

## **Guidelines for referees**

Reviewing a manuscript is a privilege and a time-consuming responsibility. It is important that the manuscripts are critically evaluated for the compliance with the following criteria: novelty, importance to the specific field and strong evidence for the conclusions that are drawn.

All submitted manuscripts are reviewed by the Editorial Board for relevancy to meet our editorial criteria. Manuscripts retained for review are sent to two or three referees, chosen by the members of the Editorial Board. Based on the advice of the referees the editor decides to: accept the manuscript with or without minor revision, invite the authors to revise the manuscript before a final decision is reached, or reject the manuscript on lack of novelty, insufficient conceptual advance or major technical and/or interpretational problems.

Referees may recommend a particular course of action in their confidential comments to the editor, but should bear in mind that the editors may have to make a decision based on conflicting advice. Furthermore, editorial decisions are based on an evaluation of the strengths of the arguments raised by each referee and by the authors. The most useful referee reports, therefore, are those that set out clear, substantiated arguments and might include a recommendation of a course of action directed to the authors.

## **Receiving the manuscript**

Referees' selection is critical to the review process and we expect the referees to treat this request as confidential. Manuscript refereed for *Food Technology and Biotechnology* should not be discussed with its authors either during or after the reviewing process. Please protect the manuscript provided to you for review from any form of exploitation. Upon receiving a manuscript to review, please do the following:

- double-check the manuscript's title page and the Acknowledgements section to determine whether there is any conflict of interest for you (with the authors, their institution or their funding resources) and whether you can judge the article impartially,
- skim the relevant parts of the manuscript and verify that it fits within the scope of Journal, and
- contact the editor for instructions if you have either a time problem or a conflict of interest, so he can extend your deadline or cancel the review assignment as appropriate.

## **Writing the report**

The primary purpose of referee's reports is to provide the editor with the information he needs to reach a decision, but they should also instruct the authors on how to strengthen their manuscript if revision is a possibility.

In your comments intended for the author(s), do not make statements about the acceptability of the paper; suggested revisions should be stated as such and not expressed as conditions of acceptance. Organize your review so that an introductory paragraph summarizes the major findings of the article, gives your overall impression of the paper, and highlights the major shortcomings. This paragraph should be followed by specific, numbered comments, which, if appropriate, may be subdivided into major and minor points.

The report should answer the following questions:

- what are the major claims and how significant are they?
- are the claims novel and convincing?
- are the claims appropriately discussed in the context of earlier literature?
- is the study of interest to more than a specialised audience?
- does the paper stand out in some way from the others in its field?
- are there other experiments that would strengthen the paper?

For manuscripts that may merit further consideration, it is also helpful if referees can provide advice on the following points where appropriate:

- how the clarity of the writing might be improved (without necessarily going into specific details of spelling and grammar)
- how the manuscript might be shortened
- how to do the study justice without overselling the claims
- how to represent earlier literature more fairly; and if necessary include more recent publications
- how to improve the presentation of methodological detail so that the experiments can be reproduced

The manuscript should be rated according to interest, novelty, technical quality and suitability.

Additional comments to the editor need to include:

- a definite recommendation regarding publication (which should be clearly marked in the Referee's note)
- an assessment of how much any suggested additional experiments would improve the manuscript, and how difficult they would be to complete within a reasonable timeframe (3 months)

- in cases where the manuscript is unacceptable in its present form, an opinion about whether the study is sufficiently promising to encourage a new submission in the future.

Reviewers' recommendations are gratefully received by the editor; however, since editorial decisions are based on evaluations derived from several sources, reviewers should not expect the editor to honor every recommendation.

### **Conflict of interest**

We rely on the reviewers to detect a breach of publication policy or ethical conduct before publication. Some of the items for which you should be alert include plagiarism, missing or incomplete attestation, dual submission and/or publication.

We try to avoid referees who: have recent or ongoing collaborations with the authors, have commented on drafts of the manuscript, are in direct competition, have a history of dispute with the authors, or have a financial interest in the outcome.

### **Publication policy and ethical considerations**

In spite of our best efforts to identify breaches of publication policy or ethical conduct, such as plagiarism or author conflict of interest, the referees who are more familiar with the field are more likely to recognise such problems and should alert the editors of any potential problems in this regard.

In summary you must communicate suspicion of policy or ethical problems directly to the editor. Under no circumstances should you contact the author directly.