

INTERNAL REGULATION

Art. 1 – SUBJECT OF THE REGULATION

The subject of this Regulation consists of the organization of the Botanical Foundation for Research, hereinafter FBR. It governs the implementation methods of FBR's activities, which operates in accordance with the Statute and current regulations, as well as in compliance with the Code of Ethics.

All other internal sources of rules and regulations of FBR that relate to this Regulation or implement what is provided by it are hierarchically subordinate to this Regulation and are considered secondary sources, regardless of their name, approval process, or form (guidelines, policies, procedures, service charters, other specific regulations, etc.).

Art. 2 – PRINCIPLES

FBR is inspired by the distinction between the functions of:

- direction, planning, high-level administration;
- management of activities;
- control and compliance.

The principles applied by FBR in the design and development of activities are:

- a. principle of impartiality;
- b. principle of good performance;
- c. principle of cost-effectiveness, understood as good management of the resources used;
- d. principle of transparency;
- e. principle of effectiveness and efficiency;
- f. principle of equal treatment and non-discrimination;
- g. principle of accountability, meaning the demonstration of responsibility for every decision made and being accountable both individually and jointly, when such a decision is made together with others.

Art. 3 – BODIES AND COMPETENCES

As established by the Statute of FBR, the bodies of the Foundation are:

- a. the Board of Directors, hereinafter BD, a collegial body with tasks of general direction, planning, administration, and control;
- b. the President, a single-person body responsible for the legal representation of FBR, coordinates the activity of the BD, implements its resolutions, and oversees the general operation of FBR;
- c. the Vice President, a single-person body responsible for ordinary administration in the event of vacancy, absence, or impediment of the President;
- d. the Technical Scientific Committee, hereinafter TSC, whose members are appointed by the BD, is the cultural and scientific reference body of FBR. It directs the scientific activity of the Foundation through proposals and initiatives submitted for the approval of the BD, verifies the results through the preparation and development of the technical-scientific research profiles, and performs a technical-consultative function regarding the research programs themselves;
- e. auditor(s), who perform(s) the administrative-accounting control function. They are appointed by the founding and supporting members.

The bodies mentioned above are responsible for:

- a. adopting and/or sharing the acts of direction, planning, and administration concerning FBR's activities;
- b. verifying and/or examining, each within the limits of their own competences and tasks, the activities of FBR.

The activity of direction, planning, and administration of FBR is the place of unification and synthesis between:

- a. the autonomy of FBR, ensured both by the legal form of the foundation and by the absence of the constraint of representation and mandate of the subjects who make up its bodies;
- b. the objective of pursuing the purpose jointly with the Founders through constant coordination and continuous synergy.

Art. 4 – PLANNING OF ACTIVITIES

In relation to FBR's objectives, the Foundation adopts an annual activity plan based on proposals and initiatives formulated by the TSC, which submits them for approval to the BD. This plan arises from issues emerging from the sectors of competence related to the use and enhancement of botanicals, with particular reference to the safety and effectiveness of plants and/or their derivatives.

The TSC, also considering the needs and issues emerging from the different categories of FBR members – founders, supporters, and sponsors – develops the annual plan and submits it to the BD for approval.

The plan consists of:

- activities of research;
- the subjects identified for each activity;
- any collaborations with scholars, researchers, specialists, and technicians necessary for the realization of such activities;
- any participation in research projects external to FBR but consistent with its objectives;
- any projects to strengthen education, training, and professional development dedicated to young researchers and technicians;
- dissemination through seminars, conferences, and meetings as well as publications, including online, of the results of scientific work, both of FBR and others, with the aim of spreading topics related to the implementation of knowledge and innovation in the foundation's areas of interest;
- the development of guidelines, technical standards, recommendations, technical-scientific articles related to subjects of interest to FBR.
- The plan, in addition to the details of the above activities, includes the specific objectives for each and the costs necessary for their implementation so that the BD can assess their economic sustainability and have all the elements for their evaluation at the time of approval.

The BD may supplement the annual plan with all dissemination activities supporting the spread of FBR's activities, with the aim of providing scientific credibility to the use of plants and/or their derivatives in products of interest to

FBR members and encouraging the participation of new supporting and sponsoring members.

