



Partnership
for Aflatoxin
Control in Africa

Partenariat pour
la lutte contre
l'aflatoxine en Afrique

Parceria para o
Controle da
Aflatoxina em África

شراكة من أجل مكافحة
فلاتوكسين في أفريقيا



Global Panel
on Agriculture
and Food Systems
for Nutrition

High Level Roundtable on Food Safety and Aflatoxins: Time to take Action

Co-Hosted by AU's Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa and the Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition

COMMUNIQUE

Introduction

On 12 April 2016, the Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems and Nutrition (Global Panel) and the African Union Commission's Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA) brought together African policymakers to discuss food safety issues, and in particular aflatoxins, on the margins of the 12th CAADP Partnership Platform. At the joint High Level Roundtable, the Global Panel launched its policy brief Assuring Safe Food Systems: Policy Options for a Healthier Food Supply, which reviews food safety issues that are critical to poor and vulnerable populations in low and middle-income countries.

Professor Sandy Thomas and Executive Director of the Global Panel presented the brief, which describes why governments must pay closer attention to food safety issues and invest accordingly, from production through to consumption. Roundtable participants discussed the food safety challenge on the African continent and its serious threat to the achievement of the Malabo Declaration. Furthermore, participants identified promising pathways to addressing food safety in general and aflatoxin, in particular.

Food Safety in Developing Countries

Food systems are rapidly changing, bringing greater attention to issues of food safety. In 2010 alone foodborne hazards caused 600,000 million illnesses and 420,000 deaths across the world. 40 percent of this disease burden was among children under five years of age. Aflatoxin contamination is one of the most pervasive food safety challenges in Africa. Aflatoxins are invisible poisons that contaminate many staple foods, cash crops and animal feeds. Aflatoxins are produced by fungi and can occur throughout value chains making it difficult to target interventions. Pre-harvest occurrence of aflatoxin increases with crop stress caused by drought and pest attack. Postharvest accumulation spikes with poor drying, storage and handling. Aflatoxins are virtually indestructible since normal food processing practices do not affect aflatoxin levels. Food safety, and aflatoxins in particular, are a significant threat to public health, agriculture and food systems in sub-Saharan Africa.

Opening Remarks

H.E. John Kufuor, former President of Ghana and co-chair of the Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition, stated that ensuring a safe food system and a healthy food supply is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of African nations. No person chooses to feed their family unsafe food, yet millions of people unknowingly challenge their nutrition and



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and Food Systems
for Nutrition

health every day by eating food that carries serious risks. African leaders have a duty to understand the most important decisions that need to be taken so that agriculture and food systems can be safer for all. He called for participants to work together to champion policies to overcome food safety risks in African systems for a healthier food supply for Africans.

Roundtable Comments

Professor Monty Jones, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security of Sierra Leone

mentioned that science will help address food safety, for example by identifying and breeding crop varieties that show resistance to fungal growth and new approaches to crop protection such as Aflasafe, a native aflatoxin biological control technology. Although science and technology is important, every country will also need comprehensive regulatory systems that address economic, hygienic, environmental, and structural aspects of ensuring a safe food supply. And, at local level, incentives are needed for technologies and best practices. Together, implementing these frameworks should improve public health and increase competitiveness.



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Goule Gueye of SODEFITEX, a private company in Senegal, described their work to create public-private partnerships to raise awareness of aflatoxin and to develop solutions to mitigate the problem. SODEFITEX focuses on rural development and provides many services to farmers, including distribution of Aflasafe. Aflasafe is an important solution because aflatoxin is a major problem in Senegal where people consume a high volume of peanuts. Currently, Aflasafe is manufactured by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture in Ibadan, Nigeria. SODEFITEX, however, is building a manufacturing facility in Senegal and will start producing Aflasafe, locally.

Margaret Ndaba of the Tanzania Ministry of Agriculture Livestock and Fisheries described how the government has created a structure for collaboration between the Ministries of Agriculture, Health and Trade to address food safety, including mycotoxins. She mentioned that a major challenge in Tanzania is to raise awareness across the production chain. We need to put structures in place to get food safety messages out to the community level and to support necessary infrastructure such as storage capacities and material to protect produce. At the same



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and Food Systems
for Nutrition

time, stakeholders need to raise the visibility and importance of addressing food safety at a national, regional and continental level.

Dr. Kepha Ombacho of the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation in Kenya described the Kenyan experience of addressing aflatoxin. Aflatoxin is a major problem in Kenya, where several outbreaks have resulted in hundreds of deaths resulting from aflatoxin poisoning and large amounts of cereals have had to be destroyed. Kenya's experience shows that all stakeholders (ministries, farmers, researchers, companies, civil society, etc.) need to collaborate to solve the problem, to create policies, apply technologies and provide farmers the necessary tools to manage aflatoxins on the farm. Kenya's government provides testing kits and training to farmers. The government is establishing Aflasafe manufacturing plants in the country.

