

**GUIDELINES FOR OBTAINING HIGH QUALITY LABORATORY DATA**

**Carol S. Davis, Wayne R. Wolf, PhD, and Gary R. Beecher, PhD**  
**USDA/ARS, Food Composition Laboratory, Beltsville, MD 20705**  
**and**  
**Joanne M. Holden, MS**  
**USDA/ARS, Nutrient Data Laboratory, Beltsville, MD 20737**

**ABSTRACT**

*Accurate and reliable food composition data are essential for food intake assessment, food manufacturing, labeling, regulation and trade. High quality analytical laboratories are key to generating high quality food composition data. The criteria for selection of a laboratory should be based on analytical performance, validation of method, and on-going quality control programs. This information is invaluable in the resolution of data that disagree. Performance can be monitored by requesting the analysis of in-house and/or standard reference materials with known concentrations. Laboratory in-house quality assurance programs provide the foundation for the ongoing generation of reliable data and can help laboratories to achieve accurate and precise values for "unknown" analytical samples of foods. Customers/database developers must request quality assurance data to be assured that the laboratory is continually producing high quality food composition data. In our experience over the last decade, attention to the details of these criteria has resulted in the generation of the known best data analytical laboratories are capable of producing.*