

2024 GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GFORSS MEMBERS

Report on Accomplishments

27 March 2024 @ 12:00 GMT

OVERVIEW

Over the past 3 years, since its creation, GForSS has worked to promote the various food regulatory science disciplines through the development and dissemination of knowledge, creation of networks, investments in food regulatory science competency development and the advancement of resources of potential use for the benefit of the food regulatory science community.

SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Several initiatives are presently underway or under development, they include:

KNOWLEDGE GENERATION AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

A. Codex Outreach Program

GForSS continues to implement its Codex outreach initiative, aiming to enhance codex capacities in the Near East, Asia and the South West Pacific regions. Implementation of this initiative is accomplished by GForSS, in collaboration with LandoLakes Venture 37, the Risk Analysis and Regulatory Excellence Platform of Laval University (PARERA) and partnerships with regional coordinators of the targeted region, where possible, as well as with regional standardization organizations.

This initiative is funded by the United States Codex Office (USCO), United States Department of Agriculture (US DA). This initiative continues to contribute to the development of Codex communities of practices in the targeted regions and countries, including the development of training material on Codex procedures and protocols, the development of analysis of agenda items in relation with upcoming Codex committees, the development of approaches to strengthen Codex programs in the targeted countries and regions.

Outputs of this initiative can be reviewed via the following website links:

- Arab Codex Initiative @ <https://gforss.org/networks/arabcodex/>
- Asia Codex Initiative @ <https://gforss.org/networks/asiacodex/>
- SWP Codex Initiative @ <https://gforss.org/networks/swpcodex/>

B. Food Laboratory Training Activities

A food laboratory capacity building program was initiated by GForSS. The impetus was funding provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (US DA) and the United States Agency for International Development (US AID). Support was also provided by R-Biopharm and the Waters Corporation.

Initial training on methods to analyse contaminants using chromatography based techniques, including LC-MS/MS for chemicals in food. Over 160 participants from African countries, selected by their respective competent authorities, took part in on-line and practical training over the past period. This training resulted in the development of resource materials that can be used freely and will be made available on the GForSS E-Learning Platform.

C. Structuring Food Laboratory Networks and Communities in Targeted Regions

GForSS contributed to structuring food laboratory communities and developing relevant regional sections of AOAC INTERNATIONAL in order to take advantage of the resources offered by the broad network of AOAC INTERNATIONAL, the leader of standardization of laboratory science used for regulatory purposes. Such efforts have been carried out in the Arab and South West Pacific regions.

Additionally, GForSS has implemented a web interface with the Arab Section of AOAC INTERNATIONAL, including the Section's foundations, team members and governance documents (By-Laws and Executive meeting records) – <https://gforss.org/networks/arabaoac/>.

D. Development Food Laboratory Science Foundations

GForSS continues to invest in knowledge dissemination and practical implementation of specific projects supporting the foundation of risk assessment, such as the development of guidance on the collection and management of occurrence data and food consumption information.

E. Development of a Centre for Food Laboratory Science

A Centre for food laboratory science was established in collaboration with the Jordan Armed Forces Military Laboratories to support the creation of a Centre of Excellence in food laboratory science for training, capacity development, application development and generation of food occurrence data.

F. African Food Regulatory Authorities Forum (AFRAF)

A forum gathering representatives of African food competent authorities, at the heads of Authority Level, created by the African Union Commission, in partnership with the National Food Safety Authority of Egypt (NFSA), various food regulatory competent authorities in Africa and International Partners held its inaugural meeting, gathering 200+ participants from 38 African countries, 6 UN organizations and 8 non-African nations.

AFRAF aims to facilitate information exchange and shape an agenda of collaborative initiatives to support food regulatory harmonization across the African continent. A website was developed which can be referenced for additional details: <https://afraforum.org/>.

KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION

G. E-Learning Activities

GForSS, in collaboration with partners, invested in the development of an e-learning platform (<https://learning.gforss.org/>) that has contributed to the design and delivery of several training programs in food regulatory science. More efforts will be deployed to standardize training courses, enable their certification and offer a more diverse variety of disciplines to benefit GForSS members and the broader food regulatory science community.

H. Webinars

Webinars were periodically organized on various themes of food regulatory science spanning from food contract material, food fraud or food consumption data collection. A YouTube channel was launched (<https://www.youtube.com/c/GlobalFoodRegulatoryScienceSociety>) and hosted a series of programs on food regulatory knowledge dissemination under the title of GForSS TV.

NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

I. Annual Meetings on Food Regulatory Science

Two of such meetings were convened: one in 2021 and another in 2022, via hybrid mode. Other meetings will be planned using this technology, enabling the broadest collaboration and meeting participation.

DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

J. Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs)

GForSS discussed and signed a series of MoUs with partners from the international food regulatory science community to support the development and implementation of joint programs and contribute more effectively to joint initiatives.

MoUs were signed with:

- The Ministry of Health of Republic of Lebanon.
- The Ministry of Agriculture and National Institute of Food Safety of Suriname (NIVS).
- The Military Laboratories of the Jordan Armed Forces.
- The Arab Industrial Development, Standardization and Mining Organization (AIDSMO).

Other agreements are in discussion with several organisations from the Arab and African regions.

MEMBERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT

K. GForSS Members and Partners (<https://gforss.org/team/>)

GForSS continues to grow its membership and intends to develop additional resources to attract more members and partners. The membership has grown to over 200 members, across 45 countries, spanning all continents – the aim being to continually diversify contributions of the organisation.

L. GForSS Organizational Management (<https://gforss.org/governance/>)

All meetings of the GForSS management structures (Board, Executive Committee) are made available publicly and can be consulted online.

M. GForSS Procedures and Protocols (<https://gforss.org/governance/>)

The organization's procedures and protocols continue to be developed to strengthen management practices and to equip it with solid foundations enabling effective management of its programs.