EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

EAC REGIONAL AFLATOXIN PROJECT

MEETING OF EXPERTS TO REVIEW DRAFT TECHNICAL PAPER ON COMMUNICATION STRATEGY AND AFLATOXIN CONTROL

14th - 17th April, 2015

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

REPORT OF THE MEETING
1.0 INTRODUCTION

The EAC Regional Project on Aflatoxin Control and Improved Nutrition through the “Multi-regional Aflatoxin Abatement Program (MRAAP) and Aflatoxin Policy and Program for the East African Community (APPEAR)” is part of the support for implementation of the EAC Food Security Action Plan (2011-2015). The main goal of the “EAC Regional Project on Aflatoxin Control and Improved Nutrition” is to design and implement policies and programs to strengthen food security and food safety with a focus on aflatoxin abatement.

The EAC Secretariat is collaborating with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in the development of Technical Policy Papers that will inform the development of an evidence-based EAC Regional Policy on Aflatoxin abatement. Technical papers have been generated in the following areas:

a) Aflatoxin Levels in Food Standards  
b) Aflatoxin Levels in Feed Standards  
c) Impacts on Human Health  
d) Aflatoxin and the 1000 days  
e) Impacts on Animal Health and Production  
f) Biocounters  
g) Alternative Uses and Disposal Systems for Aflatoxin contaminated material  
h) Post-Harvest Handling  
i) Economic Impacts on Trade  
j) Aflatoxin Awareness Communication Strategies at Regional and National Level, including the development of the EAC Aflatoxin Safe Food Logo  
k) Adoption of Hepatitis A and B Vaccinations in the EAC National Immunization Programmes

1.1 Convening of the Meeting

Aflatoxin is a major threat in East Africa with economic consequences and cross-sectoral impacts on health, agriculture, environment, and trade. There is need for a comprehensive communication strategy to engage all major stakeholders due to the complexity and overlapping dimensions of aflatoxin impacts and mitigation efforts.

Communication needs to be an integral part of the aflatoxin agenda to support policy development, harmonization and awareness and increase programmatic reach and impact. The EAC Aflatoxin communication is aimed at building a broad based strategy and framework for more targeted national communication strategies in line with national development plans, barriers, policy priorities and needs.
The EAC Secretariat, with support from USAID Regional Economic and Integration Office, convened a meeting of experts to review the Draft Technical Paper on Communication Strategy and Aflatoxin control. The Technical Paper is among a series of Technical Papers that have been developed under a collaborative arrangement with IITA to inform development of EAC Regional Policy on Aflatoxins. The meeting was held from 14th - 17th April, 2015, in Dar es Salaam, the United Republic of Tanzania.

1.2 Participation

Delegates from the EAC Partner States, USAID East Africa, IITA, Eastern Africa Grain Council, Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA) and EAC Secretariat staff participated in the meeting. The list of participants is attached as Annex I.

1.3 Constitution of the Bureau

In accordance with the EAC Rules of Procedure, the meeting was chaired by Mr. Makame Mpambe, Chief Planning Officer, Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources, Zanzibar - the United Republic of Tanzania, while Mr. Cris Msogoba, Ministry of EAC Affairs, the Republic of Uganda was the Rapporteur.

1.4 Adoption of the Agenda and Programme

The agenda and programme of the meeting was adopted and is attached as Annex II.

1.5 Objectives of the Meeting

The main objective of the meeting was to review and enrich the technical paper produced by IITA Consultants and generate a final revised draft that will contribute towards informing EAC Regional Policy on Aflatoxin Abatement. Specific objectives of the meeting were to:

(i) Identify gaps and make inputs to improve the technical paper on Communication strategy and aflatoxin control;
(ii) Identify key policy issues and recommendations on Communication strategy and aflatoxin control; and
(iii) Consider the proposed EAC “aflatoxin safe” logos for food and feed products.
2.0 OPENING REMARKS

2.1 Remarks by the Chairperson

The Chairperson, Mr. Makame Mbarak, welcomed the delegates to Dar es Salaam. He thanked the participants for turning up for the meeting, thanked the EAC Secretariat for convening the important meeting. He noted that he looked forward to a productive discussion given the wide range of representatives and expertise of the delegates in attendance. He finally wished the delegates a fruitful meeting.