Dr. Chris Muyunda of the Pan-African Agribusiness and Agro-Industry Consortium and a PACA Steering Committee member described PACA's continental program and PACA's work in pilot countries (the Gambia, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, Senegal, and Uganda). At the country-level, PACA works with stakeholders to determine the severity of the aflatoxin problem and to develop structures to mobilize farmers, value chain actors, and governments for awareness raising and developing solutions. Dr. Muyunda described his experience in Zambia, where the Ministry of Agriculture is organizing workshops to engage farmers, millers, traders and processors in addressing the problem through crop drying, storage, and processing. The private sector is highly committed to dealing with aflatoxin. As aflatoxin testing starts to increase in the marketplace, it will be important that value chain actors implement measure to control aflatoxin.

Dr. Timothy Wesonga from the East African Community (EAC) emphasized that EAC and its Member States have identified aflatoxin as a priority problem. EAC worked with the research and policy community to develop a series of technical papers on the impacts of aflatoxin. EAC has made these papers publicly available and is currently working on strategies and policy recommendations. EAC is working with its member states and a range of stakeholders, including the East African Grain Council, to increase aflatoxin testing in maize and to promote best practices for post-harvest handling and processing. He identified the invisibility of aflatoxin as a major challenge to convincing people that aflatoxin is a problem to be addressed.

Pamela Fessenden of USAID mentioned that in implementing the Feed the Future initiative, USAID has created broad partnerships to help develop and test technologies and make them accessible to smallholders and SMEs. USAID approaches food safety as a nutrition and commercial trade and growth issue. USAID builds partnerships in the US and Africa that work across these sectors. Partnerships include the private sector, as well as with other funders (e.g., partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation on the Storage and Drying for Aflatoxin Prevention (AflaSTOP) project).



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Parceria para o
Controle da
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Global Panel
on Agriculture
and Food Systems
for Nutrition

John Cordaro of Mars, Incorporated described the company's strong social ethos that drives many partnerships. Mars has tremendous capacity in food safety management and engages in partnerships to address complex food safety and aflatoxin challenges. Mars is a champion of PACA and is fully committed to helping PACA be successful. He emphasized that several upcoming global meetings will provide opportunities to engage high-level policy-makers on embedding food safety issues into national and international policies. African stakeholders should appreciate the power they have to influence the outcomes of upcoming global meetings and elevate food safety as a global nutrition and food security priority. Food safety, including aflatoxin, is an urgent problem and we need to act now.

Quaye-Kumah Nii of the Government of Ghana emphasized that advocacy is key to ensuring that policy-makers support food safety policy and regulatory systems. Paulina Addy added that the Government of Ghana is developing a new policy being on food safety. Similarly, Olaleka Quadri of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Nigeria mentioned that safe food is a government priority and that the government is making progress in putting a food safety policy in place.

Dr. Jean Kamanzi and Dr. Mawuli Sablah of the FAO mentioned that FAO is using a coordinated approach to help countries build food control systems. FAO encourages African countries to use the existing Codex Alimentarius system, including the Codex Committee for Africa, to discuss harmonization of food safety standards. FAO is helping to create an African Society of Food Control Officers.

Cynthia Mugo of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa reminded all participants to keep smallholder farmers at the center of their attention. Farmers, in particular women farmers, have an overwhelming number of things to consider (e.g., healthy soils, better seeds, etc.). Governments and partnerships are critical to create integrated approaches and solutions in support of smallholder farmers.

Closing Remarks

Dr. Janet Edeme, Acting Director of the Department for Rural Economy and Agriculture, African Union Commission and Chair of the PACA Steering Committee, provided closing remarks on behalf of H.E. Mrs. Rhoda Peace Tumusiime, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, African Union Commission. Dr. Edeme spoke to the importance of addressing food safety and aflatoxin to achieve the Malabo Declaration Commitments agreed upon by the African Union Heads of State and Government. For instance, the commitment to ending hunger in Africa by 2025 cannot be achieved without also addressing the issue of food safety. And, the prevalence of aflatoxins undermines the commitment to triple intra-Africa trade in agricultural commodities by 2025. Dr. Edeme urged policymakers across the African continent to embrace the recommendations in the Global Panel food safety brief to implement an integrated set of policy actions, including regulation, surveillance, and training.



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Dr. Edeme reminded participants that the AU Commission responded to requests from African leaders at the 7th CAADP PP for the establishment of PACA. The AU Commission stepped up to establish PACA Secretariat within the Department for Rural Economy and Agriculture. PACA provides strategic leadership, and catalyzes and coordinates more effective aflatoxin control. On behalf of Commissioner Tumusiime, Dr. Edeme encouraged all participants to make use of this center of expertise at the AU Commission and to align their aflatoxin mitigation efforts towards PACA's holistic approach and the PACA continent-wide strategy.

