

**Procedure and requirements for the acceptance of associate partners in the Welfare Quality Network**

**Introduction**

The Welfare Quality Network is a collaborative effort of a large group of former partners of the Welfare Quality® project. The Network focuses on scientific exchange and activities designed to contribute to the further development of the Welfare Quality® animal welfare assessment systems. The Welfare Quality Network is open for other scientific institutions that work in this area to join the Network as full partners.

The Welfare Quality Network also aims to provide relevant knowledge and services to stakeholders in animal production chains who would like to implement or use the Welfare Quality® animal welfare assessment systems. Although the Network is a scientific effort, the current partners firmly believe that an open exchange with stakeholders who wish to use the WQ protocols will benefit both parties and enable continued development of the protocols. Therefore, the Welfare Quality Network invites stakeholders to become associate partners to the Network.

Individuals who leave an organisation that is a partner in the Welfare Quality Network may apply to remain in the Network as an associate partner by completing and submitting the entrance request and paying the appropriate fee.

This document describes the rights of associate partners and the procedure for their acceptance in the Welfare Quality Network.

**Relevant expertise and experience**

New associate partners must demonstrate appropriate knowledge and interest in promoting and safeguarding farm animal welfare, and particularly in the ongoing development and upgrading of welfare assessment systems for the various animal types.

**Code of conduct**

New associate partners need to agree to and sign a code of conduct (See Annex 1).

**Fees**

New partners are requested to pay an entry fee (€ 2,500) plus the fee of the entry year. Current annual fees are €250 for scientific partners and €500 for associate partners.

**Procedure**

Stakeholders who wish to become an associate of the Welfare Quality Network must complete the entry request (ANNEX 2) and submit this to the Coordinator of the Welfare Quality Network. The Management Team will then advise the General Assembly regarding acceptance. The General Assembly will take the final decision.

ANNEX 1

***Code of Conduct***

***For associates of the Welfare Quality Network (WQN)***

Associates of the Welfare Quality Network (WQN) agree to uphold and be governed by the commitments, principles and rules set out in this Code of Conduct. The Code governs the terms and conditions of associate partnership; it is not a legally binding document and not enforceable by law.

It is fundamental to the integrity, credibility and progress of the Welfare Quality Network (WQN) that every associate partner supports and promotes the WQN, and works towards the continued development and implementation of the Welfare Quality® animal welfare assessment systems.

**1. Promotion and Commitment**

1.1 Associates will acknowledge their membership of the WQN and its practices.

1.2 Associates will promote this commitment throughout their own organization (if applicable).

1.3 Regular attendance of the associates at WQN meetings is expected.

1.4 Associate partners can participate in discussion but are not able to vote.

**2. Highest ethics and integrity**

2.1 Associates agree to conduct themselves in all activities related to the WQN with the highest degree of ethics and integrity.

2.2 Associates agree to operate in accordance with all applicable laws when undertaking any activities related to the WQN.

**3. Claims**

3.1 Associates will not make independent claims about the use of part or all of any of the WQ welfare assessment systems without adequate WQN training and certification.

3.2. Associates who use only certain measures in an assessment system must make it clear that any claim is ‘based on those parameters alone’.

**4. Implementation**

4.1 Associates in all stages of the supply chain and in other relevant associate organizations will work towards the implementation of the goals of the WQN.

4.2 Associates will strive to secure adequate resources within their organization (if applicable) to meet their commitment to the WQN objectives.

4.3 Relevant personnel within associate organizations will share appropriate information that enables them to work towards the WQN objectives.

**5. Advertisement and Communication**

5.1 Associates may identify their relationship with the WQN in advertising and marketing materials, but may not suggest WQN endorsement of their products.

5.2 The Chair of the WQN Management Team is the only approved spokesperson for specific WQN activities or strategies.

5.3 The Management Team will approve all external communication messages and statements concerning the WQN.

5.4 The basic principle of the WQN is to openly communicate its work as broadly as possible. So, if an associate prefers that a specific piece of their information is not to be communicated outside the WQN then this must be clearly indicated at the time of sharing.

**6. Conflict of Interests**

6.1 If an associate feels unable to share pertinent information due to a conflict of interests, then this must be declared and the associate can withdraw from that particular discussion.

**7. Breaches of this Code**

7.1 Grievances and disputes should be resolved when possible by the Partners and associates. If that fails the WQN coordinator shall attempt resolution but if it is still not achieved, then the grievance/dispute can be presented to the Management Team who will be the final arbiter. All discussions, proceedings and communications shall remain confidential to the parties involved.

7.2 Breaches of this Code may lead to exclusion from the WQN.

**8. End of Code of Conduct**

8.1 This Code terminates if the WQN is terminated

8.2 Competitive relevant information may not be disclosed even after the termination of this Code.

**9. Miscellaneous**

New associates may join the WQN at any time

Name: ……………………………………………………………………

Representing (Organisation): ……………………………………………………………

Date:

Signature

**ANNEX 2**



**Request to become associate partner in the Welfare Quality Network**

|  |
| --- |
| **Applicant (organisation, name(s) of representative)** |
| **Experience/expertise in animal welfare assessment** |
| **Expected contribution to the further development of the Welfare Quality® approach** |
|  |
| **References (e.g. guidelines for suppliers, specific labelling system, social responsibility strategy,…)** |