



## Press Release N° 390/ 2015

### AUC and Mars, Incorporated sign agreement to tackle aflatoxins

**Addis Ababa, 7 December 2015** – The African Union Commission and Mars, Incorporated, have today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to share food safety resources and expertise to control aflatoxins in food crops – a significant threat to food safety in Africa and a major deterrent to use of key African raw materials in global supply chains.

The agreement will facilitate the sharing of food safety research, knowledge, and best practice, and will aim to build and enhance capability for aflatoxin testing and controls. AUC, through the Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA), will leverage Mars' Global Food Safety Center, and together PACA and Mars will work in partnership to help raise awareness of aflatoxin issues across Africa, and identify opportunities to pilot and implement practical efforts to harmonize food safety management in Africa.

“The cooperation between African Union Commission and Mars is in line with our efforts to tackle the complex aflatoxin challenge by working together with a wide array of stakeholders. We value the competencies of the private sector and particularly the experience of Mars in food safety and quality and the creation of preemptive food safety research platforms all of which are of direct relevance to aflatoxin control. Africa is the only region in the world where the supply of aflatoxin prone raw materials, such as groundnuts, will far exceed the internal demand for the years to come. This MOU should serve as a launching pad for collaborations to improve food quality and safety standards that eventually benefit millions of smallscale farmers in Africa, who depend on crops such as maize and groundnuts for their income and food,” stated H.E. Rhoda Peace Tumusiime, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agroculture of the African Union Commission.

Mr. Dave Crean, Vice President of Corporate R&D at Mars, Incorporated, added: “Aflatoxin contamination in humans continues to have a devastating impact across the globe, causing premature death, high liver cancer rates and childhood stunting. With UN estimates that 25 per cent of food crops are affected and 4.5 billion people are potentially exposed to contaminated food annually, it's clear that action is needed. Our

agreement with PACA marks an important step in our mutual goal of tackling aflatoxins and strengthening the global food supply chain. By working in partnership to share food safety knowledge and expertise, our aim is to help tackle the aflatoxin threat, moving us all closer to the mutual goal of access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food for all.”

PACA and Mars have previously collaborated to raise awareness on the scale of the aflatoxin challenge and underline the critical role of an open, collaborative multi-sector approach in tackling malnutrition and driving food safety and security. In July this year, they partnered on a food safety panel at the United Nations’ (UN) Third Financing for Development conference in Addis Ababa entitled ‘Uncommon Partnerships Address Aflatoxins - An Urgent Worldwide Food Safety Challenge’; and in November 2015, they co-sponsored a food safety side event at the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in Rome to drive discussion on ‘Multi-Sector Partnerships Drive Food Safety Solutions’. These discussions have highlighted the need for further mutual alignment and engagement, resulting in the desire to collaborate more closely through the MOU.

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