



## *Food Safety in Africa: Past Endeavors and Future Directions*

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Global Food Safety Partnership

Report Launch Event: Monday, 11 February 2019

Radisson Blu Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

### **MEETING OVERVIEW AND PARTICIPANTS**

On Monday, 11 February 2019, the Global Food Safety Partnership (GFSP), in partnership with its host, the World Bank, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), convened a full-day meeting to formally launch its report “*Food Safety in Africa: Past Endeavors and Future Directions*” and engage diverse representatives of the food safety community to define critical areas for improving food safety outcomes in Africa. Other donor participants who attended the launch included USAID, The Netherlands, DFID, the EC, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The specific objectives of the launch were defined as follows: 1) to present and discuss the GFSP Report and discuss most pressing challenges from the perspective of leadership in African countries, and 2) to deliberate on three proposed themes and define ways to mobilize, target and coordinate public and private action.

The event was planned to coincide with the first FAO/WHO/AU International Food Safety Conference in Addis Ababa on 12 – 13 February. Over 120 stakeholders attended (see attached participant list) from a multitude of countries and sectors (e.g., African governments, multilateral organizations, global private sector, producer associations, research groups, and development partners). Barbara Stinson, of Meridian Institute, moderated discussions of a 35-member roundtable and posed follow-up questions to the group to elicit collaborative dialogue. In the meeting’s closing session, the full audience had an opportunity to comment on the report and share their own challenges and successes regarding food safety capacity building.

### **OPENING REMARKS AND REPORT PRESENTATION AND LAUNCH**

Lystra Antoine, CEO of the GFSP, opened the event by welcoming attendees and thanking the report contributors, advisors, reviewers, and sponsors. She outlined purpose of the report’s focus on food safety in Africa, both because of the growing importance of the region’s food production systems and new understandings of its food borne disease (FBD) burden. Leadership from the World Bank, African Development Bank, USAID, and Mars, Inc. also offered opening remarks. Following a brief presentation of the report by Silvia Alonso (ILRI) and Mike Taylor (GFSP), Lystra Antoine formally launched the report. Roundtable discussion proceeded according to the meeting agenda (attached). A wide range of topics were addressed by participants, including the three key themes of the report, additional themes, and next steps.

## **KEY THEMES FROM ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION**

The three main recommendations of the GFSP report were discussed in sessions throughout the day. Comments are summarized below first by the core themes of the report:

**1) Public Health for Africans** – effectively addressing FBD for Africans through knowledge and intervention strategies, with emphasis on informal markets.

- Participants were well-aligned on the first report recommendation - in order to solve food safety challenges in Africa, food consumed primarily by Africans and food safety in the informal sector must be targeted for further investment and attention. Development partners, national governments, and the private sector should increasingly incorporate informal markets in their overall food safety strategy and in country interventions.
- In reality, the “informal sector” encompasses a great diversity of food production, sale and consumption. Although the report terminology is useful to distinguish between the formal sector and the wide range of informal food systems and markets in Africa, practical policy should reflect more specific market environments (e.g. local wet markets, street food, cross-border trade) and their associated risks for FBD.
- As a reference point, ILRI has recently assembled a volume of evidence on Food Safety in Informal Markets: <https://safefoodfairfood.ilri.org/2015/07/31/bookopenaccess/>
- With cross-sectoral collaboration and support, rather than punitive measures, informal markets can make incremental but significant progress towards food safety. Incentives are needed to promote good food safety practices in informal settings, and government should be “on the side” of the informal sector (e.g., provide certificates for responsible producers).
- A major challenge of the informal sector is the lack of organization/management. Vendors can be aggregated in clusters, and leaders within each community should be targeted as food safety champions.
- There are often language barriers in donor efforts to sensitize local vendors. Train-the-trainer approaches can be effective in wider dissemination of food safety practices.

**2) Risk-based** – build capacity for well-governed, evidence- and risk-based prevention strategies to improve the local conditions of food safety governance.

- There was a broad consensus among meeting participants that the lack of evidence on food safety in Africa results in limited funding and constrains the effectiveness of current investments. There is a tremendous need for more country-level data on incidence and causes of FBD, to both build awareness and guide preventive interventions and priorities.
- “Data speaks louder than words.” National governments and outside investors require a statistical evidence base, much like we have for trade investments. Quantification of the burden will lead to action with measurable impacts (e.g., the new TARTARE project led by Ohio State University to measure microorganisms in raw milk and meat).
- In order to meet the demand for evidence, African countries must build internal capacity for risk-based approaches, as well as critical information from the social sciences.

