Dear PACA Community Members:

We are pleased to present this Special PPM Edition of your newsletter with important updates and information. This Issue has a special coverage of the Second Partnership Platform Meeting of PACA which was conducted on 11-13 October 2016 in Entebbe, Uganda.

The Second PACA PPM raised the bar and showed further maturity of PACA. The PPM took stock of the multi-faceted challenges due to aflatoxin contamination of staple and cash crops in Africa and available options and models to tackle the challenges. H.E. Yoweri Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda officially opened the Second PPM. His eloquent address to the meeting sent a strong political message to address the challenge meaningfully. The Second PPM was marked by unique side events addressing specific stakeholder needs and capabilities (private sector, non-state actors or parliamentarians) and specific technologies (aflasafe) or tools (extending the PACA model to non-pilot countries). Please read more highlights of the PPM including the celebration of individuals and organizations for outstanding contributions to aflatoxin control and food safety.

Once again the PPM was so successful through the support of PACA community members. Thank you to those who shared information about projects that now feature in the map of aflatoxin prevention and control activities at the PACA Website.

We also thank many of you for your support and for registering to participate in the PPM. We were glad to see so many diverse representatives in Entebbe, and we gratefully acknowledge your valuable participation at the PPM toward achieving the meeting objectives. We are so sorry that we were unable to support participation of all registered PACA Community members. The selection from the list of registrants was based on first-come, first served basis, while trying to achieve a balance between different stakeholder categories and maximize women’s participation. We weren’t able to support more participants purely due to resource limitations. We are working on the report of the 2nd PACA PPM and will share it with the Community in the coming few weeks.
Welcome Message- Continued

We are also grateful to the PPM Planning Task Team who has been a source of advice during weeks of planning of the PPM. The National Planning Committee in Uganda played crucial roles in making the PPM a success.

In addition, we appreciate the organizations that set up exhibition stands in the gallery market place at the PPM to showcase products and knowledge that are available to deal with the complex aflatoxin problem.

This Issue highlights a recent outbreak of high level of aflatoxin contamination from July to September 2016 that caused acute poisoning in Dodoma and Manyara regions of Tanzania, which claimed 18 lives. This is deeply saddening and only the ‘tip of the iceberg’. Without the timely intervention of Tanzanian authorities, many more lives could have been lost but the chronic effects of low to medium levels of aflatoxins are the biggest threats to public health and trade.

You may recall that I reported about the Secretariat’s continued effort, with guidance from the PACA Steering Committee and AUC, to build its capacity to effectively support continental, regional and country level activities. I am pleased to welcome and introduce to the PACA Community our Strategy and Operations Senior Officer, Ms. Liz Ogutu; Knowledge Manager, Ms. Peace Mutuma; and Communication Expert, Ibrahim Gariba; Country Officer for Senegal, Mr. Magatte Ndoye, and Country Officer for Tanzania, Dr. Happy Magoha. Please read their profiles inside this issue.

Thank you for your support to aflatoxin control in Africa.

Amare Ayalew (PhD)
Program Manager, PACA, AUC
Highlights from the 2nd PACA PPM
Aflatoxin Control

2nd PACA PPM

Partnership
The Second PACA Partnership Platform Meeting (2nd PACA PPM) was successfully held on 11-13 October in Entebbe, Uganda. The theme of the PPM was, “Tracking commitments, sustaining implementation for results and impact.”

The 2nd PPM brought together approximately 270 stakeholders from across Africa and beyond, including Government Heads of States, Ministers and other senior government officials from AU Member States, Senior REC representatives, farmer organizations, consumer associations, large and small business sector representatives, civil society, academia and development partners. The meeting promoted peer learning and participants exchanged information on ongoing aflatoxin mitigation efforts, interventions and approaches for scaling up the PACA model. Key challenges of implementation and ways forward were identified and will guide the aflatoxin mitigation efforts continentally for the coming 2 years.

