PROPOSED AGENDAS

Session 1: Promoting Regional and Global Food Collaborations in Food Regulatory Science

Monday, 17 November 2025 • 11:00-13:00 • Abu-Dhabi A

**Co-organized by the Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GFoRSS)*

A. SETTING THE SCENE: THE NEED FOR GREATER COLLABORATION

Chair: Prof. Samuel Godefroy, President, GFoRSS / IUFoST; Professor, Food Risk Analysis and Regulatory Policies, Laval University, Canada

Discuss the increasing complexity of the global food safety and regulatory environment — with evolving hazards, innovation in food systems, and expanding international trade.

Participants will recognize that while numerous institutions, expert committees, and regional initiatives contribute to food regulatory science, collaboration remains fragmented.

This limits agility and the efficient use of global scientific capacity in risk analysis.

Key Points:

- Food safety and risk assessment capacities are unevenly distributed worldwide.
- Global standard-setting bodies (e.g., Codex Alimentarius, JECFA, JEMRA) increasingly require rapid, data-driven scientific input.
- There is a need for more structured collaboration connecting regulators, academia, and independent experts to mobilize expertise and data globally.

B. REVIEW OF EXISTING COLLABORATIVE FRAMEWORKS

Moderator: Dr. Majlinda Lahaniatis, Deputy Director, International Cooperation, BfR, Germany, Co-Chair ILMERAC

This section will briefly examine the main existing mechanisms of collaboration that can serve as building blocks toward more integrated global cooperation.

Examples include:

- International expert advisory bodies (e.g., JECFA, JEMRA, JMPR) providing scientific evaluations for Codex and WHO/FAO decision-making – which need further support.
    - Global disciplinary societies and networks in food regulatory science (e.g., GFoRSS – disciplinary group of IUFoST) fostering competency development and coordination.
- Emerging national / regional centres of excellence to strengthen analytical and risk assessment capacity.

Take-away:

There is a need to plan for the pending challenges associated with the scarcity of resources which may impact the work of JECFA, JEMRA – with a possible re-thinking of the way international food risk assessment approaches underpinning global food standard setting are organized and resourced.

Opportunities:

- Build agile, multi-stakeholder mechanisms connecting regulators, scientists, and academic institutions.
- Leverage global digital data systems and shared modelling tools.
- Strengthen regional participation in global assessments through structured collaboration and shared resources.

C. CONCEPT PROPOSAL: THE INTERNATIONAL FOOD RISK ANALYSIS CONSORTIUM (IFORAC)

Moderators: Dr. Moez Sanaa, Head, Scientific Advice, Food and Nutrition Department, World Health Organization (WHO) – Mr. Greg Paoli, Research Science International (RSI) – Ottawa, ON. Canada

The discussion will progressively evolve toward presenting the IFoRAC as a proposed mechanism to fill these gaps.

Proposed Vision and Purpose:

The International Food Risk Analysis Consortium (IFoRAC) aims to create a standing, science-anchored platform that connects academia, independent experts, and regulatory scientists worldwide to support large-scale regional and global food risk assessments.

Its purpose is to provide agile, transparent, and high-quality scientific input for international decision-making processes and to strengthen the global risk analysis ecosystem.

Core Functions:

- Global/Regional Risk Assessments: Coordinate and execute multi-country assessments of contaminants, residues, microbiological and chemical hazards.
- Expert Network: Maintain a global roster of qualified assessors (from academia, regulators, and independent experts) available for mobilization.
- Data & Tool Platform: Host shared repositories for exposure data, modelling tools, and assessment methodologies.
- Capacity Development: Build capabilities through mentorship, training, and peer-exchange mechanisms.

- Resource Mobilization: Establish an agile funding mechanism pooling contributions from governments, donors, and partners to finance urgent or large-scale assessments.
- Scientific Assurance: Implement governance to ensure transparency, peer review, and methodological integrity.
- Interface with Global Risk Assessment and Decision-Making Bodies: Align assessments with the needs and timelines of JECFA, JEMRA, and Codex committees.

