



Partnership
for Aflatoxin
Control in Africa

Partenariat pour la
lutte contre les
aflatoxines en Afrique

Parceria para o
controlo das
aflatoxinas na África

الشراكة من أجل التحكم في
الإفلاتوكسين في أفريقيا

Aflatoxin Partnership Newsletter

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Dear PACA Community Members:

We are pleased to present this issue of your newsletter with important updates and information.

The first quarter of 2016 has seen some important events and milestones in PACA implementation. Country level activities which are the main focus of PACA progressed well. As promised the Country-led Situation Analysis and Action Planning (C-SAAP) reports which offer valuable home grown, locally relevant evidence are completed for some of our pilot countries, notably Tanzania and the Gambia. Having mainstreamed the national aflatoxin control plan into its national agricultural strategy, Tanzania is poised to convene government, private sector, development partners and other stakeholders for a business meeting to agree on a roadmap for implementation of the national plan and consider investments. This is a crucial stage in the country planning approach that Tanzania has been pursuing for over a year. We have witnessed that fragmented approaches didn't help countries solve the aflatoxin problem in its entire complexity. We call upon aflatoxin control stakeholders to join hands for a coordinated, government led and stakeholder driven implementation of the well-conceived national aflatoxin control plan of Tanzania and other countries. The comprehensive national plans offer a lot for PACA community members to take up, with due recognition of our diverse organizational strategies and focus.

I would also like to bring to your attention the international workshop on "Engaging the Health and Nutrition Sectors in Aflatoxin Control in Africa" held at the African Union on 23-24 March 2016. This workshop was successful in all measures but if I have to mention just one thing, that will be the clarity it brought to effectively addressing the health and nutrition aspects of the aflatoxin problem.

Message from PACA Manager—continued

Related to this, the PACA-Global Panel joint roundtable meeting held in Accra on 12 April 2016 also was successful in putting the aflatoxin problem squarely in nutrition priorities of Africa. The Accra meeting which was graced by the presence of high level policy and decision makers and influential personalities including Former President John Kufuor of Ghana and Honorable Minister Monty Jones of Sierra Leone and other high level officials from PACA pilot countries and partners was also a great advocacy platform. The food safety work of Mars, Incorporated who convened the first scientific conference in the new state-of-the-art Global Food Safety Center is exemplary. We also appreciate the Platform for African European Partnership on Agricultural Research for Development (PAEPARD) for stepping up efforts at coordinating European and African researchers and stakeholders toward a serious engagement for mitigating the scourge of aflatoxins. Please read these and other interesting articles in this issue.

Once again I would like to ask PACA Community Members to share with PACA Secretariat updates about your projects and programs for further sharing with the Community through the PACA website. We are interested in knowing about your work to help create synergies and maximize the use of limited resources. We can't afford to duplicate each other's efforts.

Thank you for your support to aflatoxin control in Africa.

Amare Ayalew (PhD)
Program Manager, PACA/AUC

Health and Nutrition Priorities in Aflatoxin Control

Human exposure to aflatoxins can have very harmful impacts on the health of populations. Currently, it is estimated that more than 5 billion people worldwide are exposed to aflatoxins. The effects of aflatoxins are known to include liver cirrhosis, intestinal dysfunction and immune suppression among others; this depends on the extent of exposure. Considering the recommendations from the first PACA Partnership Platform Meeting to harmonize health intervention efforts, create health advocacies and awareness as well as adopt the multi-sectoral approach to mitigating health risks from aflatoxin exposure, PACA invited AMREF Health Africa, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health

Organization (WHO), the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) to foster and reinforce multi-sectoral linkages in the health sector and nutrition domain. As a result, PACA, in collaboration with the aforementioned institutions, organized a workshop on “Engaging the Health and Nutrition Sectors in Aflatoxin Control in Africa” from 23-24 March 2016 at the African Union Commission Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Workshop was themed “Mitigating the Health and Nutrition Impacts of Aflatoxins in Africa through Uncommon Partnerships”. The meetings main objectives were to:

- Update participants on the burden and current

situation of health and nutritional effects due to aflatoxin exposures at global, regional and country levels.

- Inform participants of the role of nutrition in health-based aflatoxin research.
- Catalogue the various interventions targeting human and animal health as well as nutrition initiatives and actors in countries.
- Create a platform (proposed as: Africa Aflatoxin Health and Nutrition Forum) that would link actors across the three focal sectors (with special emphasis on health and nutrition) of the African economy impacted by aflatoxins to effectively crusade against this deadly fungal “poison”.