The PPM included a Technical Opening Session on day one and an Official Opening Session on day two. In the technical opening session on day one, H.E Rhoda Peace Tumusiime, Commissioner Rural Economy and Agriculture of the African Union Commission, shed light on the need to address aflatoxins in order to materialize continental goals and commitments to ending hunger in Africa by 2025, observing that this commitment cannot be fully attained if aflatoxins are not addressed. From the regional perspective, the Deputy Secretary General of the East African Community (EAC), Hon. Jessica Eriyo, reaffirmed EAC’s commitment to implementing the Malabo Declaration. She noted the gender dimensions of aflatoxins, in particular, the role of rural women in production, postharvest handling and storage. She emphasized that efforts to contain the aflatoxin problem should take into account the contribution of women.
Other dignitaries included the representative of the Hon. Alioune Sarr, Minister of Commerce, Informal sector, Consumption, Promotion of local products and SMEs of Senegal; Hon. Amelia Kyabaddde, Minister of Trade Industry and Cooperatives, Uganda, and Hon. Ssempijja Vincent Bamulangaki, Minister of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries, Uganda. The Ministers pledged total commitment and support towards aflatoxins mitigation in line with the mandates of their respective ministries.

On day two, the meeting was officiated by H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, who in his opening speech called for collective efforts among African countries to address aflatoxins challenge, as they are a major health risk and an impediment to the agriculture and trade sectors of the continent. The President emphasized the need for more concerted and proactive efforts in sensitizing the general public about the effects of aflatoxins on their well-being. In his search for immediate solutions to the problem of aflatoxins, His Excellency engaged a Ugandan Scientist, Professor Archileo Kaaya of Makerere University who is a member of the Uganda Mycotoxins Mitigation Steering Committee (UMMSC), on the possibility of available best practices and practical solutions for fighting aflatoxins. H.E further underscored the need for stakeholders to design and implement complementary aflatoxin mitigation strategies that apply an all-inclusive, transparent and partnership approach. The president thanked the AUC-PACA in providing a leadership role in aflatoxin mitigation on the continent and executing it in such a transparent and accountable manner to the AU Member States.
Agents of Change Celebrated at the 2nd PACA PPM for Outstanding Contributions

Noting that the successful implementation of aflatoxin control efforts requires constant advocacy and support by policy makers, and Agents of Change/Champions who make extraordinary efforts in the adoption, implementation, and success of aflatoxin mitigation, the 2nd PACA PPM celebrated the numerous programs and initiatives being implemented by partners in managing aflatoxin. The 2nd PPM, noted the active leadership of key agents of change and aflatoxin mitigation champions on the continent. Using a selection criteria and guideline, PACA selected organizations nominated by the PACA Community and profiled notable work by each organization. Champions were selected from four thematic areas 1) Research and technology; 2) Policy and creating an enabling environment; 3) Advocacy and communication and 4) Resource mobilization.

The following winners and runner ups were profiled. Their Profiles can be accessed on the PACA Website.

Research and Technology

Joint Winners- Dr. Ranajit Bandyopadhyay, Senior Plant Pathologist with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan, Nigeria; and Prof Peter J. Cotty, a Research Plant Pathologist and Lead Scientist for the Agricultural Research Service of the United States Department of Agriculture at USDA/ARS, School of Plant Sciences, University of Arizona, Tucson, USA. He leads the USDA Laboratory based in the School of Plant Sciences at the University of Arizona in Tucson and serves as an Adjunct Professor at his host University.

Notable Runner Up: Prof. Archileo Kaaya is the leading researcher and consultant in aflatoxins in Uganda. For over 20 years, he has been conducting research in aflatoxins including PhD research titled “Factors associated with mould and aflatoxin contamination of maize in Uganda.” Prof. Kaaya has supported the Government of Uganda in establishing the Uganda Aflatoxin Technical Working Group – The Uganda Chapter and the Uganda Mycotoxin Steering Committee.
Agents of Change Celebrated—Continued

Policy and Creating an Enabling Environment

Joint Winners - Hon. Jessica Eriyo, the Deputy Secretary General of the East African Community (EAC) responsible for Productive & Social Sectors since 30 April 2012. Hon. Eriyo has been overseeing the development of the EAC Regional Project on Aflatoxin Control and Prevention.

