



COMMUNIQUE ON THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 2ND WORLD FOOD SAFETY DAY

In commemoration of the 2nd World Food Safety Day (WFSD), the African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) and the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Africa (CCAFRICA) organized an online meeting on 5th June 2020 to raise awareness on food safety. The meeting was held under the theme “*COVID-19 Pandemic and Food Safety – Building resilient national food control systems for consumer protection and safe trade*”. The objective of the online meeting was to provide a platform for Competent Authorities in Africa responsible for food control to share information on impact, challenges, lessons in food control as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and Identify best practices and mitigation measures for operating resilient national food control systems. The meeting was attended by 86 participants from 30 African countries, 2 RECs (ECOWAS and COMESA), AU-IBAR and African Development Bank. Prof. Ahmed Elswalhy, Director AU-IBAR opened the meeting, Dr. Kimutai Maritim, CCAFRICA Coordinator also addressed participants.

WE the Member States of African Union, Regional Economic Communities, Development Partners, Food Producers, Processors and Marketers and Consumers;

RECALLING the momentum created from the previous WFSD celebrations, and desirous to collaborate in unison to focus efforts on reaching state and non-state actors as well as those directly involved in food systems on the continent in order to raise the profile of food safety at all levels;

TAKING COGNIZANCE that unsafe food poses a significant threat to human health and well-being and can hamper agricultural transformation, market integration, and economic development;

RECOGNIZING that foodborne diseases make 91 million people ill and cause 137,000 premature deaths annually¹ and that this translates into productivity losses of US\$95 billion a year in developing countries alone²;

AWARE of the need to maintain public trust in national food control systems and promote safe trade in food,

¹ WHO estimates of the global burden of foodborne diseases, WHO, 2015

² The Safe Food Imperative : Accelerating Progress in Low- and Middle-Income Countries, World Bank, 2018

RECOGNIZING the peculiar challenges and impact the COVID-19 pandemic may be having on national food control activities such as inspection, laboratory testing, market surveillance, import and export controls;

MINDFUL of the unprecedented threat from the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused social and economic disruption of unprecedented proportions and resulted in many businesses closing;

COGNIZANT that through information and experience sharing, potential mitigation measures can be identified to ensure the establishment and operationalization of national food control systems that will be resilient to future pandemics and crises;

HEREBY call for the following actions:

1. Increase investment in food safety, including building capacity for managing food safety emergencies, in order to ensure the safety of food supplies in formal and informal markets;
2. Encourage the use of risk profiling approaches to manage food safety risks and ensure attention and resources are realigned to operations classified as medium or high risk;
3. Encourage the harmonization of inspection protocols across the continent to minimize impacts of future crisis and facilitate intra-African trade in food;
4. Review existing regulatory framework, assess the national food control situation and consider the use of technologies in execution of some regulatory functions to limit impact of future crises on food control;
5. Encourage the use of e-certification and e-commerce to facilitate trade and avoid the impact of movement restrictions in times of crisis;
6. Encourage food industry to increasingly become self-regulating by providing good regulatory framework and an enabling environment;
7. Strengthen the capacities of food industry and provide guidance towards the implementation of food safety management systems based on the HACCP principles and Preventive Controls Measures.
8. Encourage multisectoral collaboration on food safety at all times and during times of crises.