



THE AFRICA-EU PARTNERSHIP
LE PARTENARIAT AFRIQUE-UE



3rd AU-EU Agriculture Ministerial Conference, 21 June 2019, Rome, Italy

Side Event on the Africa Food Safety Agency

13h00-14h15, Venue: FAO HQ, Rome 21 June 2019

1 Background and context

Raising food safety and quality standards at par with the rest of the world is not a luxury but a matter of survival for African economies. Food safety is foundational to make African agriculture a competitive and vibrant sector that promotes trade, investment, value addition and youth entrepreneurship. Contaminated foods impede food security efforts and maintain unacceptable status quo in food insecurity, poverty and a range of health related problems making sustainable development more challenging. Food safety will continue to play an important role in achieving continental commitments and strategies such as Agenda 2063 and Malabo Declaration as it has become an important precondition for access to global food markets, and increasingly, for high-value domestic markets in developing countries. As Africa moves towards its integration agenda and specifically the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), non-tariff barriers, particularly issues related to food safety/sanitary and phytosanitary standards, if not addressed proactively, will be obstacles to the AfCFTA. Agriculture, which accounts for 75% of Africa's current trade within the continent, will represent a significant portion of the trade in goods and services under the AfCFTA. It is against this backdrop that the AUC has made food safety a priority area to address within the continent by establishing an Africa Food Safety Agency. The agency is expected to coordinate efforts to address the complex developmental challenge posed by unsafe food that disproportionately impacts on the African continent today.

Food safety systems in Africa are not well developed, characterized by weak institutional set up with outdated legislative framework and inadequate laboratory capacity. Official regulation of food safety, product safety and consumer protection have been grossly ignored in many AU Member States. Moreover, food safety systems are fragmented and greatly vary among AU member states further making it difficult for them to trade with each other. Despite some efforts at harmonization of standards at sub-regional, RECS have limited instruments addressing food safety adequately and inter-REC coordination on food safety is non-existent.

There is thus a need for systemic change and a continental approach to lift and harmonize food safety standards, strengthen legal frameworks and build capacity in Africa. It is in this context that the AU Commission is poised to establish an Africa Food Safety Agency to coordinate and provide leadership and support to meet the urgent need for enhanced food safety in the continent. The agency will complement the work of African Union Inter-Africa Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) and Inter-Africa Phytosanitary Council (AU-IAPSC).

The AFSA will be established building on AU Commission's previous and ongoing food safety work. The Commission's commitment to prioritizing food safety was highlighted when it initiated and successfully convened the First AU/FAO/WHO International Food Safety Conference which took place on 12-13 February 2019 at the AU Conference Centre in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia with the aim of prioritizing food safety globally in order to effectively deal with food safety challenges at all levels, national and continental level. The AU Commission also launched a project on the Africa Food Safety Index (AFSI), a project that will institutionalize food safety tracking and capacity building through the Malabo Biennial Review Mechanism. Through this project the Commission will strengthen preparedness and functionality of food safety systems at national level, for an increased performance of each AU Member State in protecting the health of consumers, and in offering quality foods to national and international markets through competitive and fair trade. This is a pioneer work globally. The Commission has also been supporting member states and RECs in mitigation of aflatoxin contamination, a problem which hits Africa the hardest because of climatic and agronomic practices as well as heavy reliance on aflatoxin prone staples. Consequently, the establishment of the Africa Food Safety Agency is a natural progression of AU's efforts and commitment to food safety on the continent.

2 Objectives of the side event

- 1) High level strategic discussion among ministers and other stakeholders as part of the consultations to inform AU Commission's approaches for the establishment of AFSA.
 - 2) Sharing the European food safety control experience
-

3 Expected outcomes

- Recommendations from the honourable ministers on way forward for the establishment of AFSA.
- Stakeholder inputs on the following:
 - o What will be the value addition of the AFSA to food safety coordination with RECs and member states in Africa?
 - o How can AFSA effectively influence the desired systemic change in food safety in the African context?

- What should be the major roles of the AFSA in line with best practice and African needs?
- What can Africa learn from the European experience, which is one of the best and pertinent benchmarks for Africa?

4 Side Event structure and approach

The side event will be a short consultative meeting (75 minutes) focusing on the African Union's upcoming Africa Food Safety Agency (AFSA), its establishment and operationalization. It will highlight experiences from the European Union's Food Safety Management. The side event will have scene setting presentations, panel discussion and Q&A session to gather inputs from participants.

5 Side event date and location

The side event will be held on the margins of the 3rd AU-EU Agriculture Ministerial Conference scheduled on 21 June 2019 in Rome, Italy.

6 Draft program

Opening:		
13:00 – 13:05	Welcome and Introduction	H.E. Amb. Josefa Sacko, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture of AU Commission
Scene Setting Presentations:		
13:05 – 13:15	Background to AFSA	Dr. Godfrey Bahiigwa, Director, Rural Economy and Agriculture, AUC
13:15 – 13:25	EU Experience in Food Safety	Dr. Matthew Hudson, Director, DG Health and Food Safety, European Commission
Panel Discussion:		
13:25 – 13:45	Moderated Q&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hon. Prof. Dr. Ezzaldin Abustein, Minister of Agriculture, Egypt • Hon. Gaston Dossouhoui, Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Elevage et de la Pêche, Bénin • Hon. Owusu Afriyie Akoto, Minister of Food and Agriculture, Ghana • Hon. Koutéra Bataka, Ministre de l'Agriculture, de la Production Animale et Halieutique, Togo
Open discussion and wrap-up:		
13:45 – 14:05	Comments and	

	questions from the audience	
14:05- 14:15	Wrap up	