

Joint Press Release

Africa Food Safety Agenda Receives Boost from Food Safety Experts



Efforts to bring to the forefront the Africa food safety agenda by the African Union (AU) have been boosted following commitments by a group of food safety experts across the continent to support some of its nascent programmes, particularly, the Africa Food Safety Index (AFSI), an information and data gathering tool on food safety.

This was after a three-day training workshop, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 20-22 May 2019, for members of the food safety community, predominantly, focal points of National Committees on Codex Alimentarius in AU member states. The African group forms part of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, created in 1963 by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) with responsibility for setting food standards, guidelines and codes of practice to ensure food safety among others.

In recognition of the important role the Codex group plays in food safety, the AU through its programme, the Partnership for Aflatoxin Control Africa (PACA), in collaboration with the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA),

the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRF), and FAO organised a three-day workshop themed: “Strengthening Food Safety Capacity for Reporting in the Biennial Review”, to strengthen the experts network for the implementation of the AFSI in gathering data and information on food safety.

Data from AFSI would be integrated with the Biennial Review (BR), a monitoring and evaluation tool adopted by the AU to assess how member countries are implementing the 2004 Malabo Commitments by African leaders to revolutionise agriculture in the continent. The BR is presented to the Assembly of Heads of State in the form of a score card called “Africa Agricultural Transformation Scorecard (AATS)”. The maiden report was presented to the Assembly of Heads of States in 2018, but without food safety.

Speaking on behalf of the participants, Mr Fredy Chinyananhu, a member of the Zimbabwe National Committee on Codex Alimentarius expressed the commitment of members to ensure that the objectives of the AFSI were achieved. He said the meeting had generated a lot of interest in the AFSI, as well as, built the capacity of members to appreciate the importance and value of the AFSI to food safety in the continent. He commended the AU, PACA, CTA, FAO and ILRI for working jointly to organise the workshop.

Dr Amare Ayalew, Programme Manager for PACA, said the AFSI is an important step to generate home-grown credible evidence on food safety in Africa and if done well it could develop into a bigger platform like “Food Safety Information System for Africa”. He encouraged participants to prioritise data generation to promote evidence-based food safety policies and actions.

Mr. Piet Visser, Team Leader, Agribusiness and Value Chain (CTA), stressed the importance of the AFSI to the transformation of Africa’s agriculture and food systems.

He was hopeful that the inclusion of data from the AFSI that the BR-AATS, would stimulate countries to make the required investments in food safety, an intervention, he said, CTA would be proud to associate with.

END