Terms of Reference for the Technical Advisory Group on Food Safety: safer food for better health

The Technical Advisory Group (the “TAG”) will act as an advisory body to WHO through providing technical guidance and inputs to support WHO’s efforts and work in food safety by analyzing the current and future challenges in agri-food supply chains, advising innovative solutions and approaches with greatest public health benefits. Eventually, the aim is to strengthen national food safety systems and lower the burden of foodborne illnesses.

I. Functions

In its capacity as an advisory body to WHO, the TAG shall have the following functions:

a. To identify and describe current and future challenges along the agri-food supply chain;

b. To advise WHO on strategic directions to be prioritized to improve national food safety system;

c. To identify interventions and activities to improve food safety for WHO’s analysis;

d. To advise WHO on the update of the Global Strategy for food safety and any other matters (implementation, monitoring and evaluation) relating to the Strategy;

e. To advise WHO on the establishment of a global taskforce on food safety impact measurement to measure progress towards the implementation of the global strategy and achieving Sustainable Development Goals; and

f. To advise WHO on requests specified in any current and future food safety-related resolutions and/or decisions adopted by the WHO governing bodies.

II. Composition

1. The TAG shall have up to 20 internationally renowned experts as members\(^1\), including the Chairperson, who shall serve in their personal capacities to represent a broad range of research and policy areas relevant to food safety, i.e.:
   - Surveillance and detection for foodborne pathogens, contaminants and diseases
   - Food safety emergency preparedness and response
   - Microbiological and toxicological food safety risk analysis
   - Food law and regulations
   - Food frauds
   - New food technologies and research in agricultural science

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\(^1\) Members serve as full participants and partake in the decision-making process of the meeting in which they are involved.
2. Members of TAG, including the Chairperson, shall be selected and appointed by the WHO DG. The Chairperson’s functions include the following:
   • To chair the meeting of the TAG;
   • To liaise with the WHO Secretariat between meetings.
In appointing a Chairperson, consideration shall be given to gender and geographical representation.

3. Members of the TAG shall be appointed to serve for a period of 2 years and shall be eligible for reappointment. A Chairperson is eligible for reappointment as a member of the TAG, but is only permitted to serve as Chairperson for one term. Their appointment and/or designation as Chairperson may be terminated at any time by WHO if WHO’s interest so requires or, as otherwise specified in these terms of reference or letters of appointment. Where a member’s appointment is terminated, WHO may decide to appoint a replacement member.

4. TAG members must respect the impartiality and independence required of WHO. In performing their work, members may not seek or accept instructions from any Government or from any authority external to the Organization. They must be free of any real, potential or apparent conflict of interests. To this end, proposed and actual members shall be required to complete a declaration of interests form and their appointment, or continuation of their appointment, shall be subject to the evaluation of completed forms by the WHO Secretariat, determining that their participation would not give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interests.

5. Following a determination that a proposed member’s participation in a TAG would not give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interests, the proposed member will be sent a letter inviting them to be a member of TAG. Their appointment to the TAG is subject to WHO receiving the countersigned invitation letter and accompanying terms and conditions.

6. As contemplated in paragraph II.4 above, WHO may, from time to time, request TAG members to complete a new declaration of interest form. This may be before a TAG meeting or any other TAG-related activity or engagement, as decided by WHO. Where WHO has made such a request, the TAG member’s participation in the TAG activity or engagement is subject to a determination that their participation would not give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest.

7. Where a TAG member is invited by WHO to travel to an in-person TAG meeting, WHO shall, subject to any conflict of interest determination as set out in paragraph II.6 above, issue a letter of appointment as a temporary advisor and accompanying memorandum of agreement (together “Temporary Advisor Letter”). WHO shall not authorize travel by a TAG member, until it receives a countersigned Temporary Advisor Letter.
8. TAG members do not receive any remuneration from the Organization for any work related to the TAG. However, when attending in-person meetings at the invitation of WHO, their travel cost and per diem shall be covered by WHO in accordance with the applicable WHO rules and policies.

III. Operation

1. The TAG shall meet at least once a year. However, WHO may convene additional meetings. TAG meetings may be held in person (at WHO headquarters in Geneva or another location, as determined by WHO) or virtually, via video or teleconference. TAG meetings may be held in open and/or closed session, as decided by the Chairperson in consultation with WHO.
   a) Open sessions: Open sessions shall be convened for the sole purpose of the exchange of non-confidential information and views, and may be attended by Observers (as defined in paragraph III. 3 below).
   b) Closed sessions: The sessions dealing with the formulation of recommendations and/or advice to WHO shall be restricted to the members of the TAG and essential WHO Secretariat Staff.

2. The quorum for TAG meetings shall be two thirds of the members.

3. Representatives from intergovernmental organizations as well as non-governmental organizations in official relations with WHO, and members of other technical advisory groups of the WHO may be invited by WHO to attend TAG meetings, or parts thereof. For the purposes of these terms of reference, such invites will be referred to as “Observers”. WHO, at its discretion, may request Observers to complete a declaration of interests form prior to attending any TAG meetings. Observers shall attend meeting of the TAG at their own expense and be responsible for making all arrangements in that regard. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Observers may be asked to present the views and policies of their organization. Observers will not participate in the process of adopting decisions and recommendations of the TAG.

4. The TAG may decide to establish smaller working groups (sub-groups of the TAG) to work on specific issues. Their deliberations shall take place via teleconference or video-conference. For these sub-groups, no quorum requirement will apply; the outcome of their deliberations will be submitted to the TAG for review at one of its meetings.

5. TAG members are expected to attend meetings. If a member misses two consecutive meetings, WHO may end his/her appointment as a member of the TAG.

6. Reports of each meeting shall be submitted by the TAG to WHO. All recommendations from the TAG are advisory to WHO, who retain full control over any subsequent decisions or actions regarding any proposals, policy issues or other matters considered by the TAG.

7. The TAG shall normally make recommendations by consensus. If, in exceptional circumstances, a consensus on one particular issue cannot be reached, minority opinions will be reflected in the meeting report.
8. Active participation is expected from all TAG members, including in working groups, teleconferences, and interaction over email. TAG members may, in advance of TAG meetings, be requested to review meeting documentation and to provide their views for consideration by the TAG.

9. WHO shall determine the modes of communication by the TAG, including between WHO and the TAG members, and the TAG members among themselves.

10. TAG members shall not speak on behalf of, or represent, the TAG or WHO to any third party.

11. TAG meetings will be conducted in the English language. All TAG documentation, including reports and working documents, will be provided in English.

IV. Secretariat

WHO shall provide secretariat for the TAG, including necessary scientific, technical, administrative and other support. In this regard, the WHO Secretariat shall provide the members in advance of each meeting with agenda, working documents and discussion papers. Distribution of the aforesaid documents to the Observers will be determined by the WHO secretariat.

V. Information and documentation

1. Information and documentation to which members may gain access in performing TAG related activities shall be considered as confidential and proprietary to WHO and/or parties collaborating with WHO. All proposed members will be required to sign an appropriate confidentiality undertaking and provisions on ownership.

2. TAG members and Observers shall not quote from, circulate or use TAG documents for any purpose other than in a manner consistent with their responsibilities under these Terms of Reference.

3. WHO retains full control over the publication of the reports of the TAG, including deciding whether or not to publish them.