Dr. Edeme recognized the important role of African farmers and agribusinesses in demonstrating technologies and best practices to mitigate aflatoxin and encouraged all participants to work together to incentivize use of technologies and best practices.

Finally, Dr. Edeme saluted development partners who provide critical support to creating a movement for aflatoxin control and food safety in Africa. On behalf of Commissioner Tumusiime, she encouraged more Development Partners, including the African Development Bank, to increase investment in the reduction of aflatoxins. She expressed the belief that addressing the aflatoxin problem in a meaningful way would lay the foundation for addressing other food safety challenges effectively.



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and Food Systems
for Nutrition

Annex 1: Participant List

Participants:

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Country
African Union and Global Panel (Co-Hosts)			
H.E. Mrs. Rhoda Peace	Tumusiime	African Union Commission	Ethiopia
H.E. John	Kufuor	Former President of Ghana	Ghana
Janet	Edeme	African Union Commission	Ethiopia
Sandy	Thomas	Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition	United Kingdom
Regional Economic Communities			
Timothy	Wesonga	East African Community	Tanzania
Governments			
Paulina	Addy	Ministry of Food and Agriculture	Ghana
Sheriffo	Bojang	Ministry of Agriculture	The Gambia
Monty	Jones	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security	Sierra Leone
Erica	Maganga	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development	Malawi
Margaret	Ndaba	Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives	Tanzania
Quaye-Kumah	Nii	Alternate Permanent Representative to the UN Rome-based Agencies	Ghana
Kepha	Ombacho	Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation	Kenya
Olalekan	Quadri	Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	Nigeria
Adekunbi	Sanaike-Ayodeji	Nigeria High Commission	Nigeria
International Organizations			
Mohamed	Ag Bendeche	UN Food and Agriculture Organization	Ethiopia
Jean	Kamanzi	UN Food and Agriculture Organization	Zimbabwe
Mawuli	Sablah	UN Food and Agriculture Organization	Ghana
Companies			
Goule	Gueye	SODEFITEX	Senegal
John B	Cordaro	Mars Inc.	USA
Daniel	Gad	Omega Farms	Ethiopia
Gerald Makau	Masila	East African Grain Council	Kenya



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Controle da
Aflatoxina em África

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أفلاتوكسين في أفريقيا



Global Panel
on Agriculture
and Food Systems
for Nutrition

Chris	Muyunda	Pan-African Agribusiness and Agro-Industry Consortium	Zambia
Donor Partners			
Fiona	Edwards	Spring Nutrition	Ghana
Pamela	Fessenden	USAID	USA
Cynthia	Mugo	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa	Kenya
Joseph	Rusike	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa	Kenya
Rinn	Self	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	USA

Observers:

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Country
Frank	Agyekum	John Kufuor Foundation	Ghana
Judith	Akolo	KBC	Kenya
Kennedy	Awuku	EMT	Ghana
Jimoh	Babatunde	Vanguard Newspaper	Nigeria
Hans	Balyamugura	Zed Group Ltd	South Africa
Doreen	Chilumbu Nawa	Media	Zambia
Roderick	Daddey-Adjei	Food and Drugs Authority	Ghana
Faustina	Djubatcy	Media	Ghana
Emmanuel	Forson	Media	Ghana
Jean Baptiste	Havugimana	East African Community	Tanzania
Tandong Calistus	Jong-Amyofacig		Cameroon
Daisi	Kachingwe Phiri	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development	Malawi
Ngala	Killian	Media	Cameroon
Ndoye	Magatte	Ministry of Trade	Senegal
Roman	Malumalo	Donor Group Malawi	Malawi
Sokhna	Mbaye Diop	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	Senegal
Kefilwe	Moalosi	NEPAD	South Africa
Parda	Mpaso	Media	Malawi
Tom	Mugisa	Consultant	Uganda
Grace	Musimani	Farmers Media Uganda	Uganda



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Controle da
Aflatoxina em África

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'فلاتوكسين في أفريقيا'



Global Panel
on Agriculture
and Food Systems
for Nutrition

Angel	Nawuri	Media	Tanzania
Samuel	Onyenobia	AUC	Ethiopia
Mawuli	Sablah	FAO-RAF	CTA-Regional Office
Moussa	Seck	Pan African Agribusiness and Agro Industry Consortium	Senegal
Jenna	Tajchman	USAID	USA
Sunday	Uhiene	National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA)	Nigeria
Fonma	Usoro	Nigeria High Commission	Nigeria

Staff:

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Country
Baffour	Agyeman-Duah	John Kufuor Foundation	Ghana
Amare	Ayalew	PACA-AUC	Ethiopia
Lynn	Brown	Senior Adviser HarvestPlus	USA
Wezi	Chunga-Sambo	PACA-AUC	Ethiopia
Deirdre	McMahon	Global Panel	UK
Rex	Raimond	Meridian Institute	USA
Barbara	Stinson	Meridian Institute	USA