

**International**

**FOOD INSIGHTS**

**Journal**

**IFIJ**



**UPM**  
UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA  
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

## CODE OF ETHICS

The International Food Insights Journal (IFIJ) aims to publish high-quality research through a rigorous double-blind peer-review process. Achieving this requires review and publication procedures that are comprehensive, impartial, and fair, as the journal's reputation depends greatly on their integrity.

IFIJ's Code of Ethics, which is largely based on the principles upheld by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), sets out standards for good conduct and provides guidance on addressing ethical dilemmas faced by authors, reviewers, and editors. This code is intended to safeguard and strengthen the journal's reputation.

Authors, reviewers, and editors are encouraged to familiarize themselves with these guidelines and direct any questions or concerns to the Editor-in-Chief. The guidelines apply to all manuscripts submitted to IFIJ. It is essential that all parties, particularly authors, reviewers, and editors, uphold the highest standards of ethical behavior in publishing. Compliance with this Code of Ethics is mandatory for all parties involved.

### CODE OF ETHICS FOR AUTHORS

#### Originality

When submitting a manuscript to IFIJ, authors must ensure that it is an original work. If the work and/or words of others are used, they must be properly cited or quoted.

If the manuscript contains material that overlaps with previously published work, work in press, or work under consideration elsewhere, the author must cite this material in the manuscript. The author must also inform IFIJ's Editor-in-Chief of the related work and, if requested, provide a copy of the manuscript.

Manuscripts under review by another journal must be formally withdrawn before submission to IFIJ.

Authors must explicitly cite their own prior work and ideas, even when not quoted verbatim or paraphrased. If exact sentences or paragraphs from the author's earlier work are included, they must appear in quotation marks and be appropriately cited, without compromising the double-blind review process.

Excessive self-citation to artificially inflate citation counts is prohibited. Authors should also avoid self-citations that could compromise the double-blind review process. If self-identifying information is unavoidable, it should be included in the manuscript's Acknowledgements (which are not sent to reviewers) and disclosed to IFIJ's Editor-in-Chief.

Manuscripts previously submitted to IFIJ, reviewed, and rejected may not be resubmitted. If an author wishes to submit a revised version of a previously rejected manuscript, this must be clearly disclosed to the Editor-in-Chief, along with a justification for resubmission.

Authors are strongly encouraged to check their manuscripts for potential plagiarism using reliable plagiarism-detection software (e.g., Turnitin) prior to submission.

## Plagiarism and Self-plagiarism

All manuscripts submitted to IFIJ must be free of plagiarism, falsification, fabrication, or omission of significant material.

Plagiarism takes many forms, including:

- Passing off another's work as one's own;
- Copying or paraphrasing substantial parts of another's work without proper credit;
- Claiming results from research conducted by others.

Plagiarism involves the use of others' published or unpublished ideas, words, or intellectual property without attribution or permission, and presenting them as new and original. Its intent and effect are to mislead the reader about the true contributions of the author. This applies to abstracts, research grant applications, ethics review submissions, and unpublished or published manuscripts in any format (print or electronic).

Authors are expected to explicitly cite the work and ideas of others, even when not quoted verbatim or paraphrased. This standard applies whether the source is published, unpublished, or electronically available.

Self-plagiarism (or "redundancy") occurs when:

- 1) Authors reuse portions of their previous writings (identical or nearly identical sentences or paragraphs) in new papers without quotation or acknowledgement; or
- 2) Authors submit multiple papers that are only minor variations of each other to different journals, without acknowledging related work.

Self-plagiarism is common and may sometimes occur unintentionally, particularly in sections such as Methods, where limited ways of expression exist. While self-plagiarism often violates copyright agreements, there is no universal consensus on whether it constitutes scientific misconduct or how much text reuse is acceptable before it becomes "plagiarism." For this reason, self-plagiarism is not always regarded with the same severity as plagiarism of others' ideas and words. Nevertheless, because publication decisions rely on the novelty and originality of manuscripts, such practices are considered inappropriate and unethical. Self-plagiarism can be minimized or avoided by properly citing one's previous publications whenever relevant.