Health and Nutrition Priorities in Aflatoxin Control– Continued

- Identify gaps (especially as related to the nutrition sub-component) on current responses in line with the health component of the PACA strategy.
- Develop an operational plan to address the gaps and/or implement the health and nutrition component of the PACA strategy.

The meeting was attended by more than 100 stakeholders from the various sectors. Participants were fully engaged in the various plenary, group works and brainstorming sessions throughout the meeting. A press conference was also

held on the first day where leading institutions including the AUC, and experts expressed their concerns and increased need for collaboration among sectors in order to address the challenges faced due to aflatoxin contamination and exposure. The meeting came up with concrete actions in the health, nutrition, and communication areas. The major action areas identified in health among others include surveillance studies to identify high risk zones, bio-monitoring to provide prevalence data on aflatoxin exposure in humans, as well as animal health studies to provide prevalence data and

raise awareness of effects of aflatoxins on animals. In awareness, participants also identified action areas such as advocacy on aflatoxin at high level meetings, education and in-service training for increased awareness, as well as increased communication on impacts of aflatoxin. Action areas in agriculture and nutrition were also identified. For additional information, please visit our website at: <http://www.aflatoxinpartnership.org>

PACA Retrains on AfricaAIMS and Assists in Country Data Submission

The Africa Aflatoxin information Management System (AfricaAIMS) developed by PACA in collaboration with the African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), as a one-stop shop for aflatoxin and related issues on the continent, is running in five of PACA's six pilot countries as well as Kenya. The AfricaAIMS project focuses on gathering reliable and consistent "home grown" data/evidence on the current state of aflatoxin contamination of key staple crops identified by the pilot countries. It also aims to gather data from aflatoxin-related issues in the health and

trade sectors. These data are owned by the respective countries and are fed into a central database (ARIS 2) hosted by AU-IBAR.

In 2014, the PACA secretariat trained five pilot countries in data collection, sampling and analysis as well as system interface. A refresher course and data entry exercise was conducted from 8-12 February 2016 at the AU-IBAR in Nairobi, Kenya for eight country representatives from four of the current six PACA pilot countries – Senegal, Tanzania, the Gambia and Uganda. In 2015, these countries collected data on aflatoxin contamination of several crops they identified. Data on

trade exports, imports and rejections of aflatoxin prone crops were also collected and entered into the portal. More data from 2015 surveys are being prepared for entry into the ARIS 2 portal. The system enables countries to assess aflatoxin levels in staple crops from their countries as well as the impact of aflatoxin on the health of their people. In the future, the system is envisaged to facilitate the mapping of aflatoxin hot spots, prediction of aflatoxin prevalence and elucidation of possible intervention entry points. For additional information on AfricaAIMS, please visit our website at: <http://www.aflatoxinpartnership.org>.

Senegal Validates its National Aflatoxin Control Action Plan

Senegal, one of PACA's pilot countries, finalized and validated its National Aflatoxin Control Action Plan on 19 April 2016 in Dakar, Senegal. Based on a country-led situation analysis that was conducted and validated in 2015, Senegal developed its national aflatoxin control action plan to mainstream into major national frameworks such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and implement. The plan has five strategic areas under which many activities are included. These strategic areas mainly address issues of awareness raising, strengthening of institutional frameworks for



inter-sectoral collaboration, evidence generation and information sharing, capacity building of public and private sectors, and monitoring and evaluation. The agriculture advisor to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Equipment, Mr. Faustin Diatta, opened the meeting assuring participants of Senegal's commitment to reducing effects of aflatoxins on its population. He mentioned the situation analysis study where the effects of aflatoxins on

the people and economy of Senegal were clearly shown. He also indicated that the objectives of the plan translate the ambition of the President of Senegal, H.E. Macky Sall, to make agriculture the engine for economic growth and development in Senegal's development plan. The workshop was attended by heads of organizations and experts from the various sectors in Senegal. A business meeting with various stakeholders will be held in May 2016 in order to allocate funds towards implementation of the plan in Senegal.



The Global Panel for Agriculture Food Systems and Nutrition and PACA Joined Hands to Address Food Safety: Champions Meeting on the Margins of CAADP

The Global Panel for Agriculture Food Systems and Nutrition and the African Union's PACA joined hands to organize a high level roundtable meeting on the margins of the CAADP Partnership Platform on 12 April 2016 in Accra, Ghana. The Global Panel, an independent group with an aim to tackle global challenges in food and nutrition security, has members that include the former president of Ghana, the president of the African Development Bank as well as the Commissioner of Rural Economy and Agriculture of the African Union Commission among others.