Discussion Questions for DIFSC 2025:

- What are the most pressing global or regional gaps that IFoRAC could address?
- How can academia and independent experts be systematically engaged?
- What governance and funding models would ensure credibility and sustainability?
- How can IFoRAC interact effectively with JECFA, JEMRA, and Codex mechanisms?
- Which regional networks or institutions could serve as early partners or hubs?

Input on a Governance Model:

- Steering Committee: Representing global regulators, academia, and expert institutions.
- Secretariat: Housed under an established neutral entity (e.g., GFoRSS or partner organization).
- Regional Hubs: Serving as focal points for data gathering and engagement.
- Scientific Panels: Organized by domain (chemical, microbiological, nutritional risk assessment).
- Funding Committee: Overseeing financial sustainability and rapid resource allocation.

Session 2: Food Risk Assessment Developments in the Arab Region and Beyond

Monday, 17 November 2025 • 16:30 – 18:30 • Room SRH E and Live Broadcast on GFoRSS YouTube Channel

Chair : Dr. Karima Zouine, Office National de Sécurité Sanitaire des Produits Alimentaires (ONSSA), Morocco

**Co-organized by the Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GFoRSS)*

This session will highlight ongoing progress and initiatives in the development of food risk assessment systems in the Arab region, and their alignment with global scientific practices. It will showcase regional case studies, emerging methodologies, and institutional developments supporting the generation and use of scientific evidence in food safety decision-making.

Discussion Focus:

- Building regional capacity for risk assessment.
- Developing exposure assessment foundations and data systems.
- Leveraging collaboration among academia, regulators, and regional networks.
- Identifying opportunities for joint work and exchange within the Arab region and beyond.

Expected Outcomes:

- Shared understanding of progress and gaps in food risk assessment across the Arab region.
- Identification of actionable steps to strengthen regional data systems and competencies.
- Enhanced collaboration between Arab food safety institutions, academia, and GFoRSS.
- Recommendations to inform future regional initiatives and capacity-building priorities.

16:30-16:35 **Session Introduction**

Dr. Karima Zouine, *ONSSA, Morocco*

- ❖ Current Environment in Food Risk Assessment in the Arab Region:
  - Setting the scene: evolution of risk assessment practices in the Arab region.
  - Role of scientific collaboration and capacity building.
  - Overview of GFoRSS engagement and regional initiatives.

16:35-16:55 **Aflatoxin B1 in Cereals: Meta-analysis and Regional Risk Assessment for Arab League Countries**

Mr. Ali Ballout, *Food Risk Analysis and Regulatory Excellence Platform (PARERA), Institute of Nutrition and Functional Foods (INAF), Laval University, Canada*

- ❖ Overview of the meta-analysis approach and regional data compilation.
- ❖ Methodology and key findings of AFB1 exposure assessment.
- ❖ Implications for Arab League countries' food safety decision-making and Codex engagement.

16:55-17:25 **Developing the Foundations of Exposure Assessment in the Arab Region**

Dr. Elie Bouyazbeck, *Food Science expert, Ministry of Economy and Trade, Lebanon*

- Establishing data systems for food occurrence and consumption.
- Building institutional frameworks for exposure assessment.
- Lessons learned from Lebanon's national experience and regional partnerships.
- Next steps for harmonized approaches across the region.

17:25-17:45 **Harnessing Risk Assessment to Support Evidence-Based Decisions – Learning from Practical Examples**

Dr. Intisar Al-Gharibi*, Director of Risk Assessment, Oman Food Safety and Quality Center (FSQC), Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR), Oman*

- Illustrative case studies of risk assessment applied to regulatory decision-making.
- Integrating risk assessment into national food control frameworks.
- Strengthening coordination among risk assessors and risk managers.
- Opportunities for institutional learning and sustainability.

