



Meeting Minutes

Global Harmonization Initiative (GHI) Working Group Meeting

Held in conjunction with the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) Annual Meeting & Food Expo, July 29, 2008, New Orleans (USA)

On July 29, 2008, the Global Harmonization Initiative ([GHI](#)) Working Group met in New Orleans, USA, during the Institute of Food Technologists ([IFT](#)) Annual Meeting & Food Expo, the largest annual food science forum and exposition in the world. Huub Lelieveld and Larry Keener, GHI co-chairs, presided over the meeting, assisted by Pablo Juliano and Christine Boisrobert. After addressing welcoming remarks to the twenty participants (see Appendix 1), Huub Lelieveld proceeded with the meeting agenda.

Agenda Item 1: Welcome & Introduction to GHI

On October 31, 2007, the founding of the **GHI Association** as a legal entity was completed in Vienna, Austria. The official address of the “**GHI Association – Globale Harmonisierungs Initiative für Gesetze und Verordnungen im Bereich Lebensmittel**“ is:

GHI Association
Universität für Bodenkultur, Department für Lebensmittelwissenschaften und –technologie
zhd. Herrn Dr. Gerhard Schleining
Muthgasse 18, 1190 Wien, Austria

The GHI Constitution (Vereinsstatuten) is posted on the GHI website (www.globalharmonization.org). An English translation of this document is currently being worked on and will be posted on the website once available.

While the Austrian legal terminology used in the Constitution might differ, GHI’s actual structure remains identical to the one posted on the GHI website (see <http://www.globalharmonization.org/structure.htm>).

Until elections take place following the procedure specified in the Constitution, the Executive Committee is as follows:

Huub Lelieveld (President)
Larry Keener (Vice-President)
Gerhard Schleining
Sangsuk Oh
Vishweshwaraiah Prakash
Christine Boisrobert

In order to facilitate communication with members, responsibilities have been divided over the various geographical regions as follows:

Asia: V. Prakash and Sangsuk Oh
Americas: L. Keener and C. Boisrobert (North America); P. Juliano and G. Kopper (Latin America)
Europe: H. Lelieveld and G. Schleining
Africa: R. Poms and M. Gross

Next steps will involve setting up regional groups to organize and facilitate GHI activities within each region.

Rick Stier mentioned that he would discuss potential GHI representation in the Middle East with some of his contacts in Egypt.

Additionally, Gisela Kopper suggested that the Latin American and Caribbean Food Science and Technology Association (ALACCTA) meeting, which will take place during the first week of October 2008 in Brazil, might be a good opportunity to present GHI. Gisela will send an invitation to Huub.

Huub and Larry reiterated that, to ensure impartiality, GHI does not accept **funding** from governments or industry. Consequently, GHI must rely mainly on voluntary contributions from scientific member organizations or income from activities, such as publications and conferences.

Agenda Item 2: Update on Recent GHI Workshops

In November 2007, GHI held a workshop in conjunction with the 2007 EFFoST-EHEDG Conference in **Lisbon**, Portugal. This workshop was organized to decide on some timely global issues to serve as examples for the proposed **GHI scientific consensus process**. The workshop concluded with the recommendation to form **specialized working groups** (see Agenda Item 5) to address the following **four topics**:

1. Global harmonization of an **acceptable maximum limit for *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat (RTE) foods**. Cindy Stewart has agreed to take the lead on this initiative and to establish a working group on this topic.
2. Global harmonization of **safe maximum residue levels of selected antibiotics in foods**: as the detection sensitivity of analytical methods continue to improve, probability of finding minute trace amounts of antibiotics in the food supply increases and can lead to the mandatory destruction of large volume of foods. A working group, led by Jan Kwakman, has been formed to undertake the issue of the toxicity of antibiotics.
3. **High Pressure Processing (HPP)** of foods: while this nonthermal technology has been implemented commercially and sufficient research has been conducted in the US, EU and Japan, regulatory requirements for HPP are still lacking or differ between countries (e.g. similar requirements to traditional thermal pasteurization in the US vs. Regulation on Novel Foods in the EU). Bala Balasubramaniam offered to help setting up a working group on this topic.
4. Global harmonization of **toxicological test protocols** to improve the reliability of toxicological data while reducing unnecessary duplication of efforts. Firouz Darroudi has agreed to lead this initiative.