Food Safety and Quality Authority of The Gambia was established by the Food Safety and Quality Act, 2011 under the Office of The President. It is the sole National Competent Authority with powers of delegation mandated to officially control the safety and quality of all foods (including water and beverages) and animal feed whether locally produced, imported or destined for export.

Notable Runner Up: Mr. Ernest Aubee, Principal Program Officer of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) who has led the development of the ECOWAS Aflatoxin Control Action Plan (ECOACAP) and supported PACA in implementing actions in The Gambia, Senegal and Nigeria.

Advocacy and Communication

Winner - The Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF) The Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF). EAFF is the apex organization of all Framers of Eastern Africa. Its role is to voice legitimate concerns and interests of farmers of the region with the aim of enhancing regional cohesiveness and social-economic status of the farmers. The Federation, apart from voicing views and demands of the farmers on crosscutting issues such as aflatoxin mitigation, also endeavors to promote regional integration of the farmers through trade and good neighborliness.
Agents of Change Celebrated– Continued

Advocacy and Communication –Continued

Notable Runner Up: Mr. Grace Musimami, a Development Communication specialist based in Uganda. He is the CEO/Editor of Farmers Media Newspaper, and President of the Agriculture Journalist Association (AJAU). Farmers Media is the first agriculture newspaper in Uganda and East African region. Grace is a lead advocate for agriculture reporting for rural development in Uganda. Grace has reported on aflatoxin on many occasions, in an accessible manner raising awareness on aflatoxin problems and mitigation strategies. He is actively involved in aflatoxin risk communication in Uganda.

Resource Mobilization

**Winner - H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta, Resource mobilization:** Winner - H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta, President of the Republic of Kenya. In January 2015, the Government of Kenya allocated more than Sh1.5 billion to step up the fight against aflatoxin. In recommendations made after a Cabinet meeting chaired by President Uhuru Kenyatta at the State House, Nairobi, the Government said the amount will be spent in a span of two years across all affected counties. The "Cabinet approved up-scaling of interventions for aflatoxin contamination prevention and control in prone counties."

**Notable Runner ups: Mr. Obey Assery Nkya** is an Economist by training and has worked with the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania for 14 years. Currently based in the Prime Minister’s Office, he is Director of Coordination of Government Business. Mr. Assery has been a strong advocate for aflatoxin mitigation and under his coordination, the United Republic of Tanzania through its Medium Term Expenditure Framework has allocated TZS 15,341,749,200 for aflatoxin smart actions.

**H.E. Mohamed Ben Abdallah Dionne** is a Senegalese politician who is serving as the Prime Minister of Senegal since 6 July 2014. Under Mr. Dionne’s leadership, the Government of Senegal has created a comprehensive program for aflatoxin mitigation, with funding from the Ministry of Finance and Development Partners.
The multitude of influencing factors and their preponderance, the widespread occurrence and the numerous commodities affected make aflatoxin contamination a complex problem, requiring holistic approaches and coordinated actions across a broad range of stakeholders in Africa and beyond for effective mitigation. This recognition led to the establishment of the Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA) at the African Union Commission.

PACA I established effective continental, regional and country level awareness and action, initiating the reduction of the harmful effects of aflatoxin in Africa. A moral and economic imperative exists to continue action to build on these successes for the benefit of all Africans.

The next phase of PACA will build on these achievements and the asset base built over the last few years since the launch of PACA.

Aflatoxin control contributes to realizing Malabo Declaration Commitments, Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the Sustainable Development Goals. Any serious effort at meaningful aflatoxin reduction in Africa should aim at wholesale, systemic change in aflatoxin control beyond fragmented and scattered responses.

