



Food and Agriculture
Organization of
the United Nations



World Health
Organization

FAO/WHO Expert Meeting to elaborate Scientific Advice to support risk management activities on Viruses in Food

Call for experts

Background:

In recent years viruses have been increasingly recognized as important causes of outbreaks of foodborne disease. Implicated foods tend to be those that are minimally processed such as bivalve molluscs and fresh produce. In addition, many of the documented outbreaks of viral foodborne illness have been linked to contamination of the food by an infected food handler.

While in many countries viruses are now considered to be an extremely common cause of foodborne illness, they are rarely diagnosed as the analytical and diagnostic tools for such viruses are not widely available. However, much progress has been made recently in terms of the methodology available for detection and identification of viruses in both food and clinical samples. Such developments should contribute in assessing the actual burden of foodborne disease linked to viruses as well as improving strategies for the prevention and control of viruses in foods and the associated risk.

At the international level the Codex Alimentarius is considering the types of risk management tools which it can develop to assist countries in their efforts to protect consumer health from foodborne viral illness. In considering its priorities for future work the 38th session of the Codex Committee for Food Hygiene agreed that viruses were an important food safety concern. However, at that time the committee considered that it did not have an adequate scientific understanding of the field in order to make an informed decision on the priority product-virus combinations on which future work should focus. In order to gain better insight in this subject and facilitate the decision making process, the committee requested FAO/WHO to convene an expert meeting on “Viruses in Food”, the output of which would be considered by the 39th session of the committee in 2007.

FAO and WHO in collaboration with RIVM and VWA in the Netherlands are therefore organizing an expert Meeting in May 2007 to review the current state of knowledge on viruses in food and their public health and trade impact with the objective of providing advice and guidance on the virus: commodity

combinations of particular concern, the issues that need to be addressed by risk managers and the options available to them as well as the identification of additional scientific information needed to provide risk based advice on managing the risks associated with viruses in foods.

The Terms of Reference provided by the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene to FAO and WHO for this work are as follows:

- To review the current state of knowledge on viruses in food and their public health and trade impact;
- To review availability and feasibility and the practical consequences of using analytical methods for detecting viruses; and
- To review existing risk profiles (including the state of knowledge on current or future risk management options) and other relevant information pertinent to the evaluation of risks associated with viruses in food.

In order to fulfil the above terms of reference the specific objectives of the Expert meeting are:

- To provide the basis for the identification and selection of viruses and product combinations to be addressed in future risk management work;
- To identify the key issues currently faced by risk managers in terms of addressing the problems associated with viruses in food;
- To provide guidance on the different options for management strategies that will be proposed by CCFH and the impact of possible options considered by CCFH in the development of a risk management document;
- To provide guidance on the scientific advice needed for such activities as well as a suggested road map for future work; and
- To identify the data and information needed (data gaps) for risk assessment activities. This would provide guidance for research needs designed for and targeted for the provision of scientific advice.

Venue: Bilthoven, The Netherlands

Dates: 21- 24 May 2007

Expertise required

FAO / WHO are seeking people with expertise in one or more of the following areas:

- Viral contamination of food, including sources and routes in the different steps of the food production chain;
- Impact of conditions along the food-chain on survival of the virus and possible control measures;
- Epidemiology of foodborne virus diseases including the burden of foodborne viral diseases;

- Available methods of virus detection and potential to collect data on the basis of these methods (including methods of sampling and sample transport and storage); and
- Management and control of foodborne viruses and the challenges therein.

While FAO/WHO are primarily seeking people working in the area of viral food safety, those working on other aspects of virology are also invited to apply. Due to limited resources, the meeting will be conducted in English only.

Application:

Applications should be made using the electronic application form available at <http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/roster/rox?lang=en&>. A curriculum vitae including a description of education, work experience and a list of publications or other relevant types of technical output may also be attached.

For any further information on the application procedure or problems with access/using the electronic application form please use the contact details below.

Process for Selection of Experts:

All applications will be reviewed by a panel of four individuals (one from FAO, one from WHO and two independent, internationally recognized, experts agreed by both FAO and WHO) to determine whether the applicants meet the following criteria:

- Technical expertise and professional recognition in the specified areas as listed above;
- Publications, presentations in the specified areas;
- Ability to participate in group discussions; and
- Ability to draft clear and concise reports.

All applicants meeting these criteria will be considered in the selection of experts for the consultation.

In doing so FAO/WHO will consider the following:

- Diversity of experience and scientific backgrounds;
- Conflicts of interest (each participant will be asked to complete a 'Declaration of Interest' form); and
- Representation from different geographic and economic regions and gender balance.

(See 'Important Notes' below for additional information)

Deadline:

In order to be considered for this consultation applications must be submitted on or before 15 March 2007.

Contact Information:

For further information and to submit an application please contact either:

Food Quality and Standards Service

Attention: JEMRA
Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
00153 Rome, Italy
Telephone: + 39 06 5705 3614
Facsimile: + 39 06 5705 4593
E-mail: jemra@fao.org

Department of Food Safety, Zoonoses and Foodborne Diseases

Attention: JEMRA / Jenny Murcott
World Health Organization
Avenue Appia 1211
Geneva 27
Switzerland
Telephone: + 41 22 791 3557
Facsimile: +41 22 791 4807
E-mail: foodsafety@who.int

Important Notes:

Experts shall be selected to participate in the expert meeting in their personal capacity and not as representatives of their country or of the institution for which they may be employed.

Selected experts will be asked to complete a 'Declarations of Interest' form in order to determine if any potential conflicts of interest exist.

FAO and WHO seek to have representation from all geographic regions including developing and developed countries.

FAO and WHO seek to have a balanced representation of women and men.

Funds for translation are not currently available. At the present time meetings and correspondence will be carried out in the English language. Applicants should have a good working knowledge of English.

Selected experts may be required to assist in the preparation of background papers for the consultation, participate in a four day meeting and provide feedback after the meeting to facilitate finalisation of the report.

Travel expenses and a per diem will be paid to all selected experts participating in the expert meeting.

No reimbursement is provided for work undertaken.