

HEADS of FOOD SAFETY AGENCIES - TERMS OF REFERENCE

Adopted version during the plenary meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland, 15th & 16th of May 2025

1. Proposed Vision

To improve/strengthen and harmonize the implementation of food safety legislation in Europe through providing a forum for:

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. the exchange of information;2. promoting networking, collaboration and common activities and;3. create a common understanding of the risk picture and the need for change in priorities and legislation, |
|---|

between the national food safety and/or consumer protection agencies in areas of mutual interest and at times of food safety incidents.

2. Background and Rationale

The rules-based world we have known is changing and international cooperation is changing. Because of this the risk picture is changing and the goal of HoA needs to change to meet these evolving needs. In this regard there is a need for a more strategic approach to the different challenges facing us in the future.

HoA recognizes that there are important drivers in our field, such as:

- Geopolitical challenges and social security
- Climate change and the need for more sustainable food systems
- New Technology – Opportunities and threats
- Trust and alternative facts
- Availability of people and competence
- Budget and resource constraints

The drivers are up for review every fourth year, or when the Plenary deems it necessary because of changes to the risk picture.

HEADS of FOOD SAFETY AGENCIES - TERMS OF REFERENCE

Adopted version during the plenary meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland, 15th & 16th of May 2025

3. Goals / Objectives

The HoA is a forum of the national Food Safety and/or consumer protection agencies in Europe at the most senior level of management that has the following goals:

- To strengthen relationships of national food safety and/or consumer protection agencies;
- To exchange information on, and increase knowledge and understanding of, the strategic and operational challenges of the Agencies in the forum;
- To enable collaboration at a strategic and operational level. This includes identifying common risks, risk assessment needs and risk management needs on topics of mutual interest and/or EU relevance,;

4. Membership

The members of the European HoA will be [the most] senior level representatives with responsibility for the management/co-ordination of food safety at a national level.

5. Operational Approach / Meetings of the HoA

In order to achieve the aforementioned vision and goals, the forum will have the following governance framework:

- A plenary – the composition of the plenary shall be the most senior level persons with responsibility for food safety and/or consumer protection in their country.
- A Host Country – the Host Country should be the EU-MS that holds the presidency or any other member country that offers to host the plenary meeting. Arrangements can be made to allow participating non-EU countries to host the meeting, if the Member State that has EU presidency decides not to host the meeting.
- The HoA Secretariat – the role as the HoA Secretariat may rotate among the members and can be shared by several countries. If contested The Plenary decides which member country is to have the role. The HoA Secretariat will make sure there is continuity between Plenary meetings and assist the Host Country in planning the meetings.

HEADS of FOOD SAFETY AGENCIES - TERMS OF REFERENCE

Adopted version during the plenary meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland, 15th & 16th of May 2025

- D. The HoA Working Groups - The work of the Plenary is supported by HoA working groups. The HoA Working Groups and their respective topics are determined by the Plenary. Terms of Reference and outcomes from the HoA Working Groups are approved by the Plenary. All member states and non-EU members of HoA are welcome to participate in the HoA Working Groups.

To facilitate its operation HoA Plenary and HoA Working Groups use a dedicated HoA platform where members can find all the relevant information and documents.

Preparation of the Agenda:

The meeting agendas of the Plenary will be prepared by the Host Country with the assistance of the HoA Secretariat. All member states are invited to propose agenda topics, either individually or in collaboration with other member states to strengthen cooperation. The Host Country, with assistance of the HoA Secretariat, is responsible for deciding about the topics for the final agenda. The topics on the agenda should reflect the HoA's vision, background and rationale and goals/objectives and with respect to the following principles:

- Proposal of initiatives (e.g. through working groups) to develop good practices and promote the outcome of these initiatives
- Promote the exchange of experiences, which will be beneficial for an improvement of efficiency and effectiveness
- Identify common challenges in the implementation of common legislation and propose areas for change, address issues and (upcoming) risks, through the formal committees of the European Commission on matters related to food safety management, in order to make more effect together as member states. Suggestions for improvement are to be submitted by the countries that support them.
- The Agenda should have a balance between topics of strategic importance and other topics.
- Support and facilitate collaboration and partnerships between Member States and with other networks in the EU and globally related to food safety management¹

¹ E.g. *EFSA, FAO, WHO, Codex, International Heads of Food Agencies Forum*

HEADS of FOOD SAFETY AGENCIES - TERMS OF REFERENCE

Adopted version during the plenary meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland, 15th & 16th of May 2025

Frequency of Meetings:

Biannual meetings will be organized by the Host Country with the assistance of the HoA Secretariat (see Annex 1).