The scope of PACA Phase II will thus be to drive systemic change in aflatoxin control in Africa.

Outputs targeted to achieve systemic change:

1. **Establish a strong knowledge base through:**
   - Developing AfricaAIMS into a searchable database with credible data and information; and
   - Capturing and sharing knowledge through regional and continental meetings/conferences.

2. **Ensure implementation sustainability through inclusion of aflatoxin mitigation in:**
   - National development strategies, e.g., CAADP;
   - National quality and standards programs;
   - National agricultural extension, community health and education curricula;
   - Driving behavior changes for adoption of aflatoxin mitigation through market incentives (‘carrot’) and regulatory enforcement (‘stick’).

3. **Ensuring intervention scaling and replicability through:**
   - Promoting program implementation by developing awareness and behavior change interventions tailored to the needs and challenges of various value chain actors;
From PACA Phase I to Phase II: Continued

⇒ Building capacity through massive training and program shadowing;
⇒ Identifying technologies and practices that are appropriate for the multiple agro-ecological zones of countries;
⇒ Laying a strong foundation for enabling policies for technology adoption.

4. **Ensure financial sustainability through:**
⇒ Enhancing government support and allocation of government resources towards aflatoxin mitigation activities and actions;
⇒ Promoting private sector and development partners’ investment in aflatoxin prevention and control;
⇒ Ensuring monitoring and evaluation of program implementation.

In conclusion, PACA is spearheading integrated approaches to address the complex aflatoxin challenge. PACA’s work is key to achieving the agricultural transformation of the Malabo Declaration Commitments, including ending hunger in Africa by 2025, poverty reduction, tripling intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services, and enhancing resilience of livelihoods and production systems to climate variability. PACA also contributes to fast tracking the Continental Free Trade Area in many agricultural commodities, thus contributing to the Agenda 2063 of African Union. Moreover, effective aflatoxin mitigation is indispensable to achieving Sustainable Development Goals: No Poverty, Zero Hunger, and Good Health and Wellbeing.

The rationale for the next phase of PACA stems from the unique value proposition and comparative advantages of PACA as one of the innovative food safety organizations in the world. PACA’s proven track record of effective implementation working with country governments in Africa, as well as the approach of establishing strong stakeholder buy-in, political will and increased awareness of the problem and intervention options, establishes the recipe for success for the next phase. The PACA Secretariat, housed at the African Union Commission, understands the complexity of the aflatoxin challenge and the need for systemic actions by multiple actors for effective mitigation. PACA Phase II calls for stakeholders who are committed to food security, nutrition and health, income generation and poverty reduction to join hands and assist in the fight against aflatoxins in Africa.
PACA and CTA Collaborate and Convene a Side Event at the PACA PPM to Enhance Engagement of the Private Sector in Aflatoxin Mitigation