2.2 Remarks by USAID

Ms. Mary Onsongo, Program Management Specialist, noted that given the collaborative nature of the aflatoxin project, it was important to recognize the contribution of both IITA and the EAC and their commitment to working together without self-interest towards a common goal. She reminded the meeting that USAID’s support to the EAC started in 2011. She observed that the communications paper represented an important element in the overall strategy for the control and prevention of aflatoxin and should be taken seriously. Further, she noted that USAID is pleased to have supported this crucial work and observed that the project was already beginning to record success stories. Finally, she thanked the EAC Secretariat for organizing the meeting and looked forward to interesting deliberations.

Ms. Marianne McElroy, the Interim Sanitary and Phyto-sanitary (SPS) advisor from USDA and serving at the USAID Regional East Africa office in Nairobi, thanked the delegates for the support given to her during her three-month tenure. She expressed gratitude for the opportunity to work closely with the EAC Secretariat on regional integration matters, SPS and on aflatoxin issues. She noted that the communication strategy is a key element in the effort to control aflatoxin and prevent its spread. She stated that USAID/USDA had recruited a permanent SPS advisor who would continue the work in the region.

2.3 Remarks by IITA

Mr. Victor Manyong, IITA Director, Eastern Africa noted that the meeting was the 6th in a series of meetings that the project has held to develop and review key project documents. He noted that the forum was key in determining the best way to communicate all the information that has so far been put together. He further noted urgent need to disseminate the right information as this can have a positive outcome in aflatoxin control. He stressed the importance ensuring that vulnerable groups access information on aflatoxin.

In addition, he noted that aflatoxin control is a multi-sectoral challenge that requires the human resource and financial input by all relevant stakeholders. He then thanked USAID for supporting the implementation of the project as well as the Dahrja International Consultants for the support in the development
of the technical paper being reviewed by the meeting. He concluded by wishing the delegates fruitful deliberations.

2.4 Remarks by Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA)

Ms. Wasi Chunga-Sambo, Program Officer, PACA-African Union Commission (AUC) thanked the EAC for convening the meeting on aflatoxin. She revealed that PACA is also in the process of developing a communication strategy and looked forward to working with EAC Secretariat. She noted that the PACA pilot countries – the United Republic of Tanzania and Republic of Uganda are developing aflatoxin communication strategies.

2.5 Remarks by EAC Secretariat

Mr. Moses Marwa, Ag. Director Productive Sectors, EAC Secretariat, mentioned that the main objective of the meeting was to review and enrich the technical paper on communication strategy and aflatoxin control. He noted that there is evidence that aflatoxin is a threat and stressed the importance of unpacking the technical information about aflatoxin into simple, user-friendly information to increase awareness.

He thanked all the delegates for taking time from their busy schedules to attend the meeting. He re-affirmed the commitment of EAC in spearheading implementation of aflatoxin control and prevention interventions. He thanked the United Republic of Tanzania for hosting the meeting and the hospitality accorded to delegates.

3.0 PRESENTATION OF THE BACKGROUND PAPER

The background paper was presented by Mr. Moses Marwa, EAC Secretariat. The paper articulated provisions in the EAC Treaty spelling out the mandate of the EAC Secretariat in communication and awareness. The background to the EAC Project on Aflatoxin was highlighted including objectives, components, implementation arrangements and key achievements. The status of development and validation of EAC Technical Papers on Aflatoxin was given. Mr. Marwa outlined the objectives and expected outputs of the EAC Communication Strategy and Aflatoxin Control. He concluded his presentation by stating the objectives and expected outputs/outcomes of the meeting.