Agenda Items:

1. The topics discussed during the biannual meetings may cover but are not limited to:
 - Topics of strategic importance to food safety e.g. use of new technologies in official controls; artificial intelligence; digitalization and data management; food system transformation; engagement with EU institutions on challenges and opportunities arising for evolving food systems policy / legislation.
 - Topics of operational significance arising from Working Groups e.g. ecommerce; food supplements; and / or collaboration issues between Agencies of the Member States, exchange of views on management issues; collaboration and joint programming based on shared risk assessment needs; implementation issues and difficulties or improvements and harmonisation of enforcement; activities to enable greater co-operation between members on related operational issues.
 - additional areas that may impact food chain safety and thereby the ability to protect consumers.
2. The Working Groups will report their findings and recommendations during one of the bi-annual meetings.
3. Relevant points on the agenda (e.g. feedback of working groups) will be documented in a one-pager management summary.
4. In principle, participating countries will bear their own costs. Financial assistance to achieve the objectives of this terms of reference may be requested through contributions from individual Member States and from the European Commission.

HEADS of FOOD SAFETY AGENCIES - TERMS OF REFERENCE

Adopted version during the plenary meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland, 15th & 16th of May 2025

ANNEX 1

Activities of the Secretariat for Heads of Food Safety Agencies (HoA Secretariat)

This Annex is to be read in conjunction with the main document “Heads of Food Safety Agencies – Terms of Reference”. The Annex describes in more detail the activities and responsibilities of the HoA Secretariat and the relation to the Host Country as regards the biannual Plenary meetings and the HoA Working Groups. A main part of the HoA Secretariat’s role is to ensure continuity between the Plenary meetings, assist the Host Country in planning Plenary meetings and to facilitate the transitions between the different Host countries.

Activities

I. Short list of activity subjects

- Organisation of biannual Plenary meetings

The Host Country is responsible for the organisation of the meeting and its logistics. The HoA Secretariat facilitates and advice the Host Country, with the following activities:

- supplying list of HoA contact points (and keeping them updated),
- drafting of the agenda, considering the continuity between Plenary meetings and assisting the Host Country in preparing an agenda that reflects the HoA’s vision, background and rationale and goals/objectives,
- collection and dissemination of suitable background documents and discussion points,
- ensure the minutes of meetings, and
- archiving meeting documents.

Specific arrangements between the Host Country and the HoA Secretariat can be made when they prepare the organisation of the meeting.

- Collection of summary reports for distribution (and publication on the website) of the various working groups.

HEADS of FOOD SAFETY AGENCIES - TERMS OF REFERENCE

Adopted version during the plenary meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland, 15th & 16th of May 2025

II. Long list of activity subjects

- On request of the Heads of Agencies
 - preparation of letters for financial assistance with regard to HoA activities, if necessary.

- List of proposed future subjects for discussion or Working Groups, for example:
 - digital agenda of the EU
 - new EU legislative proposals
 - Any other subject suggested during the HoA meetings as a possible subject for a Working Group or an agenda item for a later Plenary meeting.

- Content management of the website, where various resources, such as listed below, could be available:
 - general information on the various participating Agencies,
 - contact details of participating Agencies and HoA contact points, and
 - reports from the Working Groups.

Host of the HoA Secretariat

The role of the HoA Secretariat may rotate among the member states and can be shared by several countries. If contested the Plenary decides by simple majority which member country is to have the role.

Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg are currently sharing the responsibility for the HoA Secretariat.