**Concept Note**

**Third PACA Partnership Platform Meeting**

***Theme: “Scaling-up Country-led Approaches for Sustainable Aflatoxin Mitigation in Africa ”***

***2-4 October 2018, Dakar, Senegal***

***Background***

Aflatoxins are toxic and carcinogenic substances produced by certain fungi which commonly contaminate a wide range of staple food and cash crops in Africa and other tropical and sub-tropical regions. Aflatoxins are known to cause liver cancer and other chronic health effects as well as death. They are the most pervasive food safety challenge facing Africa today. In recent decades, we are witnessing increased outbreaks of acute aflatoxin poisoning that tragically claimed hundreds of human lives in Eastern Africa. But such outbreaks are the tip of the iceberg. Aflatoxins are attributed to about a third of global liver cancer cases with 40% of them occurring in Africa, making liver cancer the top cause of cancer mortality in the continent. Recent studies by PACA have shown that the monetary cost of liver cancer to Africa is in billions of US dollars. There is also mounting evidence linking aflatoxins to childhood stunting.

According to the European Union’s Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) portal, aflatoxin contaminated produce contribute the largest percentage of agricultural commodities rejected by the EU. The study commissioned by PACA in Pilot countries revealed significant losses in terms of human health and trade. Between 1980 and 2016, a total of 389 Nigerian agricultural export shipments were rejected or seized by the EU, with 39% of these being due to aflatoxin contamination. The study in Uganda also showed that the total annual export loss due to aflatoxins is close to an estimated US$ 38 million. In addition, a biomarker study on aflatoxin exposure in infants and young children in Tanzania has revealed that over 80% of infants and young children in Tabora in Tanzania’s Western zone, Iringa in the Southern Highland zone and Kilimanjaro in the Northern Highland zone had aflatoxins in their blood. Aflatoxins have thus proven to be a major developmental challenge to the African continent, affecting trade and contributing to ill health in Africa.

The Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA), a program of the African Union Commission, coordinates efforts at continental and national level in aflatoxin prevention and control. PACA, a global player in aflatoxin control and food safety, holds biannual Partnership Platform Meeting (PPM) to bring together diverse stakeholders working towards achieving a common goal of mitigating aflatoxins on the African continent. The PACA PPM is the foundation of the PACA structure and an innovative forum where diverse stakeholders come together to share information and lessons, identify challenges and co-create innovative solutions. The Platform also serves as an accountability forum and a place where commitments are renewed for continued fight against aflatoxins in Africa.

The first PACA PPM was held on 7-9 October 2014 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia under the theme “*Working together to accelerate actions to reduce the harmful effects of aflatoxin in Africa*” which endorsed the country planning process as a model for piloting effective aflatoxin control in African countries. The 2nd PPM was then held on 11-13 October 2016 in Entebbe, Uganda under the theme “*Tracking commitments, sustaining implementation for results and impact”* where implementation progress in Pilot countries was assessed and ways forward recommended. The 2nd PPM also marked the conclusion of PACA Phase I from 2013-2016 and endorsed the approaches for PACA Phase II.

***Rationale***

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.

PACA has been piloting models’ of aflatoxin control in six focus countries. Such piloting is meant to serve as a spring board to support aflatoxin control in Africa. There is now rich experience in evidence generation, national plan development and stakeholder alignment as well as financing and implementation of comprehensive aflatoxin control plans. The 3rd PACA PPM will therefore focus on expanding and scaling up the pilot country experience to non-pilot countries and increasing awareness of this food safety challenge in order to contribute to the continental agenda.

The third PACA PPM comes at a critical period when the continent and the international community are advocating for increased food safety measures to protect human lives and increase intra-Africa and international trade of agricultural commodities. The widespread occurrence of aflatoxins is currently undermining the achievement of continental commitments including ending hunger, tripling intra African trade in agricultural commodities and services, and continental Free Trade Area (FTA). Aflatoxins continue to contribute to large post-harvest losses in many crops further contributing to food insecurity and economic loss in Africa. The PACA country planning approach is believed to effect positive changes in aflatoxin control at country level and drive continental efforts on food safety.

The 3rd PACA PPM is therefore focused on scaling up the effective aflatoxin control approach used by PACA in Pilot countries. The country planning approach, executed in 5 stages, consists of the following:

* generating locally relevant data;
* developing, validating and finalizing country plans
* mainstreaming the country plans in major national frameworks such as NAIPs;
* building government capacity while providing catalytic support to implement the plan and;
* monitoring progress and advocate

PACA will hold its 3rd PPM from 2-4 October 2018 in Dakar, Senegal under the theme “*Scaling up country led approaches for sustainable aflatoxin mitigation in Africa’.* The PPM will specifically look at the successes and challenges of the country planning process in the six pilot countries and feasible ways to scale up this approach to other African countries and monitor progress. The workshop will also highlight the lessons learnt in the pilot project and continue to track implementation of country and regional plans for effective aflatoxin control.

***Meeting Objectives***

The 3rd PPM’s main objectives are to:

* Present the country planning approach and the final findings in six pilot countries
* Critically assess the results and impacts of the country planning process/Piloting
* Share the piloting experience in Six Pilot countries
* Ignite/encourage scaling up of the PACA approach in non-pilot countries
* Track progress of implementation in pilot countries and Regional Economic Communities
* Celebrate Champions of change in food safety/aflatoxin control

The Meeting’s expected outcomes are:

* Country planning approach and national findings shared/presented
* Experiences, Results and impacts of the pilot project shared and assessed
* Scaling up of the PACA approach promoted
* Implementation progress in pilot countries and RECs reviewed
* Champions of change recognized and celebrated

***Meeting Structure and Approach***

The PPM will be a 3 day highly participatory meeting with an official opening with high level guests that includes keynote addresses, and opening remarks with press briefings. Sessions will also include presentations, discussions, breakout working groups, Market Place exhibitions and celebration of champions. The meeting hopes to encourage active stakeholder engagement in the discussion and technical working group sessions.

***Meeting Participants***

PACA invites all stakeholders involved in mitigating and managing the aflatoxin problem in Africa to join this Platform meeting. This includes member states, Regional Economic Communities, government ministries from agriculture, trade and health, farmers’ organizations, the private sector, civil society, development partners, donor communities, and the African Union, among others.

***Meeting Date and Location***

The 3rd PACA Partnership Platform Meeting will be held at ……., in Dakar, Senegal from 2-4 October 2018.