Authors should therefore minimize recycling of previous writings. If unavoidable, authors must inform the Editor-in-Chief at the time of submission and reference the prior work. Such self-references should be carefully worded to preserve the integrity of the double-blind review process.

If exact sentences or paragraphs from the author's prior work appear in the manuscript, they must be placed in quotation marks and properly cited.

Plagiarism in any form constitutes scientific misconduct and is unacceptable.

Tips for avoiding plagiarism:

- Cite all sources, whether written, spoken, or electronic.
- Keep full records of every source consulted, including dates of access for electronic materials.
- Place quotation marks around any words copied verbatim and provide proper attribution.
- Use your own words when paraphrasing or summarizing, but always cite the source.
- Follow the referencing style required by IFIJ.

## **Multiple Submissions**

Authors should not publish manuscripts describing essentially the same research in more than one journal or primary publication. Submitting the same manuscript to multiple journals concurrently constitutes unethical publishing behavior and is unacceptable.

Manuscripts submitted to IFIJ must not be under consideration elsewhere, in whole or in part, at the time of submission or during the review process. Similarly, authors must not submit to another outlet any work that is in whole or in part under review at IFIJ. Resubmission is permitted only when a manuscript has been formally withdrawn or rejected.

The manuscript must not have been previously published or accepted for publication elsewhere, either in full (including book chapters) or in part (including text, figures, or tables), regardless of language.

## **Submission of Conference Proceeding Papers**

IFIJ does not accept submissions of papers that have been published in full in conference proceedings, as novelty is a key criterion for publication. However, to encourage interdisciplinary contributions, IFIJ may consider unpublished work that has been presented in part at a conference or forum, particularly if the audience was limited or the proceedings had minimal circulation. In such cases, authors must clearly disclose the prior presentation or submission and certify that the manuscript submitted to IFIJ contains substantial new material not included in the earlier version.

## **Conflicts of Interest**

Authors must avoid conflicts of interest, or the appearance of conflicts of interest, throughout the research and publication process. A conflict of interest is any circumstance that, if revealed later, could cause a reasonable reader to feel misled, or cause an author, reviewer, or editor to feel defensive. Conflicts of interest may influence judgment and are not always immediately apparent to others. They may be personal, commercial, political, academic, or financial.

Financial conflicts of interest may include (but are not limited to): employment, research funding (received or pending), stock or share ownership, patents, paid lectures or travel, consultancies, non-financial support, or any fiduciary interest in a company. The perception of a conflict of interest is as damaging as an actual conflict, since both erode trust. Any queries about potential conflicts should be directed to the Editor-in-Chief.

When submitting a manuscript to IFIJ, the corresponding author may recommend up to four potential reviewers. Suggested reviewers must not be co-authors of the manuscript, must not have had prior access to the manuscript, and must not present a conflict of interest. Editors, however, are not obligated to use the recommended reviewers.

Authors should avoid any potential conflict of interest in the selection of editors or reviewers. These requirements apply to both the corresponding author and all co-authors.

Examples of potential conflicts of interest include:

- One of the authors is affiliated with the same institution as the nominated editor or reviewer;
- One of the authors is (or was) a member of IFIJ's Editorial Board;
- One of the authors and the nominated editor or reviewer is currently a co-author on another manuscript.

Authors must not nominate individuals who have already read or provided feedback on the manuscript (or an earlier version), as this would compromise the integrity of the double-blind review process.

## **Authorship Policies**

### ***Authorship***

The corresponding (submitting) author is solely responsible for all communication with the journal and for coordinating communication among co-authors. Before submission, the corresponding author must ensure that:

- All authors are included in the author list;
- The order of authorship has been agreed upon by all authors;
- All authors are fully aware that the manuscript has been submitted.

### ***Change of Authorship***

IFIJ's policy does not support adding or removing authors once a manuscript has been submitted and undergone review. However, in exceptional cases, the Editor-in-Chief may consider a request for authorship changes if the corresponding author provides a clear justification and supporting documentation.

Requests to add author(s) must include:

- The reason for adding new author(s);
- The relevance of the proposed author(s) to the article, with appropriate background information;
- The specific contributions of the new author(s) to the research;
- An explanation of why the author(s) were not included at the time of initial submission.

