

## MEETING FOR THE DISCUSSION OF THE ARAB PROFICIENCY TESTING PROGRAM WITH THE SFDA REPRESENTATIVES

### Record of Discussions

15 August 2024 - 12PM GMT+1

On Thursday, August 15, 2024, a virtual meeting was held via Zoom to discuss the initial actions required to launch the Arab Proficiency Testing (PT) Program. The meeting featured representatives from both the SFDA and the Arab Section of AOAC INTERNATIONAL.

#### Meeting Participants

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|--|------------------------|
| <b>Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA)</b>      | Mohammed A. Al Mutairi |
|  | Somaiah K. Almubayedh  |
| <b>GFORSS/Arab Section of AOAC INTERNATIONAL</b> | Samuel Godefroy        |
|  | Hajar Tiglifet         |
|  | Amine Kassouf          |

The meeting was initiated with a brief overview by Dr. Amine Kassouf, who:

- summarized the latest discussions between the Arab Section and the PT program leadership from AOAC INTERNATIONAL.
- elaborated on the proposal to establish an Arab PT program under the aegis of AOAC INTERNATIONAL,
- reviewed the results from the recent survey that was launched among Arab stakeholders, and
- highlighted the primary objective of advancing this initiative through the implementation of a PT program on infant formula in the Arab region.

Prof. Samuel Godefroy subsequently detailed the future course of action, which involves advancing this initiative through a pilot project conducted in collaboration with reference and expert laboratories. He mentioned that the strategy will proceed along two parallel tracks.

The first track will focus on the infant formula PT program, which is considered feasible given the anticipated ease of sample accessibility, the relatively straightforward nature of the analytes and the potential for collaboration with infant formula providers or manufacturers, who may support the initiative.

He emphasized also the importance of establishing a Steering Committee comprising key opinion leaders and representatives from laboratories with the highest level of expertise, particularly those accredited to manage PT programs (ISO 17043), and he mentioned that the SFDA is a primary candidate due to its leadership role in the region.

The second parallel track addresses a key priority identified by the Arab Section of AOAC INTERNATIONAL: the standardization of gluten testing methods. Prof. Samuel noted that efforts are currently underway to establish standardized methods (recognized officially in the Arab Region) to determine gluten content in gluten-free foods. This initiative is being supported by training programs launched in Jordan and Oman, aiming at enhancing expertise in this field. With the increased interest in gluten testing in the Arab region, PT programs will also be required for this area of testing in the region. The Arab Section with its regional partners is aiming at playing a leadership role in collaboration with AOAC INTERNATIONAL towards developing and implementing a PT program targeting gluten in gluten-free foods.

Dr. Mohammed expressed strong support for the programs, highlighting their benefits that extend beyond Saudi Arabia to the entire Arab community. He emphasized that the primary objective of these endeavors is to enhance laboratory capabilities across the Arab region, thereby contributing to future advancements and improvements in the field.

#### Next Steps

Recruiting interested parties to join the Steering Committee, in order to help implementing the infant formula PT program, in partnership with AOAC INTERNATIONAL.