4.0 PRESENTATION OF THE DRAFT TECHNICAL PAPER ON COMMUNICATION STRATEGY AND AFLATOXIN CONTROL

The Consultants took the delegates through the main components of the draft technical paper. Thereafter the delegates reviewed the draft technical paper on communication strategy through group work.
The group focused on identification of gaps, provision of additional information to enrich the document and reviewing of the policy recommendations. Comments were incorporated into the draft technical paper by each breakout group and presented in plenary. The draft Technical Paper with comments presented by the three breakout groups are hereon attached as Annex III a, b & c.

5.0 CONSIDERATION OF THE PROPOSED EAC AFLATOXIN SAFE LOGOS FOR FOOD AND FEED PRODUCTS

The Consultants presented the logos and the meeting noted the following:

(i) The aflatoxin logos could cause an increase in the cost of labelled food where food with logos is sold at a premium price. They however noted that this could vary in the different Partner States. Drawing examples from labelling already in use in Partner States such as the Food Fortification Logo, the difference in price between fortified and non fortified food is negligible. They noted that any extra cost for placing aflatoxin logos will be transferred to the consumer.

(ii) On which government body to be responsible for the aflatoxin logos, delegates noted that the Bureau of Standards is largely responsible for this role but has to work closely with relevant ministries such as health, trade and agriculture.

(iii) Partner States would have to roll out an awareness campaign to create awareness about the logos.

(iv) It would be hard for the logos to be adopted in the informal sector but observed that while this might be a complicated issue, the use of logos should go ahead and the informal sector would eventually adhere to the standards if they have to sell their products to a wider market.

(v) The meeting noted that counterfeiting is a problem and aflatoxin logos could be irregularly put on food that is not aflatoxin safe.

6.0 OBSERVATIONS

The meeting observed the following:

a) There is need to improve exchange of information between Partner States on aflatoxin control initiatives.

b) The regional communication strategy should have a strong link with the Partner States’ national communication strategies.
c) The document does not show a communication audit which would inform the design of the strategy. This leaves the document with no communication goals to address the problem.
d) Social media is popular and should be harnessed especially among the youth.
e) There may be need to establish a technical working group on communication of aflatoxin.
f) Involve non state actors and take a people-centred approach such that everyone along the food chain gets the message.
g) Launch a regional communication campaign to kick off aflatoxin awareness.
h) Endeavour to give players such as the mass media and leaders accurate information or the aflatoxin message will be distorted.
i) It will be important to outline the main target audiences in the strategy, as well as the relevant messages.
j) Some sections of the draft strategy are too long and need to be revised. Generally the document should be organized in the following sections:

- Background (situation analysis)
- Communication objectives
- Target audiences
- Communication channels/mix

7.0 MEETING RECOMMENDATIONS

(i) The flow of the document is not coherent for a communication strategy. There is a lot of repetition that should be removed. A new outline was proposed (see Annex IV b).
(ii) There is need to define aflatoxin clearly and simplify the language in the document to different audiences.
(iii) Include a monitoring & evaluation component, define the role of key players in implementing the strategy and suggest the number of phases for implementing this communication strategy.
(iv) The document identifies the key stakeholders but does not rank them according to importance and their roles. Internal and external audiences should be identified and ranked. The document should consolidate and harmonize the internal and external audiences from the EAC Partner States.
(v) The document should spell out the different strategic communication interventions to be undertaken.
(vi) The document should clarify and qualify the suggested tools/channel of communication.
(vii) Consider social media as a channel of communication.
[viii] Consultants should incorporate changes and share the revised document for validation.

Signed on this 17th Day of April, 2015, by the respective Heads of the Delegations as below:

Ms. Gaudensia Shiwarozi, Ag. Manager Communication and Public Relations, Tanzania Food & Drugs Authority

Mr. Cris Massia Principal Public Relations Officer, Ministry of East African Community Affairs

Mr. John Mbat Mwangi, Principal Public Relations Officer, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock & Fisheries

Beatrice Njiruemeka Director General, Agriculture and Livestock Inspection & Certification Services, Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources

Dr. Thaddeus Nakumana Head of Communication unit, Ministry of Health

United Republic of Tanzania Republic of Uganda Republic of Kenya Republic of Rwanda Republic of Burundi