Art. 5 – METHODS OF INTERVENTION

FBR fulfils its institutional purpose, as per art. 2 of the Statute, through the implementation of its own research projects, participation in public/private calls for the funding of projects external to FBR, or through collaborations in public/private research projects from entities external to FBR. The TSC also identifies the most effective methods and forms to achieve the other purposes listed in art. 2 of the Statute.

When such projects are deemed suitable to achieve the above purposes, they are included by the TSC in the activity program referred to in the previous article and submitted for approval to the BD. If the program has already been approved by the BD and the TSC deems it necessary to make changes to integrate and/or modify the program during the year, it must submit a justified request for modification to the BD, which will then decide whether or not to proceed with the request.

Art. 6 – SELECTION AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

The activities referred to in art. 2 of the FBR Statute are selected by the TSC for evaluation and then submitted to the BD for final approval. Projects originate from production sectors that use botanicals in various ways and may come to the attention of the TSC directly from its members, the FBR BD, founding, supporting, or sponsoring members, the scientific community, or any “third” party that has identified FBR as an entity capable of clarifying the issue raised and providing a solution to the identified problem.

The TSC places activity proposals on the agenda of its meetings and evaluates them to determine which projects deserve further study and research. To judge a research project as eligible or to participate in a call or a project designed and partly carried out by other groups/research entities, the following criteria are adopted:

- assesses whether the subject of investigation falls among the issues considered worthy of attention by one or more interested production sectors;

- checks whether, for the topic raised, there are results or ongoing activities in the literature and/or in the project title that may be equivalent and/or facilitate an effective solution, or evaluates its originality;
- analyzes sector regulations and verifies whether the issue raised can be resolved within the current regulations;
- checks whether the research project aims to advance knowledge and scientific-experimental achievements to overcome the difficulties and/or obstacles at the origin of the project;
- assesses whether the potential result of the investigation and/or research contributes to technological innovation, industrial applications, or benefits for the well-being and cultural development related to the subject of investigation;
- for each activity, a detailed cost estimate and any revenue are provided if the project is funded or is part of a public/private call in which FBR participates or intends to participate;
- examines the consistency between objectives, methodology, and expected results to ensure the project is feasible;
- checks the adequacy of the requested budget, access to and availability of necessary equipment, and availability of qualified personnel. Any host research organization must be suitable to support the project;
- project duration and activity planning must be realistic. Funds and resources must be available within the expected timeframes to avoid delays;
- assesses the competence of researchers, scientists, and/or research groups assigned based on delegated activities, as well as any required scientific collaborations;
- ensures that participant risks are minimized and justified by the potential benefits of the research project. The potential benefit must be reasonable and greater than the risks associated with participation;
- the selection of participants and researchers is conducted fairly and without discrimination;
- each participant is required to provide informed consent to ensure full understanding of the risks, benefits, and requirements of the research project;

- evaluates and implements measures to protect the data and privacy of each participant.

For each project that the TSC believes FBR should undertake, it prepares a summary sheet with its opinion and minimum indications, forwarding this opinion to the President of the BD for subsequent evaluation and possible approval. In the process of analysing research projects, the TSC must highlight to the BD that it has carried out an impact analysis regarding the feasibility and consequences that the research project's conclusions may have for the sector(s) FBR addresses and for the foundation itself. The BD evaluates the impact analysis and the TSC ensures, for each project, the principles of transparency and equal opportunity, namely:

- the project objectives, personnel selection criteria, and allocation of financial resources are specified in detail and made public from the outset;
- data and results are reproducible, and the scientific community must be able to verify the results;
- the identity of reviewers and their comments on the manuscript are made public;
- all team members, reviewers, and decision-makers publicly declare any potential conflicts of interest;
- any funders monitor the research project and its decision-making process to ensure transparency standards are met;
- research teams and committees ensure diverse and qualified representation, including underrepresented genders, to counter nepotism and favouritism;
- decisions regarding the allocation of funds, scholarships, and personnel are based on scientific merit and not favouritism;
- recruitment procedures promote diversity and inclusion, for example, through anonymous applications and standardized evaluations;
- work-life balance is promoted among all team members regardless of gender, to foster well-being and productivity;
- gender equality policies are implemented.