- Countries should engage in risk prioritization, rather than defaulting to reactive measures. Multi-criteria risk assessment tools have been successfully developed to involve all stakeholders in the food system, not only experts (see Uganda pilot at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bc265e.pdf>).
- The Total Diet Study is another tool that can be replicated and scaled up (<http://www.standardsfacility.org/PG-303>). Once dietary patterns are established, evidence can be assembled along specific value chains.
- Risk management and communication are often neglected by researchers and the public sector. Stakeholders need to trust researchers in order for their evidence to be useful. Knowledge of risk is often not the same as perception of risk. Also, remember that open platforms will be critical and data should be a shared asset.
- Data collection and analysis is also important. Surveillance data from medical care providers should be enhanced and merged with food inspection and animal health data. Traceability of food products can be developed using new technology at low cost.
- Examples of risk-based inspection and analysis were provided from The Gambia, and could be usefully studied and replicated.
- The African Food Safety Index (AFSI) has been designed to help countries benchmark food safety and track progress on the continent.

### 3) **Harnessing Consumer Awareness** – using consumer demand and market forces to increase private sector initiative to drive progress.

- Participants generally agreed with the report’s assessment that we can’t regulate, modernize, or train our way to food safety. Without consumer demand, none of these are sufficient to sustain progress.
- Pawan Agarwal, CEO of India’s Food Safety and Standards Authority, shared his country’s recent experience with consumer empowerment. In order to support the healthy consumption of ~5 billion meals/day, the FSA generated a strong food safety mandate at the consumer level through targeted investments.
- India used the “Triple E strategy”--Engage, Excite, and Enable-- for social and behavioral change. The Authority moved from overall convergence (getting health and wellness ingrained in society), to food safety-specific social mobilization, initiatives, and resources (e.g., magic box tests for adulteration).
- Consumer engagement is relatively inexpensive, and can sometimes precede government policy, regulation, and inspection systems. In addition to traditional channels (e.g. school campaigns), consumers can be engaged through technology such as social media and cell phone games.
- ILRI’s new BMGF-funded project, “Urban food markets in Africa: Incentivizing food safety using a push-pull approach,” will investigate the potential impact of consumer demand on food safety within poultry and vegetable value chains (Burkina Faso and Ethiopia, 2018-2022).

## **ADDITIONAL THEMES FROM DISCUSSION**

In addition to the GFSP report recommendation themes, plenary discussion at the launch event involved the following themes:

### **“THE TIME IS NOW...”**

- *It is time for greater investment.* Donors (e.g., World Bank, AfDB, USAID, EC, Mars) were aligned on the urgent need to advance actions on food safety in Africa. Food safety is now on the agenda, not just part of the agenda, and Africa is at the forefront,
- *It is time for leadership.* Strong leadership and coordination is critical, with a great opportunity to build on the momentum of the week’s events,
- *It is time to harness the power and energy of the youth.* Young people presently make up 70% of the continent, and the median age is 18. With the right tools, this demographic can transform into extremely effective food safety entrepreneurs and advocates.
- *It is time to put health of the domestic consumer first.* It is not necessary to diminish investments on trade, however resources must be devoted to public health commensurate with the food borne disease burden.
- *It is time for continental coordination.* The continental efforts underway at the African Union have great potential to build a foundation for food safety in the region and should be supported.
- *It is time for local interventions.* Country-level engagement will be absolutely crucial in order to advance any progress on food safety. National governments should perform needs assessments and actively seek long-term financial and technical support in priority areas.

### **MOBILIZE ACTION IN AFRICA**

- Meeting participants agreed that the global community needs to be mobilized around food safety in Africa, with particular emphasis on national governments. Investors, including development agencies/banks, foundations, and the private sector, can help stimulate and support this engagement.
- Improvements in food safety don’t have to be tackled through stand-alone projects. Rather, investors can and should include food safety within broader investments, as long as food safety goals are articulated and results are evaluated from a food safety perspective. For example, food safety is an integral part of food security, and should necessarily be addressed within these projects.
- SMEs need access to working capital to address the challenge of sustainability. Food safety is important to them, but requires resources at the front end. Donors can broaden their impact on SMEs through investment in producer and trade associations.
- Capacity building investments in value chains (e.g., training centers working with dairy farmers, modern abattoirs) help drive food safety. Given the widespread limitations in product testing, building capacity/trust in local suppliers is essential to SME success.