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA) in collaboration with the Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA), held a side event at the 2nd PACA Partnership Platform Meeting on 11 October 2016. The side event brought together the Private Sector, targeting CEOs from groundnut/grain producers, millers, traders and processors across Africa and beyond. The meeting recognized the various challenges being faced by the private sector and consumers and the opportunities for increased trade and improved health and nutrition that can result in aflatoxin mitigation through Integrated Public Private Producer Partnerships (PPPPs). The meeting discussions centered around the need for targeted partnerships focusing on interventions critical for assuring the integrity of the food system in the provision of quality and safe food and feed. The meeting also acknowledged that commercial interests should be fully realized in an ethical manner in order to improve consumer confidence. Meeting participants identified action areas that will be implemented and driven by the private sector with support from the public sector through PACA, CTA and other stakeholder involvement.
On the 13th of June 2016, an outbreak of “an unknown disease” was reported in Chemba District, with more cases later reported in Kondoa, Chamwino and Dodoma MC, in Dodoma region, and in Kiteto District in Manyara region. The last new cases were reported on the 16th of September 2016. Symptoms reported for the patients included abdominal pain, diarrhea, vomiting, jaundice and ascites, without fever. Patients were treated at hospitals in Dodoma region. Cumulatively up to 21st of October 2016 a total of 65 cases and 19 deaths had been reported. The investigation team for the “unknown disease” included staff from the Ministry of Health, Community development, Gender, Elderly and Children, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Regional medical officers, Dodoma regional hospital, Kondoa district hospital, Muhimbili National Hospital, the Prime minister’s office - Rural administrative and local government, WHO, FAO and CDC. Samples of food and biomarkers (blood and urine) were collected from households, patients and non-patients. Food samples were analyzed at the Tanzania Food and Drugs Authority (TFDA) laboratory and Ghent University laboratory in Belgium. Results showed widespread and high levels of aflatoxins contamination. The range of contamination was 5.5-362.2 ppb, with 68 samples (46%) of all tested samples with aflatoxin at levels above the maximum tolerable limits. The results of food samples from Ghent University laboratory were consistent with TFDA results.

Tests of liver function indicated high levels of bilirubin, high levels of amino transferases (liver enzymes), and low levels of protein.
This was observed in samples from both patients and non-patients. These results demonstrate the effect on liver function. Blood tests conducted at CDC, Atlanta, USA showed patients’ blood samples with aflatoxin B1 Lysine adduct (median 220ng/ml, range 84.8-567), a metabolite of aflatoxin B1 that can be detected in the body following ingestion of aflatoxins. Generally, all these findings showed that high levels of aflatoxin had been consumed via contaminated food.

Interventions were made to mitigate the outbreak, including hospital treatment of patients, contaminated and spoiled maize from households seized for disposal, households replacement of maize and in quantities enough to sustain them for the next 9 months, extensive public awareness on measures to minimize contamination and surveillance, which has been extended to the districts neighboring the affected areas to establish the status of aflatoxins contamination. In order to improve food safety, strengthening of the management of mycotoxins along the food value chain needs to be done by all sectors, improve public awareness for control of contamination to be done at all levels, establish laboratory capacity to test mycotoxins in human samples and strengthen capacity to test susceptible foods, establish mechanism for disposal and alternative use of contaminated food and strengthening surveillance, inspections and testing of food samples.

The aflatoxin outbreak has not only received a reaction from the experts in different sectors but has once again raised fresh concern for awareness in the general public. On 20 October 2016, one of Tanzania’s most read local newspapers used its entire front page and the entire second page for an exposé on aflatoxins and its potential effects in the country. It is therefore encouraging to see the number of stakeholders that have now joined the fight against aflatoxins and how they are taking their own initiatives on actions like awareness creation on the dangers of aflatoxins.
On July 28-29, PACA and the Government of Uganda convened a business meeting in order to provide a platform for stakeholders to agree on the funding strategy and implementation road map that will ensure sustainable and predictable funding for implementing the aflatoxin control action plan in the country. H.E. Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, AUC’s Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture opened the meeting and commended the progress made by the Republic of Uganda in institutionalizing PACA in its farming systems through the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP). Furthermore, Commissioner Tumusiime assured delegates that AUC would continue to work with the EAC, COMESA and NEPAD Agency to ensure that what is planned in Uganda is implemented successfully in the coming years.

At the business meeting, Commissioner Tumusiime officially launched the Uganda Mycotoxin Mitigation Steering Committee (UMMSC) which provides strategic and policy guidance to the Aflatoxin Technical Working Group (ATWG) – the Uganda Chapter, in the planning, implementation and coordination of mycotoxin mitigation activities in the country.