17:45-18:05 **Aiming for Harmonized Imported Maximum Residue Limits for Pesticide Residues in the Arab Region,**

Dr. Mustafa Sultan*, Scientific Director, Near East Region, Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GFoRSS).*

- Differences in pesticide MRLs across countries and trade challenges
- Need for harmonized import MRLs to facilitate safe regional and global trade
- Importance of science-based alignment with Codex and international standards
  - Call for regional cooperation and data sharing to support harmonization

18:05-18:30 **Interactive Discussion and Q&A**

Facilitated by Dr. Karima Zouine, *ONSSA, Morocco and* ***Dr. Ruba Goussous,*** *Director of Operations, GFoRSS*

- Guiding questions:
  - What are the current challenges facing Arab countries in developing food risk assessment capacity?
  - How can data collection and management for exposure assessment be improved?

- What mechanisms and networks can enhance regional collaboration (e.g., GFoRSS Lab Platform, AFRANet)?

How can the region mobilize academic and institutional expertise to support global risk assessment efforts?

Session 3: Emerging Chemical Hazards and Risks

Tuesday, 18 November 2025 • 11:00-13:00 • Room SRH E and Live Broadcast on GFoRSS YouTube

Chair: Dr. Amine Kassouf, Scientific Director, Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GFoRSS); Adjunct Professor, Food Risk Analysis and Regulatory Excellence Platform (PARERA), Laval University

**Co-organized by the Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GFoRSS)*

The landscape of food chemical safety is undergoing rapid transformation under the combined pressures of food innovation, evolving consumer expectations, environmental change, and policy evolution. Recent policy discussions—such as those surrounding ultra-processed foods (UPFs)—increasingly integrate food additives and processing aids into broader nutrition and public health debates. While such perspectives highlight societal concerns, they also risk obscuring the critical role of chemicals in ensuring food safety, preservation, and quality, as well as their contribution to public health and consumer protection when used appropriately.

At the same time, emerging chemical challenges are intensifying—driven by pollution, climate change, and shifts in microbial and contaminant profiles—calling for adaptive and science-based approaches to safeguard food systems.

This session will explore how food regulatory science and risk assessment frameworks are adapting to these multidimensional challenges, drawing on global experiences, case studies, and methodological advances that strengthen evidence-based decision-making.

Discussion Focus:

- Review the drivers of change shaping food chemical safety globally and regionally, including environmental, policy, and consumer dimensions.
- Examine differences in chemical risk management decisions across jurisdictions and their scientific underpinnings.
- Discuss emerging issues such as novel additives, and emerging contaminants, the way to assess them and manage them
- Promote a weight-of-evidence approach for transparent, consistent, and science-anchored decisions in food chemical safety.

Expected Outcomes:

- Enhanced understanding of the interplay between science, policy, and perception in food chemical safety.
- Reinforced commitment to science-based decision-making and risk communication.
- Recommendations to strengthen adaptive and transparent regulatory frameworks globally.

11:00-11:15 Session Introduction

Prof. Samuel Godefroy, *President, GFoRSS / IUFoST; Professor, Food Risk Analysis and Regulatory Policies, Laval University, Canada*

❖ Emerging Food Chemical Issues – Adapting to Constant Changes:

- Framing current transformations in the chemical safety landscape.
- Reviewing Codex guidance and international best practices.
- Identifying some emerging issues in food chemical safety, being focussed on by food regulators
- Contextualizing recent policy shifts and societal perceptions.

11:15:11:45 **Emerging Food Chemical Issues – Chemical Hazards from Recycled Plastics**

***Mr. Mark Feeley**, Senior Food Toxicologist, JECFA Expert; Former Deputy Director, Food Chemical Safety; PARERA, Laval University*

- Food Contact Materials and plastic pollution
- Increasing the use of recycled plastics in food packaging.
- Potential chemical migration and NIAS concerns.
- Global risk assessment and regulatory focus.
- Need for continued research and collaboration.
- Future Direction – Codex Alimentarius

11:45-12:15 **Sweetener Applications in Food: Ensuring Safety Requirements and Meeting Consumer Expectations**

***Dr. Laurent Oger**, Director General, International Sweeteners Association, Brussels*

- Science communication around sweetener safety and consumer trust.
- The evolving intersection between safety assessment, nutrition, and policy.

