

WHO guideline development group on ultra-processed foods

Terms of Reference

WHO has brought together experts from all over the globe, with a wide range of relevant expertise and diverse perspectives to develop a guideline on the consumption of ultra-processed foods. The terms of reference for this guideline development group (GDG) are based on the requirements and principles of the WHO guideline development process.¹

Composition of the GDG

Experts have been selected based on the need for different types of expertise and diverse perspectives, and in line with the requirements of the WHO guideline development process for balanced gender and geographical representation. Selected experts have been invited to contribute only in their individual capacity and will not represent their government, institution or other organizations.

Following the processes required for external experts providing normative input, all experts that were considered for membership in the GDG were required to declare any interest relevant to the topics for guideline development via the standard WHO declaration of interest (DOI) form and to complete confidentiality undertaking forms. The experts selected to participate in the GDG will be asked to update their DOI forms prior to each meeting and at any time a change takes place. Any changes to DOI will be reviewed by the WHO secretariat and appropriate action taken, if needed. At each meeting, any changes to DOI will be communicated either orally or in a document accessible to all experts. The list of participating experts, a summary of relevant interests disclosed by such experts, and any appropriate mitigation measures taken by WHO relating to the management of conflicts of interests, will be reported publicly (in the guideline document) in accordance with WHO practice.

GDG member responsibilities

GDG members will contribute to the following activities as part of the guideline development process:

- Attend GDG meetings
- Provide input into the scope of the guidelines, including target populations of interest
- Help to develop the key questions that will guide evidence collection and synthesis
- Prioritize important outcomes for decision-making and develop recommendations
- Examine and interpret the evidence, with explicit consideration of the overall balance of desirable and undesirable consequences
- Formulate recommendations taking into account benefits, harms, values and preferences, feasibility, equity, acceptability, resource requirements, and other factors, as appropriate

¹ <https://www.who.int/groups/guidelines-review-committee>

- Help to formulate statements that will help end-users understand the recommendations (“Remarks”)
- Identify implementation considerations and research gaps
- Provide feedback on the final guideline document

Processes

The GDG will meet a minimum of twice, but as many times as needed to complete development of the guideline. Meetings are anticipated to be held virtually, but for any in-person meetings that are held, travel costs and per diem will be provided by WHO in accordance with the applicable WHO rules and policies. No honoraria or other forms of remuneration will be provided. All meetings will be held in English only and all documents will be prepared and provided in English. Every effort to accommodate the schedules of all GDG members will be made when scheduling meetings, and all GDG members are expected to attend as many meetings as possible. Excessive absence may be grounds for removal.

No less than two thirds of the expert group should be present for any decision-making process to take place. All decisions will be made in preference by consensus, with ample time given for discussion and deliberation. In the event the group cannot reach consensus, members will vote on the issue anonymously. A minimum of three-fourths of the complete expert group voting in favour of the decision will be required for the approval of the proposed decision. Any minority or divergent opinions will be recorded in the guideline. These procedures will be communicated at the beginning of every meeting.

The work of the GDG will be facilitated by a guideline development methodologist who will provide expert procedural guidance on various elements of guideline development, including approaches to evidence-informed decision making, use of the Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation (GRADE) framework to assess certainty in the evidence, incorporating contextual factors into the decision-making process, etc. The methodologist is not part of the GDG and will not participate in the actual decision-making of the GDG, including the formulation of recommendations.