With regard to the fourth topic, it was noted that risks assessments relying on toxicology testing *in vivo* in animals may not be relevant for humans and neither are *in vitro* tests currently used with incompetent human-derived liver cells. In contrast, new *in vitro* tests with human liver Hep G2 cells can produce reliable results. However, during this meeting, it was again pointed out, that GHI did not have a particular position for or against animal testing. GHI could only support a scientifically-based consensus amongst experts on the most reliable model to determine toxicity, regardless of it being based on animal or *in vitro* models.

In May 2008, GHI held another workshop in conjunction with CEFood 2008 (Joint Central European Congress) in **Cavtat**, Croatia. During this workshop, participants started setting up working groups on the four topics identified in Lisbon. Unfortunately, participants ran out of time. Further work is still needed to establish each group (see Agenda Item 5).

Agenda Item 3: Membership

While food science and technology professionals are presently able to apply online for **individual scientist membership** at <http://www.globalharmonization.org/applicationform.htm>, the current system lacks the ability to **automatically register** new members into GHI's membership database.

The International Association for Cereal Science and Technology (ICC), one of GHI's member organizations, has generously offered to provide this service to GHI. This proposal is currently under review to ensure that acceptance of this offer will not compromise GHI's integrity. This matter should be resolved within the coming months.

At present, GHI is about 300 individual members strong.

With regard to **scientific organizations**, Roland Poms (ICC), current Chair of the **Supervisory Board**, will invite all member organizations to nominate a representative on the Board. The main mission of GHI's Supervisory Board is to ensure impartiality and transparency. Representatives on the Board will warrant that GHI will follow its Constitution and hence remain impartial with respect to the procedures aimed at achieving scientific consensus.

Agenda Item 4: GHI and IFT

IFT Support and Representation on the GHI Supervisory Board

As discussed previously, the Global Harmonization Initiative was launched in 2004 by the IFT International Division and the European Federation of Food Science and Technology (EFFoST) in an effort to promote science-based harmonization of food regulations and legislation worldwide. Since then, both the International Division and the Nonthermal Processing Division of IFT have joined as GHI member organizations. Furthermore, many individual scientific members of GHI are also IFT members.

In January 2008, GHI addressed a letter to John Floros, President of IFT, inviting IFT to **formalize its support** of the Global Harmonization Initiative and to designate an **IFT representative** on the GHI Supervisory Board (see Agenda Item 3).

During the meeting, Martin Cole (Chair, IFT Global Regulations & Policy Committee), who has been invited to be IFT's delegate on the Board, discussed with Huub Lelieveld and Larry Keener, GHI co-chairs, the best path forward in order to strengthen the relationship between the two organizations.

All agreed that this was mainly a **communication issue**, and that GHI's objectives should be clearly delineated, particularly with regard to other international scientific organizations such as Codex Alimentarius. As stated previously, GHI acknowledges that the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) of the United Nations already count international groups of recognized independent experts (i.e. JECFA, JMPR, JEMRA). By no means does GHI intend to duplicate efforts from these organizations. Rather, GHI strives to be a scientific expert resource and aims to **develop scientific white papers**, which can then serve as scientific references for Codex committees or other experts.

Consequently, GHI needs to articulate in a one-page statement how its charter and activities dovetail with the IFT Strategic Plan and complement IFT's goals.

Some discussion was initiated on the potential need to take this relationship a step further by drafting a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two organizations. It was concluded that an MOU was not needed.

Rosie Newsome (Director, Science and Communications, IFT) also suggested that GHI re-extend its invitation to IFT to formalize its support of the Global Harmonization Initiative.

Action item: Larry Keener, Martin Cole and Mickey Parish have agreed to draft a **one-page communication letter**, clearly stating GHI's mission and highlighting the commonality of purpose between GHI and IFT. Larry will take the lead on this effort (timeline: 3 weeks).

