



## ARAB WORKING GROUP

### Development of Arab Requirements for the Acceptance of Gluten Quantitative Methods

*2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting*

#### Record of Discussions and Decisions

Monday 15 December 2025

Virtually

2 PM (GMT+2)



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

Observer	Organization	Country	Present	Regrets
<b>Mrs. Abida Al Qaisi</b>	Celiac Care Providers Society (President)	Jordan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Mrs. Kaouthar Boumeddane</b>	University of Health Sciences	Algeria	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Mrs. Nisrine Sawaya</b>	Celiac Association in Lebanon (President)	Lebanon	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Mrs. Shadwa El Araby</b>	Standards and Metrology Center AIDS MO (Director)	Morocco	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Dr. Markus Lacorn</b>	R-Biopharm AG	Germany	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Mrs. Shaimaa abdallah Mohamed Atia</b>	Egyptian Celiac Association (President)	Egypt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

GFoRSS Representatives	Organization	Country	Present	Regrets
<b>Prof. Samuel Godefroy</b>	GFoRSS (President & COO)	Canada	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Ms. Nayra El Sherif</b>	GFoRSS	Egypt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Mr. Montassar Guider</b>	GFoRSS	Tunisia	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## **1. Opening Remarks**

Dr. Amine Kassouf, President of the Arab Section of AOAC INTERNATIONAL, opened the meeting and welcomed all participants and observers to the second meeting of the *Working Group on the development of Arab requirements for the acceptance of quantitative gluten methods*.

He thanked participants for their continued engagement and emphasized the importance of harmonized, science-based analytical requirements to improve the reliability of gluten control systems and to strengthen protection, confidence, and inclusion for individuals with celiac disease across the Arab region.

Participants and observers briefly introduced themselves and their institutional affiliations.

## **2. Adoption of the Agenda**

The proposed agenda, as circulated in advance of the meeting, was presented for consideration. The Working Group reviewed the agenda and adopted it without amendments.

## **3. Introductory Presentation**

Dr. Kassouf delivered an introductory presentation outlining the rationale, scope, and progress of the Arab initiative on gluten management.

The presentation recalled the vision and objectives of the initiative and highlighted the transition from strategic vision to implementation through coordinated regional efforts. An overview was provided of activities undertaken to date, including capacity-building initiatives, stakeholder engagement, and technical work supporting the standardization of gluten analysis in the Arab region.

Key technical questions were highlighted, notably those related to the reliability, comparability, and regulatory acceptance of quantitative gluten results, and their implications for gluten-free labeling and consumer protection.

Current initiatives presented included:

- Support to the Arab network of celiac associations and national committees.
- Alignment of quantitative gluten testing approaches across the Arab region, with emphasis on immunological (ELISA-based) methods.
- Development of capacity-building materials for laboratories and regulators.

- Data-generation activities related to food consumption patterns of individuals with celiac disease and the occurrence of gluten in foods labeled or assumed to be gluten-free.

The Chair invited members and observers to contribute technical input and perspectives to inform the refinement of all undergoing initiatives.

#### **4. Discussion Points**

##### **4.1. Interventions from Celiac Associations**

Representatives of celiac associations from Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt provided updates on national contexts and challenges.

Mrs. Nisrine Sawaya (Lebanon) highlighted gaps at the regulatory and monitoring levels, including limitations in enforcement capacity and analytical consistency. In this context, Mrs. Celine Homsi (Lebanon) emphasized the importance of ensuring laboratory proficiency by requiring that all laboratories conducting gluten analyses participate in regular proficiency testing schemes, while also underscoring the critical role of appropriate sampling procedures as an integral component of reliable and compliant gluten testing.

Mrs. Abida Al Qaisi (Jordan) referred to the adoption of a national technical regulation on gluten-free requirements in early 2025, while highlighting the remaining challenges resulting from the lack of detailed technical guidance to support food producers in implementing best manufacturing practices for gluten-free food production, particularly with respect to establishing appropriate testing frequencies to ensure ongoing compliance.

Mrs. Shaimaa Abdallah Mohamed Atia (Egypt) emphasized the importance of harmonizing analytical methods to ensure consistent and reliable gluten testing outcomes, noting that such harmonization is essential to strengthening consumer confidence. She further underlined the close link between analytical consistency and the credibility of gluten-free labelling, highlighting its critical role in building and maintaining trust among individuals with celiac disease.

These interventions illustrated differing national situations while converging on the need for harmonized analytical requirements to support effective implementation of gluten-free regulations.

##### **4.2. Intervention from AIDSMO**

Mrs. Shadwa El Araby (AIDSmo) welcomed the initiative and emphasized the relevance of the Working Group's work to ongoing regional standardization activities. She highlighted the importance of ensuring consistency with existing Arab standards and Codex texts and

encouraged the Working Group to clearly articulate the scope, applicability, and intended use of the proposed guidelines to facilitate their review by the Arab Technical Committee for Food Products (TC9).

## **5. Draft Guidelines for Validation of Quantitative Gluten Methods**

Dr. Kassouf introduced the draft *Guidelines for Validation of Quantitative Immunological Gluten Methods*, noting that the document is based on AOAC INTERNATIONAL guidance and established best practices.

He informed the Working Group that the draft had undergone an initial technical review by Dr. Markus Lacorn (R-Biopharm AG) and Dr. Jérémie Théolier (Université Laval / GFoRSS).

The scope and structure of the document were presented, including provisions related to method performance characteristics, validation approaches, and considerations specific to gluten analysis.

Members discussed the importance of the proposed document as a cornerstone of regional efforts to harmonize analytical methodologies for gluten testing. The document was recognized as defining the minimum performance requirements to be met by method and technology providers, in order to ensure the generation of accurate and reliable quantitative results. The importance of matrix extension was particularly emphasized, given its relevance to the Arab region, so that authentic regional products and commodities can be appropriately included within the validation scope of analytical techniques. Participants also discussed the level of technical detail required, where Prof. Samuel Godefroy underscored the importance of ensuring that the document must be scientifically sound and robust, as it is intended to serve as the foundation for an Arab standard establishing performance requirements for quantitative gluten analytical methods.

## **6. Agreement on Next Steps**

The Working Group agreed on the following next steps:

1. Consolidation and revision of the draft guidelines, incorporating comments and inputs from the working group experts as well as from observers.
2. Convening a meeting of the Working Group to review and approve the revised draft.
3. Submission of the finalized draft to AIDSMO TC9 for consideration and potential adoption, in accordance with established AIDSMO procedures.
4. Continued coordination with celiac associations and regulators to support implementation and capacity-building activities.

## **7. Closure of the Meeting**

The Chair thanked all participants and observers for their constructive contributions and reiterated the collective commitment to advancing harmonized, science-based approaches for quantitative gluten analysis in the Arab region.

The meeting was adjourned, with the next meeting tentatively scheduled to take place approximately one month later.