In addition, a signed statement from all authors must be provided, confirming that they have no objection to the addition.

Requests to remove author(s) must include:

- A clear reason for the removal of the author(s); and
- A signed statement from all authors confirming that they have no objection to the removal.

### ***Authors' Affiliation***

The primary affiliation of each author should be the institution where the majority of the work was conducted. If an author has since moved to another institution, the current address may also be included.

### ***Co-Authorship***

All co-authors must have made significant contributions to the work and share accountability for the results. Authorship and credit should reflect the relative contributions of each individual. Authors must take responsibility and receive authorship credit only for work they have directly performed or to which they have substantially contributed. Other contributions should be acknowledged in the manuscript's acknowledgements or in an endnote.

Students should normally be listed as principal co-authors on multi-authored publications that are substantially derived from their dissertation or thesis.

Authors who analyze data collected by others must explicitly acknowledge the contribution of the original researchers.

The corresponding author is responsible for ensuring that all living co-authors have reviewed the final draft of the manuscript and have given their approval for submission and publication.

### **Copyright Law**

Copyright compliance is an essential ethical requirement. Authors are responsible for ensuring that their manuscripts do not breach copyright law. This includes securing permissions for the use of copyrighted material such as quotations, artwork, tables, or figures taken from other publications or from freely available online sources, before submission to IFIJ.

UPM Press, as the publisher, retains copyright of all articles published in IFIJ. Upon acceptance, authors must submit the IFIJ Copyright Agreement Form to the Editor-in-Chief.

### **Bioethics**

Research involving animal or human subjects must receive prior ethics clearance from the relevant institutional or national body.

For primary research manuscripts (e.g., regular papers, reviews) reporting experiments on live vertebrates and/or higher invertebrates, the corresponding author must confirm that:

- All experiments were conducted in accordance with relevant guidelines, regulations, and institutional requirements; and
- The necessary ethics clearance was obtained from the appropriate authority.

The manuscript must include, in the supplementary information (Methods) section, or, if brief, in the article itself, a statement identifying the institutional and/or licensing committee that approved the experiments (e.g., Malaysia Animals Act 1953 [Act 647]). This statement should also specify:

- Why the chosen animal species or model was appropriate to address the scientific objectives; and
- Where applicable, the study's relevance to human biology.

Research involving animals must comply with the guidelines for the care and use of animals in research, all legal requirements of the country where the work was carried out, and all relevant institutional regulations.

For experiments involving human subjects, authors must:

- Identify the approving ethics committee; and
- Provide a statement confirming that informed consent was obtained from all participants.

### **Manuscript Withdrawal**

Authors may request the withdrawal of a manuscript by writing to the Editor-in-Chief. Such requests are normally permitted within two weeks of the initial submission or before the peer-review process begins, whichever occurs first.

If an author withdraws a manuscript after the peer-review process has begun, IFIJ reserves the right to reject the paper regardless of the status of the reviewers' evaluations.

### **Timeliness**

Authors are expected to submit manuscript revisions promptly. If an author is unable to meet the specified deadline, they should contact IFIJ's Editor-in-Chief as soon as possible to request an extension. In exceptional cases, withdrawal from the review process may be considered as an alternative.

## **CODE OF ETHICS FOR REVIEWERS AND EDITORS**

### **Reciprocity**

Reviewing manuscripts is a professional responsibility that contributes significantly to the advancement of the field and should be actively encouraged. Scholars who submit manuscripts to IFIJ are generally expected to reciprocate by accepting invitations to review for the journal when requested.

## **Double-Blind Peer-Review**

### ***Peer Review Process***

IFIJ follows a double-blind peer-review system, whereby the identities of both authors and reviewers remain confidential. Peer review is fundamental to ensuring the integrity of the scientific publication process and the dissemination of high-quality research. Reviewers, selected by the editors, provide objective written assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of submitted manuscripts, with the goal of improving clarity, accuracy, and the overall quality of published work.

### ***Confidentiality***

Authors must respect the confidentiality of the review process and refrain from revealing their identity to reviewers. Manuscripts should not contain self-identifying information, and authors should not post submitted versions (including working papers or drafts) on publicly accessible websites where they may be discovered by potential reviewers. Similarly, reviewers must not disclose their identities to authors. If a reviewer becomes aware of the identity of an author or co-author, this would normally constitute grounds for declining the review.

