

Engaging the Health and Nutrition Sectors in Aflatoxin

23-24 March 2016
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

Theme: Mitigating the health and nutrition impacts of aflatoxins in Africa through uncommon partnerships

Background and Rationale

The aflatoxin problem has been recognized as one of the biggest challenges to food and nutrition security, health and trade across the African continent. Aflatoxins are highly carcinogenic compounds mainly produced by strains of the fungi *Aspergillus flavus* and *A. parasiticus*. It is estimated that more than 5 billion people in developing countries worldwide are chronically exposed to aflatoxins; the effects to this exposure includes liver cirrhosis, intestinal dysfunction, immune suppression and increased susceptibility to some infectious diseases including HIV-AIDS, and maternal and child health problems such as anemia, malnutrition, stunting, wasting. In animals, aflatoxins reduce productivity of healthy livestock through ingestion of contaminated feed, causing a decrease in production of milk and eggs, leaving toxic residues in dairy, meat and poultry products, and causing serious illness to animals.

Increasingly, partners are recognizing the need to address aflatoxins holistically. Ongoing efforts in various countries across the continent are fragmented involving single or multi-sectoral partnerships on aflatoxin surveillance and risk assessment, exposure biomonitoring, health advocacy, awareness, and other targeted nutritional and health risk interventions. Major gaps have been identified in research on the impact of aflatoxins on health, in particular the association of the immune suppression and the burden of communicable disease, thus leading to an underestimated impact of aflatoxin exposure on health in Africa. Furthermore, policies and guidelines targeting aflatoxin health risks are deficient in most countries on the continent and no clear established synergy of the nutrition and health sectors as relates aflatoxin mitigation. The health sector could coordinate and maximize the discussions for sustainable development goals in the context of Non-Communicable Diseases and Nutrition to facilitate control of aflatoxin health risks. Cognizant of this, PACA-AUC in conjunction with Amref





Health Africa, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO) – International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) are working to foster multi-sectoral linkages on the control of aflatoxins in Africa with the health and nutrition sectors taking the lead through this workshop which will chart a way forward in developing a continental health and nutrition aflatoxin action plan/road map.

Meeting Goals and Objectives

a. Goal

To foster and reinforce multi-sectoral engagements for aflatoxin control against health and nutritional hazards in Africa

b. Objectives

- Updating participants on the burden and the current situation of health and nutritional effects due to aflatoxin exposures at global, regional and country levels
- To inform participants of the distinct role of nutrition in health-based aflatoxin research
- Catalogue the various interventions targeting human and animal health as well as nutrition initiatives and actors in countries
- Create a platform (proposed as: Africa Aflatoxin Health and Nutrition Network) that would link actors across the three focal sectors (with special emphasis on health and nutrition) of the African economy impacted by aflatoxins to effectively crusade against this deadly fungal “poison”
- Identifying gaps (especially as related to the nutrition sub-component) on current responses in line with the health component of the PACA strategy
- Developing an operational plan to address the gaps and or implement the health and nutrition component of the PACA strategy

Structure of the Meeting

The meeting will include highly participatory sessions including:

- Keynote Presentation; Plenary sessions; Breakout Group sessions

Expected Outcomes

- Increased awareness among health and nutrition professionals on the burden of aflatoxins in Africa and the role of nutrition in health-based research focused on aflatoxins
- Recommended integrative approaches or interventions for the health and nutrition sectors in the control of aflatoxin in African countries
- Gaps in aflatoxin control identified with regard to the PACA strategy implementation
- Commitment from the participating institutions on various levels of engagement
- An action plan for the health and nutrition sector response and cross-sectoral engagement developed