The high level roundtable meeting was one of its kind where leaders on the continent came together to address food safety with



particular emphasis on aflatoxins. The meeting was hosted by His Excellency John Kuofor, former President of Ghana and H.E. Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, Commissioner of Rural Economy and Agriculture of AUC represented by Dr. Janet Edeme. The roundtable's main objectives were to:

1. Initiate the first high level political discussion on food safety focusing on aflatoxins and to identify

high level Champions who will advance the food safety agenda in particular aflatoxin control on the African continent

2. Launch the Global Panel's brief on food safety and introduce its key messages to African leaders
3. Stimulate discussions around food safety and aflatoxins on the continent

The meeting was attended by high level representatives from African governments and development partners where food safety issues were addressed in order to identify sustainable and promising solutions to the challenges. For additional information please visit our websites: <http://aflatoxinpartnership.org/?q=node/439> and <http://www.glopan.org>.

The PACA Steering Committee Deliberated on PACA's Strategic Direction

The eighth PACA Steering Committee (SC) meeting was held on 02-03 March 2016 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. four new members, African Society of Mycotoxicology (ASM), East African Community (EAC), Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), and Mars Incorporated were welcomed to the Steering Committee. The SC expressed its gratitude to members who rotated out, The African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) and the Common Market for Eastern and



Southern Africa (COMESA).

The meeting deliberated on various issues especially the strategic direction of PACA phase II, resource mobilization for PACA Phase II, focus areas for country plan implantation (nature and extent of PACA's catalytic support for impact), operationalization of the

Africa Aflatoxin Information Management System (AfricaAIMS), as well as progress of PACA's activities at regional and continental levels. For additional information on the meeting, please visit <http://www.aflatoxinpartnership.org/>.

News and Information on Aflatoxins

CAADP holds its 12th Partnership Platform Meeting

The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) organized its 12th Partnership Platform meeting from 12 to 14 April 2016, at La Palm Beach Hotel, in Accra, Ghana. This platform is member states-led and brought together various stakeholders to advance CAADP' visions as well as stimulate and facilitate the sharing and learning on substantive agricultural transformation issues including policies, institutions, technologies, partnerships and alliances, as well as skill and knowledge. The PPM was themed: "through Innovative Financing and Renewed Partnership" to accelerate CAADP Implementation. The meeting mainly focused on discussions

around innovative policy and institutional actions and sharing experiences, lessons on modalities, tools and enabling political economy factors to foster partnerships in pursuit of the Malabo Declaration.

The meeting aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- ◆ Help consolidate the understanding and related Action on the systemic institutional and policy changes necessary to attain the Malabo Commitments.
- ◆ share and examine various innovative instruments, models and mechanisms to attract increased accessible investment financing to agriculture with specific focus on driving action and results along the Malabo Declaration goals and

commitments; and

- ◆ review the CAADP implementation support partnership framework and structures considering adaptations and refinements to reflect evolving circumstances, aspirations and needs in fostering robust partnerships and alliances as key success factor for the CAADP-Malabo Commitments

The 12th CAADP PP will also served as a great platform to share revisions of the CAADP implementation approach including the design of the Biennial CAADP Review, Accountability and Learning cycle. The meeting was attended by more than 200 participants.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) Publishes a New Report on Mycotoxin Control in Low-and Middle Income Countries

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) is a specialized agency of the World Health Organization that promotes international collaboration in cancer research in the world. As an independent agency, IARC facilitates the coordination of research across countries and organizations. It brings together expertise from epidemiology, laboratory sciences and biostatistics to identify the causes of cancer in order for preventive measures to be adopted and the burden of disease and associated suffering reduced.

This new report focuses on the health impact of aflatoxins and fumonisins in developing countries. It mainly tries to look at possible threat to child health. It offers a health-based evaluation of a number of interventions to improve the safety of available foods. The report also looks at the lack of choice for poor or starving people in consuming highly contaminated foods especially in very stressful situations like drought. The experts believe that some suggested interventions would require major investments and food sufficiency in order to implement.

However, they also believe some interventions can be implemented through greater gender-specific knowledge mobilization.

The report was led by world-leading experts who have concluded that these mycotoxins not only cause acute poisoning and cancer but are also likely contributors to the high levels of stunting in children in exposed populations. For additional information please visit <http://www.iufost.org/iufostftp/IUFoST%20SIB%20%20-%20Aflatoxin%20Update.April%202016.pdf>.