Hon. Ssemujja Vincent Bamu-langaki, Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Uganda, represented by acting Director of extension services, Mrs. Beatrice Byarugaba, committed to incorporate aflatoxin mitigation under the Ministry’s Agriculture Sector Strategic Plan and to also take into account the multidisciplinary roles of agriculture, health and trade ministries in fighting aflatoxins.
Hon. Bamulangaki noted that without mitigating aflatoxins, it would be difficult to fully develop the fisheries, animal and crop sub-sectors in the country. Further, Dr. Patrick Tusiime, Commissioner, National Disease Control, representing the Ministry of Health, assured the meeting of the Ministry’s support in advancing interventions that address the impact of aflatoxins particularly within the preventative context of disease management, noting that a healthy nation is a productive nation!

The Resource Mobilization Strategy of Uganda which was validated at the meeting will ensure that resources are availed to implement the Uganda aflatoxin mitigation action plan.

Senegal Sets Up an Aflatoxin Mitigation Project within the Ministry of Agriculture

As one of PACA’s pilot countries since 2014, Senegal has conducted a situational analysis study on aflatoxin contamination and its economic impact on the agriculture, health and trade sectors of the country. Based on a validated situational analysis, Senegal was also able to develop and validate a National Aflatoxin Control Action Plan in 2015.

While appreciating the catalytic support from PACA, realizing the magnitude of the problem, the Senegal government through the Ministry of Agriculture created a national project for the mitigation of aflatoxins in the country supported by the government and partners. The project was created in August 2016 to fully ensure the implementation of the national aflatoxin control action plan developed with the support of PACA. The coordination unit is expected to work with all stakeholders in the country and abroad to coordinate implementation. This coordination unit will be housed within the ministry of Agriculture and Rural Equipment of Senegal. PACA congratulates the government of Senegal for its proactive engagement in the fight against aflatoxins.
Second Networking Workshop on Aflatoxin Biocontrol Held in Tanzania

The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and United States Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS) with support and in partnership with the USDA - Foreign Agricultural Service organized the second networking workshop on aflatoxin biocontrol at the IITA Science Building in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The objectives of the workshop were to take stock of current status of biocontrol development in various countries, provide a platform to network and understand each other’s work, and to have a common understanding of the scope of future developments of biocontrol in Africa.

The meeting was organized by Ranajit Bandyopadhyay (IITA), Peter J. Cotty (USDA ARS, University of Arizona), Alejandro Ortega-Beltran (IITA) and George Mahuku (IITA). The four-day workshop, 11-14 July, brought together over 50 participants including researchers, farmers’ group leaders, public/private sector partners, officials from regional and international organizations, policy makers, and donors. The workshop follows an earlier one held at the University of Arizona, Tucson, in 2012.

The participants learnt about the progress made in the development of aflatoxin biocontrol products, generically known as aflasafe, in 11 African nations. The meeting’s interactive lectures and discussions highlighted the history of biological control of aflatoxins in Africa, new laboratory techniques aimed at detecting and developing new products, registration protocols for aflasafe products, protocols for efficacy testing, aflasafe manufacturing processes, incentivizing adoption of aflasafe products in small holder setting, and strategies for technology transfer and commercialization of aflasafe. Meeting attendees participated in hands-on laboratory training on microbiological and DNA protocols for identification and tracking of biocontrol strains and quality control of biocontrol products; aflatoxin analysis; and aflasafe manufacturing. Dr. Amare Ayalew, PACA Program Manager, introduced PACA to the participants and highlighted that aflasafe is an important component of overall aflatoxin mitigation strategies promoted by PACA. The meeting resulted in agreement to share and develop techniques and standardize practices across collaborating countries.
The PACA Steering Committee Conducted its Ninth Meeting with Key Decisions

The PACA Steering Committee (SC) is the apex organ in the governance structure of PACA and convenes biannually. The SC met on 31 August – 1 September 2016 at the African Union Commission, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The SC reviewed and endorsed the following:

◊ PACA Phase II scope and approaches
◊ PACA Secretariat Business Plan
◊ The Planning of the 2nd Partnership Platform Meeting of PACA
◊ PACA Pilot Country activities progress
◊ PACA Secretariat work plan and budget for 2017 and the draft for 2018

