



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
الافلاتوكسين في أفريقيا

Opening Statement by DREA commissioner

PACA Partnership Platform Meeting

October 07-09, 2014

African Union Commission

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



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COURTESIES

Honourable Ministers,

Excellencies,

Heads of international Organizations,

Development partners,

Experts, senior officials and Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the African Union Commission and the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture, I would like to express my profound gratitude for your attendance at this special occasion where we discuss the effect of aflatoxins on our people's health, countries' economies and food security. I would also like to register my deep appreciation to the Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA), which has put together an important workshop for all of us to be part of whose theme is: "Working together to accelerate actions to reduce the harmful effects of aflatoxin in Africa"

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Aflatoxins are highly toxic and are linked to cancer, immune-system suppression, growth retardation, liver disease, and death in both humans and domestic animals. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 25% of world food crops are affected by aflatoxin, and tropical countries are most at risk. Over 5 billion people in developing countries are at risk of chronic aflatoxin exposure. Aflatoxins thus pose a threat to international trade, health, food security and many other international development efforts.

The Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA), under the auspices of the AU Commission therefore come in handy as we strategize to step up our collective dynamism towards transforming African agriculture, achieving food sovereignty and nutrition security. Without initiatives like PACA, aflatoxins would greatly undermine the regional integration process being made through Regional Economic Communities. We also welcome and cherish PACA as a mechanism for preventing aflatoxin from not only degrading human health but also hampering international trade, incomes of farmers and economies of African nations.



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Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In our quest to attaining the laudable goal of a food-secure Africa, the political leadership of the continent endorsed the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP). Within the last decade, Africa has chosen to take its common destiny in its own hands with a reaffirmation of commitment to increase agricultural production, productivity, food and nutrition security thereby combating hunger, malnutrition and poverty, and, indeed, contributing to the attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGS). . PACA was initiated by African Union at the 7th CAADP Partnership Platform Meeting in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in March 2011. Its creation was the starting point for all the great collaborative work that we see today on aflatoxin management and mitigation. Our leaders are now recognizing the importance of mitigating aflatoxins on the continent to increase food security, protect human health and reduce economic losses due to contamination.

The PACA Secretariat, in close consultation with Regional Economic Communities selected 5 pilot countries to implement activities which will lead to the mitigation of aflatoxin in the various Member States. I am pleased to inform you that the following 5 Pilot Countries were selected: the Republic of Gambia, Senegal, Malawi, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. These countries were selected using criteria that was developed by stakeholders at the 10th CAADP PP held in March 2014 In Durban, South Africa. In addition Nigeria was selected through strong recommendations from the PACA Steering Committee consisting of a range of stakeholders from the health, trade and agriculture sector.

Distinguished Guests,

This is an important time for PACA and the entire community where great partnership against aflatoxins will be formed and synergies created. PACA will strive hard to contribute to food security, increased health and trade in Africa through aflatoxin mitigation. And this is only possible with the support and dynamism of our farming communities, governments, civil society, private sectors, technical and financial partners and all stakeholders. I am pleased to note that that the PACA Steering Committee continues to provide the much needed multi-stakeholder guidance of the overall direction of this important, continent-wide initiative.

As a partnership, PACA works with various stakeholders at different levels. I cannot stress enough how much our partnership with all stakeholders in the fight against aflatoxins, food insecurity and malnutrition is essential. It is obvious that without the cooperation and support of all our partners, our efforts and our goals are in vain.



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It is noteworthy that the 2014 work plan of PACA is aligned to the strategic thrust areas of the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture which in turn are tailored to the Strategic Plan of the AU Commission adopted by the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in May last year. I am also happy to learn that concrete aflatoxin country action plans will be initiated in 2014 in the 5 pilot countries. This, indeed, augurs well for the 2014 AU Year of Agriculture and Food Security also marking the 10th Anniversary of CAADP.

In conclusion, let me reiterate the AU Commission's commitment to tackle the silent killer, aflatoxin, through the PACA initiative. The AU Commission looks forward to working closely with all PACA partners on implementing the PACA 10 year Strategy and meeting the tremendously important challenge of "an Africa free from the harmful effects of aflatoxins".