### ***Objectivity and Conflicts of Interest***

Reviewers should provide objective, constructive, and unbiased feedback. They must avoid any conduct, written, verbal, or otherwise, that might compromise anonymity or introduce bias. Individuals with major competing interests (e.g., commercial, financial, political, or ideological) or with direct involvement in the research subject should not serve as reviewers.

### ***Editorial Standards***

Authors must not nominate as reviewers or editors individuals who have already read and provided comments on the manuscript or earlier versions, as this would compromise the double-blind process. Where articles in IFIJ are published without undergoing double-blind review, for example, introductory articles by guest editors for special issues, this must be clearly indicated in the acknowledgements.

### ***Reviewer Qualifications***

Regular reviewers for IFIJ must meet minimum standards of expertise, demonstrated by their background in original research, peer-reviewed publications, formal academic training, and previous critical appraisal of manuscripts. Peer reviewers should be experts in the subject matter of the manuscript and selected based on both their scientific knowledge and objectivity.

## **Review Quality**

### ***Manuscript Review Process***

Manuscripts judged to be of potential interest to IFIJ's readership are sent for peer review, typically to two or three reviewers. In special cases, additional reviewers may be invited to provide expertise in specific areas (e.g., statistical methods or specialized techniques). Authors

may request that certain reviewers be excluded; however, the final decision rests with the Editor-in-Chief.

### ***Editorial Oversight of Reviews***

The Editor is responsible for assessing the quality of all reviews. In rare circumstances, reviews may be edited before being sent to authors (e.g., to remove identifying information) or withheld if deemed unconstructive or inappropriate. The Editor-in-Chief will periodically assess the quality and timeliness of reviews. These assessments will contribute to decisions on reappointments to the IFIJ Editorial Board and the allocation of future review invitations. Reviewer performance data will remain confidential and accessible only to the editors.

### ***Standards for Reviewer Conduct***

Reviews are expected to be professional, honest, courteous, prompt, and constructive. A high-quality review should include the following elements:

- Identification and commentary on the major strengths and weaknesses of the study design and methodology.
- Accurate and constructive assessment of the author's interpretation of data, including acknowledgment of limitations.
- Evaluation of the manuscript as a written communication, independent of the study design and results.
- Consideration of any ethical concerns or evidence of low standards of scientific conduct.
- Constructive suggestions for improving the manuscript.
- Professional, respectful tone in all feedback.
- Contextual information for editors to make an informed decision on acceptance or revision.

### ***Editorial Decision-Making***

Based on reviewers' advice (usually at least two independent reviews), editors may choose from the following options:

- Accept As Is, with or without minor editorial revisions.
- Accept With Minor Revisions, requiring limited changes by the author.
- Return for Major Revisions, requiring substantial modifications before resubmission and further review.
- Reject with Encouragement to Resubmit, if further work could justify reconsideration.
- Reject Outright, typically due to lack of novelty, insufficient conceptual contribution, major technical or interpretational flaws, or unethical practices.

Reviewers may recommend a course of action; however, editors may reach a decision based on multiple reports that differ in perspective or expertise. The most valuable reviews are those that clearly outline the arguments for and against publication, which provide editors with the necessary evidence and context for an informed decision.

## ***Reviewer Development***

All reviewers are informed of IFIJ's expectations regarding professionalism, timeliness, and constructiveness. Editors are encouraged to provide guidance and recommend educational resources (e.g., literature on best practices in peer review):

- Reviews are routinely assessed for quality.
- Unconstructive or inappropriate reviews may be withheld from authors.
- Reviewer performance is periodically evaluated, including completion times, to ensure continual improvement of the journal's review process.
- All reviewer performance data will be kept confidential.

## **What is Expected of Reviewers?**

### ***Confidentiality of Review***

Submitted manuscripts are privileged communications and must be treated as strictly confidential. Reviewers:

- Must not retain, copy, or distribute the manuscript.
- Must not share the manuscript with colleagues without the explicit permission of the Editor-in-Chief or editors.
- Must not make personal or professional use of the data, arguments, or interpretations before publication, unless with the authors' explicit permission or when writing an editorial or commentary commissioned by the journal.