Art. 7 – DISBURSEMENT AND MONITORING

For research projects and activities referred to in art. 2 of the Statute, approved by the FBR BD, the Foundation publishes on its website and/or other media the calls that include the project/activity description, objectives, eligibility criteria, and deadlines for submitting research proposals. Research centres and/or institutions, or interested researchers, submit their proposals in accordance with the methods and deadlines indicated in the calls. The TSC evaluates all proposals received through a peer-review process in compliance with the indicated procedures. The final selection is based on the scientific merit of the project, alignment with the objectives of the call and the foundation, and feasibility.

At the end of the selection, FBR issues the “award letter” formalizing the granting of funding and establishing any specific terms and conditions based on what is defined in the call.

The TSC monitors the progress of the research project through any progress reports that researchers and entities are required to submit in accordance with the project. The foundation may, in the event of changes, request a revised and updated work plan.

For the research project, FBR may require periodic reports, as established in the call, and a final report documenting the progress of the work, partial results, and use of funds. In addition to progress reports and the report on scientific results, it is mandatory to account for the use of the allocated financial resources.

At the end of the project, FBR evaluates the impact and results obtained, verifying that they correspond to the initial objectives. This evaluation also includes a follow-up period to better assess the impact of the research over time.

If funds are not used correctly, FBR may decide to terminate the project's funding and, if necessary, recover the funds in accordance with applicable laws.

Art. 8 – PUBLICITY AND TRANSPARENCY

FBR ensures publicity and transparency in the fund allocation process to protect its credibility, fairness in selection, and proper use of resources. In the case of the use of public funds, FBR is subject to specific regulatory obligations regarding transparency. As anticipated in Art. 7, the call must clearly and thoroughly specify the participation requirements, scientific objectives, evaluation criteria, and deadlines.

The call is published on the FBR website and/or other communication channels. The timeframes must be sufficiently broad to allow all interested researchers and entities to prepare research proposals.

During the evaluation process, the TSC may appoint a restricted evaluation committee composed of recognized and independent experts with proven experience in the relevant research sector. Committee members must be free from conflicts of interest with the project proposers, such as collaboration relationships or family ties. If such conflicts exist, they must be declared and the member must abstain from evaluation.

Non-selected candidates are nevertheless provided with constructive and reasoned feedback, based on the evaluations received, to promote the improvement of future proposals.

Following the evaluation process, FBR publishes the names of the winning projects, the proposing entities and institutions involved, and the amount of funding awarded. The reasons for the selection, while respecting the confidentiality of the proposals, are explained to demonstrate the validity of the choices and the transparency of the decision-making process.

FBR requires beneficiaries to provide periodic financial and scientific reports on the progress of funded projects to monitor the use of funds and project progress.

All the above information may be published on the FBR website. At its discretion, the foundation may decide, in compliance with applicable regulations, to publish this information in sector and/or scientific journals to disseminate both its activities and the results of research projects.

Art. 9 – FINAL AND TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS

This regulation comes into force on the date of approval by the BD, indicated at the bottom of the document, and its provisions apply from its entry into force. For procedures, projects, or situations ongoing at the date of entry into force, the provisions of this Regulation apply, unless the application of the new provisions would prejudice rights or legitimate expectations accrued under previous rules.

Acts, resolutions, and appointments made prior to the approval of this Regulation remain valid and effective unless they are expressly in conflict, in which case the BD will resolve any discrepancies within a period it establishes.

Selection procedures for scholarships, research funding, or other assignments initiated before the entry into force of this Regulation are completed according to the rules in force at the time of initiation and in any case in compliance with statutory rules. New calls and future procedures are managed in accordance with this Regulation and its subsequent revisions valid at the time such selections take place.

Its publication in a dedicated section of the FBR website and/or communication to all interested parties makes the entire structure and all those interested in FBR's activities aware of it.

Amendments are approved by the BD according to the procedure described in its Statute. Such amendments come into force according to the procedures established by the BD.

Any matter concerning the interpretation and application of this Regulation is decided by the BD, whose opinion is binding for all FBR parties. Interpretation is carried out in compliance with the Statute and applicable regulations.