

**INTER-AGENCY WORKING GROUP FOR SPECIALIZED NUTRITIOUS FOOD PRODUCTS**  
**TERMS OF REFERENCE**  
**October 2016**

**INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this document is to outline the Terms of Reference of the Inter-agency working group on Specialized Nutritious Food Products (SNFPs)<sup>1</sup>.

This group was formed in 2012<sup>2</sup>, in order to formalize collaboration in applying WHO's recommended nutrient values for foods for treating MAM and SAM into workable specifications for procurement purposes. UNICEF and MSF have since 2006 held regular Interagency Quality Assurance Meetings for SNFPs. WFP joined these meetings starting in 2010.

Achievements to date include increased collaboration regarding products, programs, and processes related to specialized nutritious food products. Inter-agency efforts include the harmonization of specifications for RUTF, RUSF and LNS-MQ, in addition to establishing a collaborative working platform related to improving the quality and safety of SNFPs used in humanitarian and development contexts, as well as continued gathering and sharing of evidence.

This document lays out the Terms of Reference (TOR) for this inter-agency group with the aim of formalizing the function and communication channels around the goal, objectives, and membership. This inter-agency group *is not* a normative body, but rather aims to outline the parameters to more effectively engage the wide range of stakeholders<sup>3</sup>, including WHO and FAO as the normative bodies involved or affected by the inter-agency work, and also aims to systematize the delivery of the inter-agency work.

**OVERARCHING GOAL:**

The overarching goal of the inter-agency group is to ensure that SNFPs are formulated, produced, and used in a manner that complies with international standards and is consistent with guidance from normative bodies on nutritional value and food safety, also taking into account advances in science, including product related R&D, operational needs of agencies, and empirical understanding of costs and effectiveness.

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. Develop and update harmonized specifications for procurement of SNFPs in line with evolving standards
2. Exchange information to further harmonize the approach for products/ manufacturers approval process

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<sup>1</sup> The specialized nutritious food products covered by this group include, but are not limited to, therapeutic milks, Ready- to-use Use Therapeutic Foods (RUTFs), Lipid-based Nutrient Supplements (LNS) (i.e. Ready to Use Supplementary Food (RUSF) and LNS- Medium Quantity (MQ) and LNS Small Quantity (SQ)), Micronutrient Powders (MNPs), Fortified Blended Foods (FBFs), such as Super Cereal Plus, and fortified staples (rice, corn and wheat flour, vegetable oil), as well as emergency food formulations such as high energy biscuits (HEB).

<sup>2</sup> Original organizations to meet as a group included WFP, USAID, USDA. In 2014 UNICEF and MSF joined the inter-agency group.

<sup>3</sup> Stakeholders include, but are not limited to: NGOs, normative bodies, manufacturers, local governments.

3. Share information on product quality concerns and define and promote a harmonized response to adverse food safety events
4. Identify and advocate for local capacity development<sup>4</sup> for SNFPs production
5. Liaise with normative bodies and governments and advocate for SNFP quality and standards

It is also significant to define that this inter-agency group *does not*:

- set normative standards
- develop programming guidelines (e.g. guidance for prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition)
- conduct original research (although individual members may be engaged in research projects)
- function as a clearinghouse for queries or comments on SNFPs

### **CRITERIA FOR ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIP**

It is recognized that a range of expertise is needed in the group, including on nutrition, food technology, food quality, procurement, supply chain, operations/logistics.

Member organizations must meet all of the following criteria:

1. Food assistance organization with a global mandate/involvement in nutrition
2. Involved and committed to overall quality management of SNFPs, including but not limited to the following areas: product specification development or updating, product/manufacture auditing and selection, supply chain assessment, procurement, delivery, collection and sharing of data throughout the supply chain.
3. Do not have any conflict of interest with the objectives of the group
4. Committed to reciprocity: the organization should be able to contribute to achieving the goals of the group
5. Have dedicated staff for SNFP quality assurance

This working group consists of the following founding members: UNICEF, USAID, WFP, MSF. Participation in specific inter-agency meeting sessions is by invitation only, based on needed input from:

- Donors
- Implementing Partners
- Regulatory/normative bodies
- Manufacturers
- Procurement service agents
- Academia
- Other relevant expertise (including programming experts)

### **WORKING RULES**

1. At least one annual face-to-face meeting will be organized and chaired by member organizations on a rotating basis. Additional (virtual) sub-group meetings can be scheduled on an ad hoc basis, or through agreed upon side meetings at other major related events.

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<sup>4</sup> Local capacity development examples: Food safety testing, raw material sourcing, increasing the supplier base, business case development

2. An annual work plan will be developed and agreed upon.
3. The Food Aid Quality Review (FAQR) team housed at Tufts University and funded by USAID will act as secretariat until May 2018 with the goal of passing on this role to one of the agencies.
4. The secretariat will update the inter-agency work streams<sup>5</sup> at least every 6 months.
5. Membership of additional organizations' applications for membership may be reviewed on an ad hoc basis. Membership is based on the above membership criteria and granted only at the discretion and by consensus of the current members.
6. The inter-agency group will communicate with all stakeholders involved in SNFPs to promote work transparency and facilitate information sharing. The inter-agency group recognizes that these external communications may shape the market surroundings of SNFPs.
7. To further the effectiveness of the inter-agency work, this group will also internally feedback evidence and information from their partners on issues related to the goals and objectives of this group.
8. Members commit to mutual information sharing within the inter-agency working group.
9. Consensus is expected, but decisions may be made by majority. Points of disagreement should be openly stated and noted.
10. Outputs of the group are not automatically endorsed by each of the group members. The member agencies will agree to take on board and implement the recommendations that are in line with their own agencies' mandate, institutional policies, regulations and procedures.
11. All organizations and individual members commit to ensure confidentiality when required.
12. The agenda and scope of discussions will be primarily linked to the inter-agency work plan.
13. Additional technical experts or relevant stakeholders can be invited to the inter-agency meetings on an ad hoc basis to discuss a specific issue related to the defined objectives and work plan.
14. Minutes including points of consensus, disagreement and action points will be recorded at each meeting. Internal summaries will be shared through appropriate media. External summaries will be shared through other platforms.

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<sup>5</sup> Work streams were identified during the May 2016 meeting as well as a work stream template. Current work streams include: harmonized procurement specifications, product evaluation, auditing, supplier approval process, food quality assurance, crisis management, local / regional procurement, programmatic issues, CODEX, priority research areas.