

Charter for WFO Scientific Council

I. Preamble and Mandate

In 2019, the WFO General Assembly believed the time was ripe and the need urgent to further enhance the sound-science perspectives of their policies and positions. To that end, the General Assembly adopted the principle of science-based approach followed by the establishment of a Scientific Council within the WFO structure, by the Board.

Following a global scouting of suitable candidates for the Scientific Council, on 29 May 2020, a letter by the WFO President went out to selected scientists from a broad range of disciplines that included the following invitation:

“We are creating a Scientific high-level commission, to address the challenges that we are all going to face, giving voice to reason, science, and hope. Including every player: farmers, nature, economy, civil society, science, and ethics. To this extent, we are contacting eminent scientists like you directly, to create an interface between different scientific fields, able to propose game changing ideas and to publish and present them at the most important tables in the world.

We foresee this network to be free and forward-thinking, to support it in funding with our cooperation in applying for national and international research grants, and to discuss the proposed ideas with the leading scientists already facing them for other stakeholders’ groups. Travel expenses and accommodation will be provided for you at the most prestigious upcoming meetings in the world of policy making.”

The Scientific Council constituted itself with 15 scientists for the first time on 30 July 2020. The Scientific Council has since then supported WFO providing advice and comment on science-related issues in policies, publishing frameworks and papers and participating in global processes in their scientific capacity. On the basis of these initial experiences during the first year, the following charter procedures are suggested.

II. Membership of the Scientific Council

1. Researchers and scientists qualify for the Scientific Council if they have a track record of independent scientific research and publication, and if they have a long-standing knowledge of and engagement with global food systems.
2. Membership can be accepted following an invitation by the WFO President.
3. The Governance Committee may propose potential members of the Scientific Council who will then be invited by WFO President. Members may withdraw their membership at any given time in writing to the WFO President.
4. Membership at the Scientific Council may be revoked by the Board of WFO, also upon motivated recommendations by the Governance Committee.
5. Members serve as individuals in their personal capacity, i.e., they are not representing or committing their hosting or employing organizations on any positions, opinions or perspectives. It is the responsibility of the member to ensure consent of their respective hosting or employing organization to the membership on the Scientific Council.
6. Members may at no time and at no occasion claim, in public or in private, that they speak on behalf of, or advocate on behalf of the WFO or members of the WFO. Specific exemptions may be granted only in case of explicit written mandates by either the Secretariat or the Board for a particular assignment but should generally be avoided in order to protect the scientific integrity and independence of the Scientific Council.

III. The Governance Committee of the Scientific Council

1. The Governance Committee oversees and facilitates the relationship between the Scientific Council and the WFO.
2. The Governance Committee may not interfere with the scientific independence of the Scientific Council.
3. The Governance Committee is composed of the following representatives:
 - a. The WFO Advocacy, Partnership and Policy Development Practice Leader.
 - b. A WFO Board member representative (to be selected by the Board). Her/his mandate cannot exceed her/his mandate as a Board member.
 - c. The Coordinator of the Scientific Council (to be appointed and revoked by the Secretary General)
 - d. Two members of the Scientific Council (to be selected by the other members of the Scientific Council every two years)
4. The Governance Committee meets at least twice per year, either on its own initiative, or within four weeks of being requested by either members of the Scientific Council, or the WFO Secretary General, or a Secretariat staff member acting on behalf of the Secretary General.
5. The Governance Committee strives to decide in consensus. Where consensus is not possible, a majority vote at quorum will decide. Quorum is achieved with three members present at a meeting which was called with 10 days notice.
6. The Governance Committee steers the activities of the Scientific Council helping to set up scientific research and the involved scientific areas. Also, it supervises the ongoing development of the studies and related scientific products.

The Governance Committee produces an annual report of activities of the Scientific Council.

IV. Activities of the WFO Scientific Council

1. The Scientific Council is an independent body and is composed of Scientists with expertise in the scientific sectors belonging to production and consumption in food systems.
2. The Scientific Council is formed by independent scientists and the Governance Committee.
3. The Scientific Council of WFO is activated by the Governance Committee either on an agreed annual plan or on ad hoc basis.
4. The Scientific Council may serve at the request of WFO on an on-call basis, where it will provide independent scientific evidence-based input to, preparation of and guidance on WFO's policy and positions when timely and appropriate. The Scientific Council will then function as a 'sounding-board' designed to build and extend the fact-based / science-facing component on activities of the WFO.
5. Members of the Scientific Council may create scientific publications of various types and publish them as the Scientific Council of the World Farmers' Organisation. Such publications must meet three conditions: a) they must be actively co-authored or peer-reviewed by at least five members of the Scientific Council, b) they must be submitted to all members of the Scientific Council for a review period of at least two weeks, c) they must be shown to the Governance Committee for a review period of at least two weeks on whether any material interests of the WFO are impacted by the publication. If such interests are not violated, then the Governance Committee shall not withhold approval.
6. In principle, in order to protect the scientific integrity and independence of the Scientific Council, members receive no regular reimbursement or fees for their services on the Scientific Council. However, for particular projects on a case-by-case basis, members may receive project-specific fees for contributions. Such projects may only be solicited or initiated by the WFO, and not by the Scientific Council.

V. Adoption of and amendments to the Charter of the WFO Scientific Council

Adoption of the Charter must be endorsed by the WFO Board, before entering into force. The Governance Committee may propose amendments to the Charter, which must be even so endorsed by the WFO Board.