A summary of the important guidance from the 9th Meeting of the SC is outlined below:

a) Develop a country package – universal example why country plan is designed the way it is, whole government approach, things we work on and the benefits
b) Support to Tanzania to fight the aflatoxin outbreak
c) AfricaAIMS should consider sampling off takers and aggregators
d) Secretariat should prepare a menu (package) for aflatoxin control in different situations
e) Prioritize alternative uses
f) Capture the landscape shift from value chains to food systems and show that aflatoxin control is an important investment in food safety
g) Ensure more broader engagement by private sector
h) Consider how to package PACA’s good work into a business model and an opportunity to youth.

It is noteworthy that SC members continue to play invaluable emissary roles in support of the PACA Secretariat and provide ongoing support to aflatoxin control efforts.
Aflatoxins have proven to be a major barrier in linking African farmers to markets, as they prevent commodities from meeting international, regional and local regulations and standards governing agricultural trade and food safety. The widespread occurrence of aflatoxins could undermine regional integration and the establishment of continental free trade areas in agricultural commodities. In this connection, in 2015, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in collaboration with North Carolina State University and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) organized a sampling and grading training for COMESA member countries in Kampala, Uganda. Experts from North Carolina State University, who are world authorities from decades of research on mycotoxin sampling, developed aflatoxin sampling and testing protocols for maize and groundnuts.

Groundnut and maize are among the most susceptible crops to aflatoxin contamination. In most of West Africa, these two crops are a major source of food and nutrition. Groundnut production, marketing and trade are major sources of employment, income and foreign exchange in many West African countries. Sampling and testing methodologies in most countries are not uniform and not recognized in neighboring countries. Sampling and testing are major components in identifying aflatoxins and determining the levels. Proper sampling and testing methodologies are necessary in order to minimize the impact of aflatoxins on the health of the people as well as trade of countries.

From the foregoing, USDA, PACA and ECOWAS are coming together to support the development of and training on an ECOWAS regional sampling and testing protocol as well as a Mutual Recognition Framework. This exercise is an attempt to support African member states on identifying feasible sampling and testing protocols that are based on scientific principles and that also provide a balance between minimizing trade restrictions and maximizing consumer protection. PACA, USDA, and ECOWAS are currently working on drawing lessons from the COMESA experience in order to strengthen the experience and feasibility in the ECOWAS region. The training workshop is tentatively scheduled for May 2017.
The PACA secretariat is pleased to announce its new additions to its family at continental and country level. The AUC secretariat has now been strengthened with three additional staff including of a Strategy and Operations Senior Officer, a Knowledge Manager, and a Communications Officer. We are pleased to introduce the new members of the PACA team at continental level.

The Strategy and Operations Senior Officer, Ms. Liz Ogutu, is a Kenyan national who has worked in various senior positions before joining PACA. She was the Regional Manager for Africa at the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) based in Nairobi, Kenya and previously the Resource Mobilization Head at the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI). She also worked with UNICEF as a private sector partnership consultant, working on projects and programs on water, environmental sanitation, as well as child participation, health and nutrition.

Ms. Ogutu is joining the PACA Secretariat team to deliver on its increased responsibility for aflatoxin control to pilot and non-pilot countries, and other partners on the continent. Liz will support the Secretariat and countries on ongoing resource mobilization efforts to implement continental and national aflatoxin mitigation strategies as well as day to day operations of the Secretariat.
Ms. Peace Mutuwa, a Ugandan national, worked with the Peace and Security department of the African Union Commission as a database specialist for the past eight years. She joins PACA as the Knowledge Manager. Prior to her appointment at the AUC, Ms. Mutuwa served in other organizations in the capacities of, Assistant Lecturer and Program Coordinator. Peace will manage and coordinate PACA’s activities on generating evidence to support countries with policy development and decision making. She will therefore be managing the Africa Aflatoxin Information Management System (AfricaAIMS) as a one stop information portal where all data on aflatoxins and related issues can be found. The AfricaAIMS database will support countries in identifying hot spots and ensure proper measures are taken and policies developed. Ms. Mutuwa will lead the Secretariat in the development of a searchable repository of aflatoxin literature as well as synthesizing knowledge and information on best practices, and the aggregation, validation, and dissemination of data.