Establishment of a Special Interest Group (SIG) within IFT:

Member organization EFFoST recently set up a Special Interest Group (SIG) "Global Harmonization" chaired by Aleksandra Stjepanovic. It was decided during the present meeting to create a similar Special Interest Group within IFT. Christine Boisrobert agreed to take the lead on this initiative and coordinate efforts (e.g. meeting organization), with support from Pablo Juliano and Bala Balasubramaniam.

As a potential means to better mesh GHI's activities with IFT's in coming years, Pablo Juliano suggested for GHI to propose **Roundtable sessions** on various topics in the IFT Scientific Program. The Roundtable format encourages higher participation levels from IFT attendees. By moderating such sessions, GHI would draw interested parties on a particular topic, thereby facilitating the formation of specialized working groups as well as fostering onsite discussions among a larger group of scientific experts in that topic (see Agenda Item 5).

Action Item: To further strengthen the relationship between the two organizations, Rick Stier suggested that GHI write a proposal for a **2-day pre-annual meeting short course on Global Harmonization** at the **2009 IFT Annual Meeting & Food Expo** in Anaheim, CA. An alternative would be to propose a 1-day Conference on Global Harmonization prior to the Meeting. This program would be set up with support from most IFT Divisions (e.g. International, Nonthermal, Food Engineering, and Food Laws & Regulations). Christine Boisrobert further suggested that the agenda for the 2-day short course mirror the chapters in the GHI book to be published in 2009 (see Agenda Item 6). Similarly, contributing authors would be invited to join the course faculty.

Action item: Rick Stier, Pablo Juliano, Mickey Parish, James How, John Surak and Larry Keener have volunteered to be members of the organizing committee for the next **GHI Working Group Meeting** to be held in conjunction with the 2009 IFT Annual Meeting & Food Expo in Anaheim, CA. All present agreed that Sunday morning and the International Hospitality Lounge were probably the most suitable time and place for such meeting. The committee will be responsible for making timely and proper arrangements for the meeting via conference calls (e.g. meeting objectives, agenda, communication and invitation to stakeholders, etc...).

Agenda Item 5: Specialized Working Groups

Now that several issues have been selected to serve as examples for the proposed **GHI scientific consensus process** (see Agenda Item 2), GHI needs to send out invitations to interested scientific parties to form specialized working groups to address each issue.

In addition to the aforementioned topics, Larry Keener proposed "**Mycotoxins**" as a fifth subject. Amongst potential scientific stakeholders for this issue, Larry mentioned the European Federation of Food Science and Technology (EFFoST), the International Association for Cereal Science and Technology (ICC), and the International Organisation of Spice Trading Associations (IOSTA).

Once formed, these scientific working parties will **draft statements for review and final approval by scientific experts**. These experts first must be recognized by peer consensus as experts in their field and be sanctioned by the GHI Supervisory Board. The intended result of this iterative process is a **scientific consensus recommendation** to be available for regulators around the world. It should also be noted that this consensus process must be dynamic based on the continuous progress of science.

During the meeting, participants discussed the role of government scientists within the GHI organization. In addition to give their individual scientific insights, their role is seen as one of communication, i.e. to circulate the resultant scientific white papers to the various stakeholders within their respective agencies as a basis for informed decision-making.

Agenda Item 6: GHI Book

GHI has successfully submitted a book proposal to Academic Press/Elsevier, entitled “Ensuring Global Food Safety: Exploring Global Harmonization.” This book, slated for publication in May 2009, aims to generate interest and raise awareness on current discrepancies in food safety legislation and regulations worldwide and to discuss possible means of improvement. Now that this project has been approved, GHI needs to contact the proposed authors and confirm their collaboration. This process has been initiated during the IFT meeting.

Furthermore, GHI is seeking suggestions for pertinent authors on some of the topics covered in the book. In this process, GHI is striving to maintain a **balanced international representation**. Similarly, GHI would ideally like to associate an author from industry with an academic counterpart for each chapter.

A few suggestions were given during the meeting. Larry Keener will send the current book outline to the meeting participants for additional ones.

These minutes are an attempt to accurately reflect the discussions during the meeting.

Ch. Boisrobert

July 11, 2008.

APPENDIX 1 – Participants

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	E-mail	Country
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