### ***Handling Suspected Misconduct***

If reviewers suspect misconduct (e.g., plagiarism, data manipulation, or ethical violations), they should notify the Editor-in-Chief in confidence. Concerns must not be discussed with third parties unless the journal formally authorizes disclosure.

### ***Timeliness***

Reviewers are expected to complete their reviews promptly. If a reviewer is unable to meet the deadline, they should notify the Editor-in-Chief immediately so that either an extension can be granted or a replacement reviewer assigned. As a guideline, the standard timeframe for completing the first review is three weeks.

## **Transparency in Peer Review**

While high-quality peer review is essential, it is equally important for readers to know which contents of the journal have been peer reviewed. IFIJ will clearly state:

- Which types of articles are subject to peer review?
- The nature of the review process (e.g., double-blind).
- Whether articles are reviewed by editorial board members, external expert reviewers, or both.

## **Journal Performance and Accountability**

To ensure transparency and accountability, IFIJ will publish annual audits of its editorial performance, including:

- Acceptance and rejection rates.
- Publication timelines (e.g., average time from submission to first decision and from acceptance to publication).
- Percentage of submissions sent for external peer review.
- Other relevant performance indicators as determined by the editorial board.

## **Decision Quality**

The Editor-in-Chief has the responsibility to provide authors with a clear explanation of the editorial decision on a manuscript. Decision letters should be of high quality, integrating reviewers' comments while also offering additional guidance or suggestions from the editors. Editors should not issue a decision letter without explanation, nor should they simply attach reviewers' comments without context.

## **Submission by Editorial Board Members**

All manuscripts submitted to IFIJ undergo a rigorous double-blind review process, whereby authors do not know reviewers and vice versa. In addition, when making editorial decisions about peer-reviewed articles where an Editor is an author or acknowledged as a contributor, IFIJ has mechanisms to ensure that the affected Editors or staff members recuse themselves and are not involved in the publication decision.

When editors are presented with papers where their own interests may compromise their ability to make an unbiased decision, they must delegate responsibility to a suitably qualified editorial board member. In such cases, the Editor-in-Chief ensures that manuscripts are evaluated objectively, fairly, and professionally, with personal biases excluded from comments and judgments.

To safeguard the journal's integrity, an excessive number or frequency of submissions from editorial board members should be avoided, as this may raise ethical concerns.

## **Publishable Amendments**

Amendments are usually requested by the authors of a publication and are represented by a formal printed and online notice in the journal, as they affect the publication record and/or the scientific accuracy of published information. Where these amendments concern peer-reviewed material, they fall into one of four categories: Erratum, Corrigendum, Retraction, or Addendum, as described below.

### ***Erratum***

A notification of a significant error introduced by the journal that affects the publication record, the scientific integrity of the paper, or the reputation of the authors or the journal.

### ***Corrigendum***

A notification of a significant error made by the author(s) that affects the publication record, the scientific integrity of the paper, or the reputation of the authors or the journal. All authors must sign the Corrigendum submitted for publication. In cases where co-authors disagree, the editors will seek advice from independent peer reviewers and impose the appropriate amendment, noting the dissenting author(s) in the published version.

### ***Retraction***

A notification of invalid results. All co-authors must sign a Retraction specifying the error and briefly stating how the conclusions are affected, and submit it for publication. In cases where co-authors disagree, the editors will seek advice from independent peer reviewers and impose the amendment deemed most appropriate, noting the dissenting author(s) in the published version.

Retractions are issued when the main conclusion of a paper no longer holds or is seriously undermined due to subsequent information of which the authors were unaware at the time of publication. For experimental papers, this may include further experiments by the authors or by others that fail to confirm the main experimental conclusion of the original publication.

Readers wishing to draw the editors' attention to published work requiring retraction should first contact the authors of the original paper and then write to the journal, including copies of the correspondence with the authors (whether or not the correspondence has been answered). The editors will seek advice from reviewers if they judge that the information is likely to call into question the main conclusions of the published paper.

