



Call for applications – submission due: 4 November 2024  
**FAO global meeting on Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS)**  
**Food safety and water surveillance within the One Health framework**  
Red Room, FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy, 6-8 May 2025

### **Background**

Whole genome sequencing (WGS) identifies the DNA sequences of an organism, significantly contributing to a better understanding of variations within and between species of various foodborne and waterborne pathogens. Because the genomic information of such species significantly varies among different geographical areas, having a global collaboration would lead to a strong contribution to make WGS an extremely effective preventive control and monitoring tool for foodborne and waterborne disease cases, which are sickening estimated 600 million people annually around the world. The true effectiveness of WGS in global monitoring and trend analysis has been once again strongly realized during the recent pandemic time, and thus WGS is expected to make a significant difference in improving the relevant work in various technical fields such as food safety, antimicrobial resistance (AMR) monitoring and water safety and quality.

### **FAO initiatives**

The FAO Agrifood Systems and Food Safety Division has several ongoing initiatives on application of WGS for food safety management, and through technical partnerships with some regulatory agencies and academic institutions, various technical and policy documents have been developed to aid capacity development for countries, particularly for low- and middle-income countries. The FAO Land and Water Division also has an ongoing project on the use of WGS for water quality, irrigation and on-farm controls for achieving global food safety and nutritional security. Given the momentum and familiarity to WGS gained by a wide range of stakeholders from the experience of the global pandemic, as well as the current progress and needs expressed by the countries, FAO will organize a global meeting on WGS, scoping in the topics of food safety and water safety within the One Health framework to bring together government officials, public health professionals, researchers, development partners and other stakeholders involved.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of the FAO global conference are to

- Capture and discuss the current landscape of food safety and water surveillance efforts;
- Highlight existing initiatives aiming at better understanding foodborne and waterborne pathogens, and the relevance to improving human/water health;
- Raise awareness on concrete benefits of the use of WGS for food safety / water management at the national level;
- Discuss the way forward on global collaborative actions including data generation and data sharing; and
- Discuss and form a technical task force to conduct follow-up activities to compile evidence-based data and information to draft a white paper illustrating where we stand and what needs, particularly from low- and middle-income countries, can be addressed to improve human/water health.

### **Multisectoral approach**

While the primary target audience for the conference is the government decision makers working in the area of food safety and water surveillance, the meeting will welcome speakers and participants with various technical backgrounds from various sectors including government / public, international / intergovernmental, academic / research NGO/civil society and private sectors. Because of the limited number of available seats in the meeting room, selection of participants will be made by FAO, based on the criteria below.

### **Application process**

Those who are interested in applying for participation in the conference can complete [the online application form<sup>1</sup>](#) by the end of the day, **Monday, 4 November 2024** in the applicant's local time zone. Selection will be made by 23 December 2024 and the results will be informed only to the successful applicants in January 2025. Please note that even if the applicant confirms that s/he would be able to cover the travel expenses, s/he will need to be selected by FAO to register to the conference in order to obtain the official FAO invitation letter. The registration instructions will be provided to the selected participants only.

### **Travel support**

A limited amount of funding has been made available by donor agencies to support some of the selected participants' travel costs. Applicants from low- and middle-income countries who are not in the private sector are eligible to apply for the support, but the priority will be given to the applicants who works in low-income countries.

### **Selection criteria: priorities**

1. Priority will be given to the applicants who have ongoing initiatives, partnerships and/or projects with FAO.
2. The primary target audience (regulatory officials working in the area of food safety and water surveillance) will receive priority.
3. The level of relevance of the topic of WGS to the applicant's position/work will be assessed. Based on the assessment, the relevance will be ranked and this criterion will be used as a basis when determining the final selection.
4. As the conference will be held in English only, the sufficient level of English proficiency will be required.

### **Selection criteria: overall balance**

1. While multiple participants from the same country are welcome, the maximum 30 people per country may be selected.
2. Geographical / regional balance will be considered.
3. Gender balance will be considered.
4. Sector balance (please see under "multisectoral approach" section) will be considered.
5. While food safety and water surveillance are two main topics in the conference, inclusion of diversity in technical background to cover various One Health topics will be considered.

### **Selection criteria: travel support**

1. Travel support will not be provided to the applicants who works in high-income countries.
2. Private sector participants are not eligible to apply for travel support.
3. Travel support will primarily be limited to the applicants who resides in low-income countries.
4. Considerations can be given to the applicants from middle-income countries, depending on the economic status of the affiliated institutions / country contexts.

### **Note**

Queries on the process can be sent to [Masami.Takeuchi@fao.org](mailto:Masami.Takeuchi@fao.org). FAO gratefully acknowledge the financial and technical support received from governments of Australia, Canada, European Union, Singapore and United States of America.

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<sup>1</sup>Online application form: <https://forms.microsoft.com/e/iC653R67ny>