



Partnership
for Aflatoxin
Control in Africa

Partenariat pour
lutter contre
l'aflatoxine en Afrique

Parceria para o
Controle da
Aflatoxina em África

الشراكة من أجل مكافحة
الأفلاتوكسين في أفريقيا



Communiqué on the Regional Workshop on the Aflatoxin Challenge in West African States

Alisa Hotel, Accra, Ghana

18-20 November 2013

On 18-20 November 2013, approximately 40 experts from agriculture, health, and trade met in Accra, Ghana to set regional priorities to address the aflatoxin challenge in West African States.

Preamble

The African Union Commission (AUC) endorsed the creation of the Partnership for aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA) at the 7th CAADP Partnership Platform meeting in Yaoundé, Cameroon in March 2011. PACA was officially launched by the AUC and endorsed by the Joint Conference for Ministers of Agriculture and Ministers of Trade on 31 October 2012.

The Economic Community of West African States ECOWAS, in collaboration with the African Union through the Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA) and other key partners including the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (WECAD/CORAF) convened a workshop on the “Aflatoxin Challenge in West African States” from 18-20 November 2013.

The delegates from the following ECOWAS Member States: Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo, as well as a civil society organization from Cameroun (PROPAC) assessed the status of member states' efforts to develop comprehensive solutions to control aflatoxin, and to set regional priorities for the development of a regional action plan on aflatoxin mitigation to benefit ECOWAS countries.

The workshop benefited from the regional experiences from ECOWAS and COMESA which were presented by representatives of these Regional Economic Communities. The ECOWAS Commission made a detailed presentation on the status of implementation of the ECOWAS Agriculture Policy (ECOWAP). The region has been able to develop its regional and national CAADP compacts which are now attracting funding from a variety of development partners. A number of initiatives designed to fast track the ECOWAP implementation have been established. These include the regional food reserve programme, the rice offensive, hunger free initiative for West Africa, the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Programme amongst others. The establishment of the Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food will also help in the coordination of all regional programs under the ECOWAP. A number of regulatory frameworks

on sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS), seeds, fertilizers, veterinary medicine and pesticides have been developed. These regulations will contribute towards the attainment of the food security objectives of the ECOWAP and enhance the competitiveness of West African agriculture.

COMESA shared its experience on the legally established structures and mechanisms to implement and coordinate SPS capacity development programmes, whilst ensuring that SPS measures only serve a legitimate objective and do not become barriers to trade or non-tariff barriers (NTBs) in the Common Market. An important achievement has been the ongoing negotiations to establish the Tripartite Free Trade Area (FTA), by merging the EAC, COMESA and SADC FTAs. The Tripartite FTA Agreement lays out a legally binding coordination mechanism that will enable the three Regional Economic Communities (EAC-COMESA-SADC) to harmonize SPS programmes and implement risk based SPS measures for the smooth flow of food and agricultural products across the tripartite region.

Recommendations

Recognizing that the aflatoxin challenge is complex and calls for coordinated efforts and integrated approaches for managing the risks to public health, food security, trade and economic development, the recommendations from the meeting to policy makers were grouped into the following three sectors: health, trade and agriculture.

Key Interventions in the Health Sector

Workshop participants identified the following interventions as high priority for mitigating the human health impacts of aflatoxin:

1. ***Public Awareness Creation***
 - Create public awareness among stakeholders within ECOWAS Member States.
2. ***Capacity Building***
 - Build human and laboratory capacities for risk analysis, management and communication.
 - Establish a regional mechanism (e.g. Regional Food Safety Authority) within ECOWAS to coordinate Member States' food safety management.
 - Make Food Safety Authorities within Member States autonomous in order to harmonize the linkages between agriculture, health and industry to effectively manage aflatoxins and other food safety issues.
3. ***Research***
 - Establish Regional Risk Assessment Laboratory as reference center to research into food contaminants, starting with aflatoxins.

- Conduct research on new drugs for treatment of human health effects of aflatoxin.
- Conduct research /cohort studies to establish the relationship/association of mycotoxin (aflatoxin) to specific childhood diseases such as stunting.

4. *Treatment*

- Establish Liver Cancer Registries in each Member State and at the Regional Level.
- Promote the use of proven drugs used as treatment e.g. Oltripaz, etc. by Ministries of Health.