Mr. Ibrahim Gariba, the incoming PACA communication officer, worked as a communications’ consultant for the department of social affairs of UNICEF Ghana. During his time with UNICEF, his work focused on the promotion of home and community-based care for vulnerable children in poor communities in Ghana through the development of social and behavior change communication strategy among others. Mr. Gariba has extensive experience in the development of communication strategies for community mobilization, behavioral change and social change as well as implementation and monitoring of communication plans. PACA believes that awareness raising and communication is an essential component in addressing the aflatoxin issue for behavioral change. As a result, the PACA secretariat works diligently to provide its stakeholders with accurate and timely information on aflatoxin and related issues. Mr. Gariba is therefore joining PACA to strengthen the effectiveness and continuous development and dissemination of relevant information to its community. Mr. Gariba will lead the Secretariat’s efforts on developing a communication strategy that will be adapted to local environments.
At the country level, PACA supports pilot countries in the development of a national aflatoxin control action plan. PACA targets the implementation of the national plans is the single most important activity for the countries in order to comprehensively mitigate the aflatoxin problem. PACA has hired country officers in Senegal and Tanzania. We are pleased to introduce the new members of the PACA team at country level.

Senegal: Mr. Magatte Ndoye

Mr. Magatte Ndowy of Senegal has been an official of the Senegalese government for more than three decades. Mr. Ndoye served in various capacities within the government of Senegal in the ministry of trade, informal sector, consumer affairs, and promotion of local products, and SMEs. Mr. Ndoye was the secretary general of the foreign trade center of Senegal, head of office in charge of the Arab and Islamic financing of the Directorate of Debt and Investments of the Ministry of Economy and Finance. He was also the director of a program on crop intensification for chemical industries of Senegal. Mr. Ndoye brings extensive experience in international trade, partnership building and coordination.

Tanzania: Dr. Happy Magoha

Dr. Happy Magoha of Tanzania is a biological scientist who has worked on mycotoxin exposure assessment in infants under six months of age. Dr, Magoha has been working as a lecturer in the Food and Nutrition Department at the Open University of Tanzania for the past eleven years. She was also involved in various activities including situational and laboratory analysis of mycotoxin and its effects in Tanzania. She brings extensive experience in nutrition, contaminants and food safety in general.
The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), in partnership with the African Union Commission (AUC), convened the 2016 Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS) Annual Conference to promote review and dialogue on the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) implementation agenda among state and non-state actors.

This year’s conference which centered on nutrition brought together state and non-state actors to deliberate on key findings of the 2015 ReSAKSS Annual Trends and Outlook Report (ATOR), which examines challenges and opportunities for linking agriculture and food systems to nutrition. The ATOR 20150 includes a chapter on “the Role of Mycotoxin Contamination in Nutrition: The Aflatoxin Story”. This chapter which was authored by experts from PACA, IFPRI and ILRI highlights the need to link food safety to nutrition and health outcomes using the example of aflatoxins as one of the most pervasive food safety challenges in the continent. A summary was presented at the ReSAKSS Conference and discussed.

During the UN Decade for Nutrition, it is high time that stakeholders give emphasis to integrating food safety in nutrition outcomes. Failing that would mean another lost opportunity while achieving that would make African agriculture competitive while contributing to nutrition and developmental outcomes including Malabo Declaration Commitments, Agenda 2063 for the Africa We Want and the Sustainable Development Goals.

“AFRICA FREE FROM THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF AFLATOXINS”

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