



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



**World Health  
Organization**

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

**FAO, HQ, Rome, Italy: 9-13 October 2023**

### **Call for Experts**

**Issued in March 2023**

#### **Background**

The thirty-eighth Session of the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants requested the Codex Alimentarius Commission, at its twenty-ninth Session in 2006, to seek scientific advice from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) on the risks and benefits of fish consumption: specifically, a comparison of the health benefits of fish consumption with the health risks associated with the contaminants methylmercury and dioxins (defined here to include polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins [PCDDs] and polychlorinated dibenzofurans [PCDFs] as well as dioxin-like polychlorinated biphenyls [PCBs]) that may be present in fish. The Codex Alimentarius Commission request was driven by growing public concern in recent years regarding the presence of chemical contaminants in fish. Over the same period, the multiple nutritional benefits of including fish in the diet became increasingly clear. In response to that request, FAO and WHO held an Expert Consultation on the Risks and Benefits of Fish Consumption from 25 to 29 January 2010 at FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy. Data on levels of nutrients and specific chemical contaminants (methylmercury and dioxins) in a range of fish species were reviewed, as well as scientific literature covering the risks and benefits of fish consumption. The Report of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on the Risks and Benefits of Fish Consumption (<http://www.fao.org/3/ba0136e/BA0136E.pdf>), was published in 2010.

Since then, new scientific evidence has become available, and FAO and WHO are currently making preparations to convene an expert consultation to review the new evidence, and update the conclusions and recommendations of the 2010 report as needed. An expected outcome of the expert consultation will be a framework for assessing risks and benefits of fish consumption, which will also provide guidance to the Codex Alimentarius Commission in its risk management functions.

#### **Specific objectives of the Expert consultation**

The Consultation has 3 main objectives.

- i) Review the results of recent systematic literature reviews on risks and benefits of fish consumption.
- ii) Draw conclusions regarding the health benefits and risks associated with fish consumption.
- iii) Recommend a series of steps that Member States should take to better assess and manage the risks and benefits of fish consumption and more effectively communicate these risks and benefits to their citizens.

The deliberations of the meeting, including all the relevant data, the conclusions and recommendations will be consolidated into a report with contributions from all the experts.

### **Timing**

The FAO-WHO Expert Consultation is planned for 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> of October 2023. It will take place at FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy.

### **Objective of this call**

The objective of this call is to identify qualified scientists willing to serve as experts in the forthcoming expert consultations to develop scientific advice for guiding the elaboration of appropriate Codex texts and to advise Member States. According to the procedures described in the FAO/WHO framework for the provision of scientific advice on food safety and nutrition<sup>1</sup>, the FAO/WHO Secretariat establishes a list of qualified scientists, and then selects relevant experts from this list according to the process outlined below. These experts will assist the Secretariat with preparatory work and/or participate in the meeting.

### **Basic and essential required qualifications of experts**

#### *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 in the last ten years.
- Good knowledge of the English language, in writing and speech, as the Consultation will be conducted in English only.
- Leadership and/or 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:

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: <https://www.fao.org/3/a1296e/a1296e.pdf>

- Qualitative and quantitative approaches in evaluating risks from exposure to contaminants in the diet, in particular methylmercury, dioxin and dioxin-like PCBs, from fish.
- The role of selenium (Se) with regard to the health effects of methylmercury.
- Health benefits from fish consumption.
- 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 (including both wild capture and farmed fish), in particular in relation to population-based dietary habits and health from both epidemiological and experimental perspectives.

#### **Criteria and process for selection of experts**

Applications will be reviewed by a panel of three or more individuals from FAO and WHO. to assess whether the applicant meets the qualifications and has relevant expertise in the subject matter areas listed above. Declaration of Interest (DOI) forms will be reviewed. Any potential or perceived conflicts of interest disclosed in the DOI form will be considered in the selection process. In addition to subject matter expertise, the selection of experts will also take into consideration diversity and complementarities of expertise, a balance of genders and balanced representation from FAO-WHO geographic regions.

#### **Applications**

Interested applicants should submit the following documents via the submission form using the following link: <https://extranet.who.int/dataformv3/index.php/577393>. DOI and confidentiality undertaking forms can also be found at this link.

1. Curriculum vitae including:
  - a detailed description of education and work experience;
  - a list of peer reviewed publications relevant to the topics above; and
  - two personal references from individuals that have knowledge of their professional qualifications.
2. Completed Declaration of Interests (DOI) forms
3. Signed Code of Conduct and Confidentiality Undertaking forms

Please do not include reprints in your submission unless specifically requested at a later date.

#### **Additional information**

Selected experts will be invited to contribute only in their individual capacity as experts, with responsibility for providing independent advice to FAO and WHO, and will not represent their government or institution. Applicants must have a good working knowledge of English as the Expert Consultation will be held in English only, and all background documents and correspondence will be prepared in English. Travel and

per diem to attend the any face-to-face meetings will be covered by FAO and WHO. No honoraria will be provided.

**Deadline**

Applications must be received by 7 April 2023 to be eligible for consideration. Applications received after that date will only be evaluated if additional expertise is required, following the evaluation and selection process as described.

**Correspondence:**

Please direct any questions to:

1. Esther Garrido Gamarro, Fisheries and Aquaculture Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy. Telephone: +39 06 570 56712, Email: [Esther.GarridoGamarro@fao.org](mailto:Esther.GarridoGamarro@fao.org)