12:15-12:45 **Weight-of-Evidence Approach – Reviewing the Strength of Data Supporting Food Regulatory Decisions on Chemicals in Food**

***Prof. Bensu Karahalil,** Head of Toxicology Department, Faculty of Pharmacy, Gazi University; Vice President, Turkish Society of Toxicology*

- Principles of weight-of-evidence evaluation.
- Integrating toxicological, mechanistic, and epidemiological data.
- Advancing transparent, reproducible, and science-driven food chemical safety decisions.

12:45-13:00 **Interactive Discussion and Q&A**

Moderated by Dr. Amine Kassouf and Dr. Betül VAZGEÇER

- Discussion Themes:
  - How can regulators and scientists anticipate and respond to new chemical hazards?
  - What balance should be struck between safety science and broader policy narratives?
- How can we promote science-based decision-making and risk communication?

Session 4: Assessing Risks and Benefits of Food Innovation

Tuesday, 18 November 2025 • 14:00-16:00 • Room SRH E and Live Broadcast on GFoRSS YouTube

Chair: Prof. Samuel Godefroy, President, GFoRSS / IUFoST; Professor, Food Risk Analysis and Regulatory Policies, Laval University, Canada

**Co-organized by the Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GFoRSS)*

Food innovation is reshaping the global agri-food landscape, introducing novel ingredients, production processes, and functional foods that promise benefits for nutrition, sustainability, and resilience. Yet, these advances also challenge existing regulatory and risk assessment frameworks, requiring science-based methods to evaluate both safety and potential health benefits.

This session will explore how food regulatory systems are adapting to innovation, with examples from leading global and regional initiatives. It will highlight how risk–benefit assessment, harmonized health claim evaluation, and regulatory modernization can together support responsible innovation and maintain consumer trust.

Discussion Focus:

- Review the drivers of change shaping regulation of innovative foods and processes.
- Showcase institutional models integrating science, regulation, and innovation.
- Discuss regional experiences in assessing health and nutrition claims.
- Examine methodological approaches for balancing risks and benefits in food innovation.

14:00-14:15 Session Introduction

Prof. Samuel Godefroy, *President, GFoRSS / IUFoST; Professor, Food Risk Analysis and Regulatory Policies, Laval University, Canada*

- ❖ Reviewing the Food Regulatory Landscape for Innovative Ingredients and Processes – Drivers of Change:
  - Framing key global and regional trends driving regulatory modernization.
  - Outlining Codex principles and international best practices.
  - Highlighting the need for integrated risk–benefit approaches to enable safe innovation.

14:15-14:45 Singapore's Future Ready Food Safety Hub (FRESH) – Sharing the Experience

Prof. William Chen, *Director, FRESH, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (remote participation)*

- ❖ Overview of Singapore's proactive approach to regulating food innovation.
- ❖ Building science–policy–industry interfaces through FRESH.
- ❖ Lessons on fostering innovation while maintaining consumer protection.

14:45-15:15 Harmonizing Assessment of Health Claims – The ASEAN Experience

Prof. Tee E. Siong, *Scientific Director, International Life Sciences Institute SEA Region*

- ❖ Brief background of diverse approaches to health and nutrition claims in SEA.
- ❖ Efforts to promote coordinated approach to health and nutrition claims assessment in Southeast Asia countries.
- ❖ Methodological alignment across diverse regulatory contexts
- ❖ Implications for food innovation, trade facilitation and consumer information.

15:15-15:45 Topic: Connecting the Dots: Risk–Benefit Assessment for a Resilient and Sustainable Food Future

Dr. Moez Sanaa, *Head of Scientific Advice, World Health Organization (WHO)*

- ❖ Integrated Approach to Human and Planetary Health
- ❖ Risk–Benefit Assessment for Dietary Trade-offs
- ❖ Framework for Optimizing Animal and Plant Protein Intake
- ❖ Global Data Collaboration for Sustainable Diets

15:45-16:00 Interactive Discussion and Q&A

Moderated by Prof. Samuel Godefroy

- ❖ Pathways to strengthen safety and efficacy assessment of innovative foods and health claims.
- ❖ Leveraging experiences from Asia and beyond to advance food regulatory modernization.
- ❖ Fostering science-based innovation governance through collaboration.