



THE GLOBAL STANDARD
FOR LIVESTOCK DATA

Terms of Reference for the ICAR Functional Traits Working Group

Version July, 2024

Network. Guidelines. Certification.

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1 Background

The following sections cover the key elements of the Terms of Reference for the Functional Traits Working Group (FT-WG).

These revised ToR have been approved by ICAR Board at its meeting on 29th November of 2022.

2 Context

The FT-WG is one element of ICAR's Group structure as elaborated [here](#) on the ICAR website. As a working group:

- a. It is a permanent,
- b. Its chair is appointed by the Board of ICAR,
- c. Its members are appointed by the Chief Executive of ICAR,
- d. It is responsible for policy relating to services to members.

The main purpose of the FT-WG is to achieve a number of objectives related specifically to functional traits.

Functional traits are all traits, except milk production, conformation, feed intake and green-house gases, which affect the ability of an animal to perform the functions required for it in a profitable farming enterprise. The trait areas to be considered as Functional Traits are:

- a. general health
- b. udder health
- c. female and male fertility
- d. calving ease and stillbirth
- e. feet and legs problems
- f. workability
- g. survival
- h. metabolic stress
- i. welfare related traits

3 Objectives of the FT-WG

The objectives of the FTWG are to:

- a. Provide a forum for members of ICAR to collaborate, exchange information and learn from each other on all aspects of the recording of Functional Traits.
- b. Maintain, update, promote and extend universal guidelines for the recording of Functional Traits in dairy cattle, world-wide.
- c. Conduct and report the results of periodic international surveys on Functional Traits in dairy cattle, world-wide.

- d. Develop, provide and promote a system and standards for functional trait (services) which will form the basis of the service that ICAR will provide to members of ICAR on a user-pays basis.
- e. Facilitate and co-ordinate international collaboration in research and development on the recording, herd management, benchmarking, and genetic improvement of Functional Traits.

4 Governance

The ICAR FT-WG will comprise a Chairperson appointed by the ICAR Board and members appointed by the ICAR Chief Executive. The term of membership and voting rights of members will be determined at the time of appointment and may be reviewed from time to time.

All ICAR Group members are required to comply with the most recent version of ICAR's Conflicts of Interest Policy as [here](#).

The FT-WG will comprise members who cover some or all, depending on the level of interest and participation in ICAR activities, of the following interests:

- a. Geographical regions: Europe (West and East), North America, South & Central America, Asia, Africa & Oceania.
- b. Technical expertise: animal recording, genetics, animal health, animal nutrition, animal reproduction, and animal physiology.
- c. Supporters of ICAR Participation in Functional Traits: Recording Organisations, Breed Associations, Breeding Organisations and Research Organisations.

The Committee, may from time to time, create advisory committees to provide specialist and expert advice on topics of relevance to achieving the objectives of the Group.

5 Chair duties

- a. Group Composition – in consultation with ICAR Secretariat and ICAR Board ensure membership is comprised of interested and enthusiastic members representing active stakeholders.
- b. Business and Group Meetings – takes initiative for dates, agenda and minutes in consultation with Secretariat. Organise at least two meetings per year, 3 to 4 meetings per year are recommended.
- c. Coordinate relationships with other ICAR groups (see paragraph 8). Have awareness of activities going on in other groups.
- d. Group activities - in consultation with the group members, establish priorities with agreed duties of group members and agreed deliverables and timescale. Accomplishment of the tasks in time and activities leading to a satisfactory outcome.
- e. Communications with the ICAR Board. See paragraph 7.

6 Secretariat

Role of ICAR Secretariat in providing support for the FT-WG:

- a. Group Meetings - agree dates and venues in consultation with Chairperson, provide notice of meetings to members, agree agenda with Chairperson, distribute agenda, agree minutes with Chairperson, and distribute minutes.
- b. Group Composition - maintain list of Group members with up-to-date contact details, in consultation with Chairperson and ICAR Board ensure membership is comprised of interested and enthusiastic members representing active stakeholders.
- c. Website - maintain website and forum ensuring contents are up-to-date and relevant according to the ToR and priorities agreed by the FT-WG.

7 Communications with the ICAR Board

- a. Annual report of the FT-WG Chairperson to the Board.
- b. The ICAR Staff support person as identified from time to time by the ICAR Chief Executive. All communications for the Group are to be copied to this person.
- c. Participation of the Chairperson in meetings with the Board, normally on an annual basis coinciding with the ICAR Annual Meetings.

8 Relationships with Other ICAR Groups

Relationships between FT-WG and other ICAR Groups are as summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Relationship with other ICAR Groups and other institutions.

Group	Purpose of Relationship	Method of maintaining relationship
Interbull Sub Committee (IB-SC)	For all matters related to genetic evaluations for which Interbull has the over-riding responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By providing leadership for functional trait recording. • Overlapping membership. • Joint expert advisory group(s) as required.
Interbeef Working Group (Interbeef-WG)	For possible future collaboration in covering Functional Traits relevant to Beef breeds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By providing leadership for functional trait recording. • Overlapping membership. d. Joint expert advisory group(s) as required.
Conformation Recording Working Group (CR-WG)	To ensure no overlap in traits and a consistent and complementary approach to trait definitions, recording guidelines and determining importance in breeding objectives & selection criteria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By providing leadership for functional trait recording. • Overlapping membership. e. Joint expert advisory group(s) as required.

Group	Purpose of Relationship	Method of maintaining relationship
Artificial insemination and related technologies (AI&RT-WG)	To ensure guidelines for recording inseminations, for which the A&RT-WG has responsibility, are consistent with the data required for assessing functional traits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By providing leadership for functional trait recording. • Overlapping membership. • Joint expert advisory group(s) as required.
Animal data exchange (ADE-WG)	To ensure standards for data exchange encompass data relevant for recording of functional traits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By providing leadership for functional trait recording. • Overlapping membership as required. • Joint expert advisory group(s) as required.
IDF and OIE	Standardisation of health events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in relevant conferences and working groups.
Others	Ensure any other standards, guidelines and services involving a recording or sampling device are developed using a shared ICAR philosophy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication of plans and progress. • Overlapping membership as needed. • Joint expert advisory group(s) as required.

9 Priorities

Priorities are to be established by the FT-WG taking account of its terms of reference and any requests from the ICAR Chief Executive.

The priorities for FT-WG in the next year can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Priorities for FT-WG in 2024.

Priority	Description
1	Guideline for BCS related to health and welfare.
2	Elaboration of base for guidelines on use of animal sensors for health and welfare context of herd management and genetics.
3	Partial update of other guidelines.