Key Interventions in the Trade Sector

Workshop participants identified the following interventions as having high potential mitigating aflatoxins in the short to medium term:

1. Awareness creation and capacity building

- Design country awareness creation strategies and harmonize them across the region.
- Promote discourse and communication through country and regional workshops.
- Conduct policy advocacy at country level.
- Create and formalize national Mycotoxin Associations as an instrument of awareness raising among the general public as well as interaction among stakeholders.
- Establish a West African Aflatoxin Awareness Day.

2. Setting standards and regulations (including regulatory bodies for the informal markets)

- Set up committees to draft standards and regulations for both human food and animal feed.
- Validate draft standards and regulations at country level.
- Establish institutions to administer the standards and regulations.
- Create awareness on the standards.
- Monitor the effective enforcement of the regulations and compliance to the standards.
- Organize workshops and seminars to harmonize countries' standards and regulations into regional standards and regulations.

3. Infrastructural development

- Set up a committee of experts to take stock of existing national and regional infrastructure as well as available human resources.

- Conduct a needs assessment and identify the gaps.
- Mobilize financial and human resources and fill the identified gaps.

4. *Innovation and investment in technology*

- Facilitate public and private sector investment in aflatoxin reduction technologies.

Key Interventions in the Agriculture Sector

Workshop participants identified the following interventions as high priority for the agriculture sector:

1. *Education, Awareness, and Capacity Building*

- Train farmers about the effects of aflatoxin and strategies to mitigate aflatoxin through train-the-trainer workshops, farmer field schools, demonstration plots, field days, and exchange visits.
- Connect farmers with researchers through workshops, field schools, personal contact, dissemination of information, and mechanisms for follow up.
- PACA and ECOWAS should mobilize funds through implementation of the PACA Strategy and ECOWAP and development of proposals to donors.

2. **Pre-Harvest measures for aflatoxin management**

- Aflatoxin-resistant seeds - Multiply and distribute existing, high yielding, farmer preferred lines where available (groundnuts). Conduct multi-locational trials for lines for which this has not already been done.
- Biocontrol – Conduct trials to demonstrate product value, scale up this technology, and train farmers how to use this technology.
- Good agricultural practices (GAP): Look at critical control points for all crops of concern. Include GAP in extension agent and private sector technical advisor materials and use in farmer training programs.

3. **Research/Diagnosis**

- Conduct field trials, including on farm trials, to assess the effectiveness of cultural (indigenous) aflatoxin control mechanisms.

4. **Post-Harvest measures for aflatoxin management**

- Decontamination and alternative uses - Develop a universally accepted grading system. Grade raw material. Use maize with aflatoxin levels less than 100ppb for livestock feed. Feed with higher levels can be used for less sensitive species. Ammoniated product can be used for fertilizer. Crops with aflatoxin levels too high for other uses can be transformed into biofuel.
- Build capacity of national, private, and research institution laboratories to conduct cutting edge screening and monitoring for aflatoxin.
- Grain drying and storage – Maintain existing drying and storage facilities and locate new ones close to farmers. Ensure power supply is available. Train farmers in the use of drying equipment and techniques.

5. **Markets and Policy**

- Create markets that differentiate grades and provide a premium for aflatoxin-free products to provide incentives for farmers to adopt aflatoxin control.
- Review existing food safety policies and add mycotoxin-specific guidance and/or develop mycotoxin policies at country level.
- Build capacity for risk assessment, communication, and management in regulatory agencies.

Call to Action

Experts in the three sectors called upon the regional and national policy makers to mainstream aflatoxin issues into relevant frameworks at regional and country levels, such as the CAADP Agricultural Investment Plans, The ECOWAS Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) etc., to address the identified priority intervention areas.

In the light of the real threats that aflatoxin poses to the region in terms of food security, trade, health and overall livelihoods, the workshop mandates the ECOWAS Commission to bring this matter to the attention of political leaders and decision makers. Furthermore, workshop participants urge the ECOWAS Commission and political leaders to give priority attention to the challenges of aflatoxin by providing the much needed political support and resources at both the regional and national levels.

Timeline of Post-Workshop Activities

Item	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Finalize Communiqué and share with meeting participants													
Explore the possibility of publishing presentations in relevant journals with FARA													
Identify presentations to be used for the journal articles													
Request for contributions for journal articles from identified presenters													
Submit articles to a selected journal													
Anticipated fast-track review and publication of articles													
Draft a roadmap for aflatoxin mitigation in ECOWAS- towards implementation of the suggested interventions in communiqué													
Present communiqué and roadmap to policy makers in ECOWAS at a relevant platform (TBD)													
Review of ECOWAP to incorporate aflatoxin mitigation strategies							??	??	??	??	??	??	