



PRINCIPLES FOR RESEARCH CONDUCT

Common ground for objective conclusions

Good evidence-based policy making depends - at least in part - on good evidence. In this context, the food industry emphasises the need for sound, robust and transparent science and research.

With this in mind, the food sector has developed a set of Principles for Research Conduct, which aim at creating a balanced common basis on which science can be discussed objectively.

The principles should be applicable to any research, whether or not it is industry-funded. The same rigorous standards should always be applied to safeguard science against particular interests, be they financial, commercial, ideological, etc. If the principles proposed hereby are adopted by researchers, irrespective of their affiliation, there would be virtually no reason to disagree with a research conclusion, unless the science itself is disputed, or the level of uncertainty intrinsic to it.

The main Principles of Research Conduct identified by FoodDrinkEurope experts as a common basis are:

Scientific robustness:

1. Research should be driven by clearly stated *a priori* hypotheses and analyses and follow the principles of scientific rigor, including discussion of limitations and challenges of the work, in order to provide robust evaluations.
2. Scientific criteria (methodology and design, data quality and validation, and statistical analysis) should be applied.
3. These criteria are universal and shall apply equally to all research, irrespective of industry support. The funding source shall never affect the genesis, conduct or outcome of the research.

Governance:

1. Rigorous standards should be applied to the conduct of industry-funded research. It is important to clarify upfront/early the degree of involvement of industry and its role in the research in order to identify the potential conflicts of interest that might occur.
2. Independent peer review is seen as the best method to maintain standards of quality, improve performance, and provide credibility to scientific research. As such, a peer-review publication should be a primary output of any research efforts, regardless of results.

Transparency:

1. Transparency and openness about research collaborations with partners such as universities and as part of consortia, upfront/early disclosure of funding and/or affiliations is essential.
2. Publication of the scientific research in credible, independent peer-reviewed journals to ensure the widest possible reach within the scientific community is crucial, in particular work conducted to substantiate health claims and to support safety assessments.
3. All research will be published, independently of the results.
4. Publication of specific research may be delayed due to confidentiality and competitive reasons. Declaration of confidentiality is not a question on the outcome of a research but on the subject in general. Industry, as academic institutions do, usually protects intellectual property rights, which influences the publication of research outcomes since certain data must be kept confidential for a defined period of time.

Objectivity:

1. By targeting separately lobbying and scientific research, the independence of the latter will be ensured.

These principles equally apply to public-private partnerships where transparency on funding, interests and affiliations is essential.

With the adoption of these Principles the food industry reiterates its commitment to sound, credible and reliable science and its willingness to further develop it in cooperation with the largest possible number of scientists.

