultation, the selected experts will be required to declare any potential interests associated with the subjects and substances that will be evaluated through completion of a standard form developed by FAO or WHO. They will be asked to indicate in writing any interest (financial and intellectual) on their part or that of their spouse that may affect their scientific independence as experts including one or more of the following conditions: employment (past or present) by any commercial enterprise or private or civil sector association; a recipient of research or other study grants from such enterprises or associations; or shareholdings in commercial enterprises active in fields related to food safety. These declarations will be evaluated and retained by the Joint Secretariat. In addition, a confidentiality undertaking is also to be signed to ensure proper handling of dossiers and proprietary information.

Deadline

Applications should be sent to FAO or WHO by **15 August 2009** to the addresses below, electronic applications are preferred. Applications received after that date will be evaluated if additional expertise is required and the evaluation and selection will follow the same procedure as described.

Submissions of Applications

WHO Jørgen Schlundt Director Department of Food Safety, Zoonoses and Foodborne Diseases World Health Organization 20, Avenue Appia CH-1211 Geneva 27 Switzerland Tel (+41) 22 791 34 45 Fax (+41) 22 791 48 07 E-mail: schlundtj@who.int	FAO Grimur Valdimarsson Director Fish Products and Industry Division Fisheries and Aquaculture Department Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Via delle Terme di Caracalla 00153 Rome, Italy Tel: (+39) 06 5705 Fax: (+39) 06 5705 E-mail: Grimur.Valdimarsson@fao.org
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