Roundtable of Aflatoxin Experts on “Building a Multi-Stakeholder Approach to Mitigate Aflatoxin Contamination of Food and Feed” Called for Innovations and Partnerships to Mitigate Aflatoxins

The Platform for African-European Partnership in Agricultural Research for Development (PAEPARD), in collaboration with the Directorate General Santé of the European Commission, the East African Farmer Federation (EAFF), the Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA) and the African Society of Mycotoxicology (ASM), organized a roundtable meeting of aflatoxin experts from around the world on 25 January 2016 in Brussels, Belgium. The meeting attracted more than 40 participants from 22 different countries and provided valuable perspectives to the aflatoxin issue. It was a platform where experts and relevant stakeholders shared experience and highlighted the various potential solutions to address the issues of aflatoxins in Africa

and other affected continents. There were a series of presentations in two sessions each focusing on lessons and actions to address the aflatoxin problem (presentations are available at <http://paepard.blogspot.com/2016/01/announcement-roundtable-of-aflatoxin.html>). Dr. Amare Ayalew, PACA Program Manager, presented on the need for coordinated approach and sustained investment in strengthening areas of knowledge and information, evidence-based and coherent policy development, support innovation, strong commitment and embedding aflatoxin control in nutrition and value chain development projects. Experts agreed on the complexity of the aflatoxin problem and the fact that there is no silver bullet as a solution, but have shown that there are

many technologies and options that can be used by farmers and other stakeholders. However, the meeting also emphasized the need for systemic review of available evidence including analysis to determine the cost of inaction in mitigating the problem. This will enable policy makers to make decisions based on evidence such as cost of inaction. Participants also agreed on the need for more research on issues such as the effects of aflatoxins on stunting and nutrition as well as research to harness innovations and develop suitable and affordable aflatoxin control options and testing methods for stakeholders. The meeting benefited from lively panel discussions and open dialogues. A report is available at the link, <https://dgroups.org/?3ysmqb9y>

Uncommon Collaborations and the Future of Food Safety Science: Mars, Incorporated Convened Leading Scientists and Practitioners in an International Symposium

Mars, Incorporated conducted an international scientific symposium on 18-20 April 2016 at the Mars Global Food Safety Center, Huairou, Beijing, China. The goal of the symposium was to bring together a global group of food safety experts to share current research, identify food safety challenges, and discuss opportunities for collaboration between industry, NGOs and academia that can change the current food safety paradigms and drive towards safer food for the world.

The successful symposium was held in three sections. The first section allowed a tour of the Global Food Safety Center of Mars (GFSC). Opened in September 2015, the GFSC is a state-of-the-art facility which is meant to serve as an international platform for research and training and contribute to achieving food safety for all. The second section of the symposium focused on food safety science research in the areas of

mycotoxin management, pathogen management and the opportunities offered by big data and next generation sequencing for a more holistic and proactive food safety risk management program across the entire supply chain. The conference participants heard that multiple food safety challenges remain in the global supply chain and that the impact of mycotoxins on human health has been historically under-prioritized. They also heard that Salmonella remains a significant challenge in the food industry and more focus is needed on prevention rather than detection. The third section focused on collaborations and potential opportunities for addressing the challenges and putting into use the opportunities identified. There were several presentations that painted the horizon of global and regional food safety and regulatory frameworks and discussions on existing “uncommon collaborations” between Mars and different

organizations including PACA. Food safety and its role as a key component of food security was another area of discussion with the view that new and complex risks could pose challenges to existing risk assessment approaches. The audience heard that against a backdrop of globalization of the food supply chain and an increase in international trade, food industry practices are moving away from reliance on border checks to underpinning food safety with good risk assessment processes across the global logistics chain. Whilst it was accepted that implementation of country regulations and practices will vary, it was argued that a positive trend is being seen across industry, driving a level of commitment, cooperation and collaboration to implement an aligned spirit of laws, driving best practice and facilitating the trading of safe food.

Uncommon Collaborations and the Future of Food Safety Science – Continued

It is to be recalled that African Union through PACA and Mars signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in December 2015 to tackle aflatoxins. During the signing of the MOU, H.E. Rhoda Peace Tumusiime, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture of the African Union Commission said “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 particular-

ly 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.” Mars and

PACA have since been collaborating in high level advocacy at the regional and global level and will jointly work in a number of areas toward the common goal of safer food.

Mars has stated that it takes a pre-competitive approach to food safety and through the Global Food Safety Center has committed to sharing food safety research and knowledge to help ensure a safer food supply chain. Collaboration across disciplines and practitioners was emphasized during the three day symposium as “food safety is too important to be left just to food safety scientists”.

Upcoming event:

2nd PACA PPM - October 2016

Date and Location to be determined

“AFRICA FREE FROM THE HARMFUL
EFFECTS OF AFLATOXINS”

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