

ARAB WORKING GROUP

Development of Arab Requirements for the Acceptance of Gluten Quantitative Methods

1st Meeting

Record of Discussions and Decisions

Tuesday 8 July 2025

Virtually

4 PM (GMT+3)

Member	Organization	Country	Present	Regrets
Mrs. Celine Homsy	Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute (LARI)	Lebanon	☒	☐
Dr. Intisar Salim Al Gharibi	Food Safety and Quality Center (FSQC)	Oman	☒	☐
Dr. Sana Jaballah	Agri-food Technical Center (CTAA)	Tunisia	☐	☒
Dr. Jérémie Théolier	PARERA/GFoRSS – Laval University	Canada	☒	☐
Dr. Amine Kassouf	President Arab Section	Lebanon	☒	☐
Dr. Mustafa Sultan	Secretary Arab Section	Egypt	☒	☐

1. Opening

The meeting opened with a roundtable introduction, where participants presented themselves, their professional backgrounds, and their interests related to gluten testing and celiac disease.

Dr. Amine Kassouf welcomed participants and provided an overview of the Arab Section of AOAC INTERNATIONAL, highlighting its geographical coverage across 22 Arab League countries, its mission and vision to strengthen analytical capacity in the region, and its role in linking the Arab analytical community with the international network.

2. Overview of Progress to Date

Members reviewed key milestones achieved under the Arab Gluten Management Initiative, including:

- Awareness and stakeholder engagement activities (webinars, conference sessions, celiac associations).
- Initial trainings on gluten determination using ELISA-based methods (Amman and Muscat), with materials now compiled into an online resource.
- Ongoing work towards standardization of analytical methods, aligned with Codex and AOAC International frameworks.
- Preparatory steps to collect data on gluten occurrence in gluten-free foods and on consumption patterns of celiac communities in the region.

3. Initiatives Underway

The group discussed current activities:

- Supporting the Arab Network of Celiac Patients' Associations.
- **Developing and harmonizing analytical performance criteria for gluten testing methods.**
- Advancing capacity building through training and e-learning modules.
- Designing sampling plans to generate **occurrence and exposure data** for celiac populations.

4. Working Group Structure

The meeting confirmed that the Working Group on “Quantitative Methods for Gluten Analysis” had been endorsed by the Executive Committee of the Arab Section, composed of

3 Arab analytical community representatives, 1 international expert, and 2 Arab Section leadership representatives.

5. Discussion Points

- The importance of establishing validated and regionally relevant gluten testing methods.
- The need for harmonization to support regulatory frameworks and ensure food safety for celiac individuals.
- The role of Arab AOAC Section in providing transparency, documentation, and capacity building for member countries.

6. Discussion and Adoption of the Terms of Reference (ToR)

Participants reviewed and discussed the proposed Terms of Reference (ToR) for the working group, exchanged views, and agreed to receive the document in written form for official validation. The ToR will serve as the framework guiding the group's mandate and activities towards the development of Arab analytical performance criteria for quantitative gluten testing methods.

7. Agreement on Next Steps and Planning of Upcoming Activities

- Members to provide updates to the group on the status of gluten regulatory frameworks in their respective countries.
- Review and formally approve the Terms of Reference (ToR).
- Inform the Arab Technical Committee for Food Products Standards (TC9) of the Arab Industrial Development, Standardization and Mining Organization (AIDSMO) on the progress of this initiative.
- Use the next meeting to begin reviewing the draft analytical performance criteria.