### ***Addendum***

A notification of a peer-reviewed addition of information to a paper, usually in response to readers' requests for clarification. Addenda are published only rarely, and only when the editors determine that the addition is essential for the reader's understanding of a significant part of the published contribution.

## **PENALTIES**

Plagiarism constitutes scientific misconduct and is an unacceptable violation of publication ethics. It must be addressed promptly.

The Editor-in-Chief, editorial board, and reviewers are the primary means of detecting plagiarism in manuscripts submitted to IFIJ.

Given the seriousness of such charges, strict confidentiality must be maintained throughout the process. Allegations of plagiarism, supporting materials, and outcomes will only be disclosed to individuals directly involved in the review process.

Due process and confidentiality are essential in all cases of alleged plagiarism, falsification, or other unethical conduct. Such cases will be handled in accordance with the Code of Ethics of the journal's editorial board and the University Publications Committee.

In instances where the editor determines that “major” unethical conduct has occurred, the manuscript will be rejected, and the authors may be prohibited from submitting to IFIJ for a period of one to three years, depending on the severity of the misconduct.

IFIJ reserves the right to evaluate issues of unethical conduct, including plagiarism, redundancy, and related concerns, on a case-by-case basis.

## **Consequences**

### ***Authors***

Any work in a manuscript found to contain plagiarism, falsification, fabrication, or omission of significant material constitutes unethical publishing behavior and is unacceptable. Such cases will be handled in accordance with the practices of the journal’s editorial board and University Publications Committee.

Editors and/or reviewers must report any suspected unethical publishing behavior by the author(s) to the Editor-in-Chief. The Editor-in-Chief shall take appropriate action and subsequently refer the matter to the journal’s editorial board and University Publications Committee for further determination. Possible actions, depending on the severity of the unethical conduct, include:

- Issuing a formal notice to the author(s),
- Rejection of the manuscript,
- Imposing a ban on submission to IFIJ for a specified period, normally up to three (3) years.

### ***Editorial Board Members***

The reputation of the journal depends heavily on the integrity, conduct, and fairness of its editorial board members. Board members are expected to demonstrate professionalism and uphold the highest standards of publication ethics at all times.

When making editorial decisions on peer-reviewed articles submitted to IFIJ, any editorial board member who is an author, co-author, or acknowledged contributor to the manuscript must exclude themselves from the publication decision.

Complaints regarding suspected misconduct by board members should be brought to the attention of the Editor-in-Chief. The Editor-in-Chief shall ensure that all relevant documentation substantiating the alleged violation is presented to the journal’s editorial board and the University Publications Committee for review and appropriate action.

Sanctions for unethical conduct may include:

- Dismissal from any editorial office at IFIJ,
- Other penalties similar to those applied to authors found guilty of unethical conduct.

The Journal’s editorial board holds the sole responsibility and authority to determine sanctions. In cases involving multiple parties, sanctions may be applied unevenly depending on the degree of responsibility for the misconduct.

## **NOTE**

International Food Insights Journal's Code of Ethics was adopted from the Code of Ethics of Pertanika. The first edition of Pertanika's Code of Ethics was approved by Professor Abu Bakar Salleh, the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research & Innovation) and Chairman, University Publications Committee [Jan 2006 to Dec 2010]. It was developed with the research assistance of Professor Mohd. Zamri Saad, Professor Tan Soon Guan, Professor Shamsheer Mohamad, Professor Mohd Ali Hassan, and Ms. Erica Kwan Lee Yin. Helpful comments were received from Professor Aini Ideris, the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic & International Affairs), Universiti Putra Malaysia [Dec 2008 to Nov 2013].

**Prepared by Dr. Nayan KANWAL**  
Chief Executive Editor, UPM Journals

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**Edited by Dr. Bee-Lia CHUA**  
Editor-in-Chief, International Food Insights Journal (IFIJ)

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**  
**Faculty of Food Science and Technology**  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor  
Malaysia  
+(6)03-9769 8367  
ifij@upm.edu.my  
www.food.upm.edu.my

**PUBLISHER**  
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43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor  
Malaysia  
+(6)03-9769 8855  
dir.penerbit@upm.edu.my  
www.penerbit.upm.edu.my