

## **Terms of Reference (ToR)**

### **SC-3 Development of Scientific Consensus on Palm Oil as a Food Ingredient**

#### **A. Background**

Palm oil is one of the world's most productive and widely used crops, accounting for around 40% of global demand for vegetable oil. Malaysia and Indonesia are the two largest producers, supplying local and international markets. Despite its significant role in the global economy, the palm oil industry has faced decades of criticism, largely due to misleading information spread by consumer protection organizations and anti-palm oil campaigns. These campaigns have contributed to misconceptions about palm oil, particularly by labelling it as a harmful saturated fat similar to animal fats, with claims that it raises blood cholesterol levels and increases the risk of coronary heart disease.

Palm oil, which is extracted from the mesocarp of the palm fruit, is a balanced oil consisting of about 50% saturated fatty acids and 50% unsaturated fatty acids. It does not contain any trans-unsaturated fatty acid isomers. Therefore, when consumed appropriately, palm oil is healthier than animal oils when it comes to maintaining desirable plasma cholesterol and lipoprotein levels. However, there is a lack of conclusive data from palm oil producing countries and data on the health effects of palm oil consumption. Therefore, having a good understanding of the nutritional effects of palm oil on health is crucially needed to help combat the misleading facts on palm oil nutrition.

Despite these positive attributes, there is a lack of conclusive data from palm oil-producing countries on the long-term health effects of palm oil consumption. This gap in scientific evidence has fuelled ongoing confusion and perpetuated misinformation about palm oil's nutritional benefits and risks. A multidisciplinary expert consensus meeting will be held in Indonesia and Malaysia to address these concerns and provide accurate, science-based information. The goal of this meeting is to review the latest scientific findings on palm oil's health impacts while also addressing environmental and food security issues related to its production. By bringing together experts in nutrition, health, agriculture, and sustainability, the meeting aims to provide a balanced, evidence-backed perspective on palm oil, helping to clarify its role in human health and shaping informed consumer and policy decisions.

## **B. Problem Statement**

Saturated fatty acids, especially saturated fatty acids from animal fats, have long been associated with cardiovascular disease. Palm oil, which contains around 50 % saturated fatty acids, is falsely attributed to an image that gives a similar detrimental health effect like the saturated fats from animals and industrial trans-fatty acids. This negative accusation against palm oil can lead to instability in the export market and economic losses. Therefore, there is a need to provide a summary of scientific evidence/references for the effects of palm oil intake compared to other dietary fats. Hence, this project will help to clarify the dietary guidelines that a diet containing palm oil is not the villain we once thought they were in the public's interest.

## **C. Objective**

The objectives of this study are:

- a. To provide an extensive literature review on the health effects of palm oil intake in lipid profile, glycaemic outcomes, and body weight changes.
- b. To summarise and recommend the latest health facts based on the compilation of recent scientific evidence as a reference for health regulatory agencies and palm oil nutritional promotional activities.
- c. To develop a consensus document on the role of palm oil in food safety, nutrition, and sustainability, based on the latest scientific evidence.

## **D. Scope of Work**

The successful implementer(s) will be responsible for the following:

### **1. Expert Selection:**

- a. Identify and invite internationally recognized experts from Indonesia and Malaysia in the fields of food science, nutrition, toxicology, sustainability, and veterinary science.
- b. The method of expert identification should be elaborated to ensure its representativeness and a diversity of experts representing various perspectives and expertise.
- c. The expert panel should include experts from the Scientific Committee of the CPOPC

### **2. Meeting Organization:**

- a. Organize and facilitate a series of expert consensus meetings in Indonesia and Malaysia.
- b. Develop a detailed agenda for the meeting, covering key topics such as:
  - i. Nutritional profile of palm oil

- ii. Saturated fatty acid content on palm oil and its impact on health effects of palm oil intake in lipid profile, glycaemic outcomes and body weight changes.
  - iii. Contaminants in palm oil and their potential health risks
  - iv. Sustainability practices in palm oil production
  - v. The role of palm oil in food security and economic development
- 3. Literature Review and Evidence Synthesis:
  - a. Conduct a comprehensive literature review on the scientific evidence related to the effect of palm oil intake on lipid profile, glycaemic outcomes, and body weight changes
  - b. Conduct a comprehensive literature review on the scientific evidence related to palm oil and its impact on health, the environment, and food security.
  - c. Synthesize the findings from the literature review and expert discussions to develop a scientific consensus document.
- 4. Consensus Document Development:
  - a. Draft a clear and concise consensus document that addresses the key questions and concerns about palm oil.
  - b. Ensure the document is evidence-based, scientifically sound, and communicates complex information clearly and understandably.
  - c. Incorporate feedback from experts and stakeholders to refine the document.
- 5. Dissemination and Communication:
  - a. Develop a communication strategy to disseminate the consensus document to relevant stakeholders, including policymakers, industry representatives, scientists, and consumers.
  - b. Organize a press conference or webinar to launch the consensus document and engage with the media and the public.
  - c.

## **E. Output**

- a. A detailed report on the health effects of palm oil intake in lipid profile, glycaemic outcomes, and body weight changes.
- b. A final consensus document that addresses the key questions and concerns about palm oil that can be used as a reference for regulatory agencies and palm oil nutritional promotional activities.
- c. A presentation summarizing the key findings of the consensus document.

d. A communication plan to disseminate the consensus document.

**F. Project Duration and Timeline**

The study is expected to be carried out in four (4) months in 2024-2025.

**G. Budget**

The proposed budget for this study is USD20,000.

**H. Evaluation Criteria**

The implementer(s) will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- a. Expertise and experience in the relevant fields.
- b. Ability to organize and facilitate a high-quality expert consensus meeting.
- c. Quality of the literature review and evidence synthesis.
- d. Clarity and comprehensiveness of the consensus document.
- e. Effectiveness of the communication and dissemination strategy.
- f. Adherence to the project timeline and budget details.

We encourage interested organizations to submit proposals outlining their approach, qualifications and proposed detailed budget.