- Global companies can share their technical expertise on Good Manufacturing Practices, and Technoserve provided an example in food processing.
- Investors can foster market-based solutions in the formal sector, as there is an increasing demand for food quality assurances in African hotels, supermarkets, and convenience stores. Challenges exist in the informal sector, where there is little financial incentive for food safety.

### **“FOOD SAFETY IS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY”**

- Stakeholders -- policymakers, regulators, scientists, risk communicators, relevant international institutions, donors, private sector, food processors, youth, consumers -- must be brought together for action planning in specified countries.
- India’s experience demonstrates that food safety initiatives are essentially about creating partnerships. There is a need for coordination/integration of capacity building at different levels within country context (state, municipal), and the creation of more country-level public-private dialogues. For example, the Presidential Roundtable in Kenya has made the private sector responsible for developing organized food markets, while reserving the government’s authority to enforce food safety.
- Meeting participants also called for coordinating mechanisms between the various national government entities involved in food safety (e.g., Food Safety Authority, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Livestock/Fisheries, Ministry of Finance).
- The private sector has a major role to play in creating infrastructure (e.g. third party lab systems). They can share responsibility for compliance with the national food safety authorities.
- Exchange of knowledge within regions is an untapped resource, and there is an added value of political will when addressing challenges for regional coordination. Efforts at regional harmonization of standards should continue.

### **HOLISTIC, EXPANSIVE, LONG-TERM INVESTMENTS**

- Training is needed, but it is not enough; regulations are needed, but are not enough; we need multifaceted, tailor-made strategies that support the markets and the food business operators to improve their practices and the safety of foods. Food safety should be examined from farm-to-fork, and government efforts should be more preventive than reactive. FAO’s tools for strengthening food control systems are underutilized (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-y8705e.pdf>).
- We need to move beyond short-term trainings and fragmented investments to longer-term education, mentoring and empowerment of stakeholders. Proposals included building a unified African food safety curriculum at the university level; digitalization of training, as with the online courses for food handlers and food safety supervisors in India; expansion of

agricultural extension, with an emphasis on One Health; mentoring and coaching of SME operators; and integration/standardization of procedures for regulators.

- “Pilots never fail, pilots never scale.” Investors need to provide the underlying structure such that African countries can scale in a sustainable manner. This depends on building institutional capacities, well-defined systems and processes, and (crucially) food safety frameworks.
- WASH, especially water safety, is vitally important to food safety. Animal health and environmental interventions also play a significant role in food safety outcomes, but almost always go unmeasured. The FERG group is due to release new evidence on foodborne environmental hazards, such as heavy metals.
- Targeted interventions are important components of a holistic strategy. There is great value in stakeholders looking at food safety solutions at a more granular level (e.g., specific value chains, production levels, market contexts, and consumer groups). GLOBALG.A.P. has local g.a.p. pilot: [https://www.globalgap.org/uk\\_en/for-producers/localg.a.p./](https://www.globalgap.org/uk_en/for-producers/localg.a.p./)

### **SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS**

1. Meeting highlights are distributed to all participants, along with participant list (GFSP).
2. Solicit additional feedback via sli.do or other platform (GFSP).
3. Maintain lines of communication between GFSP and AfDB to extend partnership and possibly create a coherent leadership strategy.
4. Convene a core group around future food safety events (such as IFSC – Geneva) to take advantage of momentum and maintain alignment (GFSP).
5. Use United Nations World Food Safety Day (7 June) as a platform to raise awareness (all stakeholders).
6. Continue to use the leverage and convening power of the GFSP to advance the recommendations in the report.
7. Identify select countries to showcase intervention in Africa.
8. Include measurable food safety outcomes in relevant projects and engagement with countries. (donor and development agencies)
9. Make the business case for private sector involvement in food safety capacity building in the informal sector.

“Today, we need a new mantra [for food safety]. What does not kill you, can kill you next time; what does not kill you, can kill your cousin; what does not kill you, can get you hospitalized for two weeks; what does not kill you, can cost Africa billions of dollars; what does not kill you can stunt you mentally and physically; and what does not kill you, can kill you eventually.”

~Edward Mabaya, African Development Bank