

ILSI's Organizational Structure

This document is intended to accompany an organizational chart of ILSI and explain the legal status and relationships among the various entities that make up the ILSI family.

ILSI

The International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI)¹ was established to advance the understanding of scientific issues relating to nutrition, food safety, toxicology, risk assessment, and the environment by bringing together scientists from academia, government, industry, and the public sector (such as other nonprofit groups) to solve problems with broad implications for the well being of the general public.

ILSI is incorporated as a nonprofit corporation in the District of Columbia. It is also recognized by the U.S. federal government as a charitable, scientific, and educational organization that qualifies as exempt from federal income tax. For short-hand purposes, ILSI is often referred to as a "501(c)(3)," which is a reference to the section of the U.S. tax code that covers organizations like ILSI, which are also sometimes called "public charities." This is because such organizations' activities are for the primary benefit of the public, and moneys contributed to them may be treated (in the U.S.) as charitable donations. Because the U.S. tax regulations impact ILSI's fundamental mission and purpose, which the branches share, the U.S. laws indirectly impact the branches as well. In addition, because the actions of a branch reflect on ILSI and may even be attributed to ILSI for legal purposes, some requirements that ILSI must follow to maintain its tax-exempt status in the U.S. are passed on to the branches (e.g., restrictions on lobbying, ensuring activities are of public benefit).

ILSI's membership is composed solely of the member companies of all the ILSI branches. A company that joins an ILSI branch automatically becomes a member of ILSI by virtue of its membership in the branch. It is not possible to join ILSI directly; membership in ILSI derives automatically and exclusively through membership in an ILSI branch. ILSI members come primarily from the food, beverage, pharmaceutical, and chemical industries. Members are all companies; no individual or trade association is eligible for membership in ILSI or its branches. All ILSI members are eligible to join ILSI's international committees (e.g., the ILSI International Organizations Committee, the ILSI International Food Biotechnology Committee).²

ILSI's Board of Trustees (BOT) guides the organization, ensures its scientific integrity through review processes and exercise of budgetary authority (see Duties of an ILSI Trustee document for legal responsibilities), establishes policies that apply throughout the broader organization (as conveyed in the organization chart), and facilitates coordination across the entire organization. To ensure a balance of scientific perspectives, the BOT is composed of at least 50% individuals from the public sector (primarily academic scientists); the remainder is composed of individuals representing ILSI members. These trustee positions are allocated by the BOT to the various entities that make up the ILSI family.

¹ Sometimes, when referring to ILSI, people use the terms "ILSI Global," "ILSI International," or "ILSI Washington." These are not separate entities in any way, but merely names that some people use when they mean ILSI. On the other hand, some people use the name "ILSI" when they really mean the entire ILSI family (i.e., ILSI, the branches, the Focal Point, and ILSI RF) or some particular component of the ILSI family. To avoid confusion, it is helpful to use the correct and complete names of entities.

² ILSI North America offers an option for limited participation in that branch. "Associate members" of ILSI N.A. may participate in one ILSI N.A. committee only and are not considered "members" of ILSI N.A. or ILSI; therefore, they have no rights to vote or participate in ILSI international committees.

Branches

ILSI's branches are separately incorporated in the geographic areas where they reside and have their own Boards of Trustees that are responsible for their activities, work products, and finances. Branches may establish committees or task forces to focus on particular scientific topics of interest to their members. All ILSI branches pay assessments to ILSI based on their member dues, and they agree to comply with policies established by the ILSI BOT in exchange for charters that allow them to use the ILSI name and receive other benefits from ILSI, both tangible (e.g., copies of ILSI publications, use of ILSI's association management software system, dedicated pages on the ILSI website) and intangible (e.g., access to ILSI's international network, association with the ILSI "brand" which is respected in the scientific community).

Two ILSI branches are located in the U.S. and share office space with ILSI, but, like the other branches, they are governed by their own independent BOTs: ILSI North America and the ILSI Health and Environmental Sciences Institute (HESI). They have the same legal status as ILSI, i.e., nonprofit, tax-exempt corporations. All branches are regional in scope except ILSI HESI, which is a global branch that has a different programmatic focus from the other branches. (The regional branches are primarily focused on nutrition and food science, including food safety/risk assessment, whereas ILSI HESI is more focused on toxicology and risk assessment related to chemical and pharmaceutical compounds.) There is also an ILSI Focal Point in China, which conducts activities similar to a branch, but has no BOT or members; instead the Focal Point has supporting companies whose contributions help fund activities.

Research Foundation

Created in 1984, the ILSI Research Foundation (RF), unlike ILSI and the branches, does not have members. It is, however, incorporated as a nonprofit with the same 501(c)(3) status as ILSI. In 2005 the ILSI Risk Science Institute (RSI) and the ILSI Center for Health Promotion, which were formerly separate entities, became part of ILSI RF, together with the ILSI Human Nutrition Institute. Thus, ILSI RF programs focus on advancing the methods and application of science in risk assessment, human nutrition, and the prevention of obesity. ILSI RF also awards grants for research in its focus areas.

The role of the Research Foundation within the ILSI organization is distinct but complementary. As a separate corporation without member companies, ILSI RF provides a forum for collaboration with a wide range of organizations and a place within ILSI where government agencies can fund programs of mutual interest. ILSI RF also works to broaden and strengthen ILSI's global network of experts and increase its recognition in new parts of the scientific community. ILSI RF funding is primarily from government grants and agreements, from foundations interested in ILSI RF research, from the ILSI RF endowment, from its work with ILSI branches, and from unrestricted and project-specific industry grants.

ILSI RF was established as a "supporting organization" to ILSI. This means that the Research Foundation supports ILSI's mission and goals and derives its 501(c)(3) status through its relationship with ILSI. Because ILSI RF is a supporting organization, ILSI is legally required to "operate, supervise, or control" ILSI RF. This is achieved through the ILSI BOT electing the ILSI RF BOT. The ILSI RF BOT is composed of eleven members (the majority from the public sector), five of whom also serve on the ILSI BOT.