



Partnership  
for Aflatoxin  
Control in Africa

Partenariat pour la  
lutte contre les  
aflatoxines en Afrique

Parceria para o  
controlo das  
aflatoxinas na África

الشراكة من أجل التحكم في  
الافلاتوكسين في أفريقيا

## Aflatoxin Partnership Newsletter

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### Dear PACA Community Members,

We are pleased to present this issue with important updates and information. The year 2014 has been a very good year for PACA and aflatoxin control. In 2014, PACA launched major activities in five pilot countries, namely, Gambia, Malawi, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda. The communication and advocacy efforts by stakeholders across Africa have been rewarding. The aflatoxin problem which was a preserve for academia only a few years ago is now recognized as a challenge that is holding back many African countries from realizing their export potential and food and nutrition security. The public health burden due to aflatoxins is also being widely understood. In this past year, aflatoxin issues were discussed at the highest political level in the continent and many important global forums including the UN Committee for Food Security, CFS 41. Government, research, private sector and development partners and other players are engaged in substantial grass-root work to make raw materials and foods safer. However, there still remains a lot to be done to abate the aflatoxin problem to achieve the PACA vision of “an Africa free from the harmful effects of aflatoxin”.

As we are all aware, aflatoxin disproportionately affects the marginalized segments of the society. In June 2014, the African Union Heads of States and Government declared the year 2015 as “Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development towards Africa’s Agenda 2063”. Women play a major role in the farming and processing industry of crops that are highly susceptible to aflatoxin such as groundnuts. PACA endeavors to leverage the AU assembly decision to promote women’s role in aflatoxin control and build their capacity in this critical area. As a flagship program of CAADP and aligned to its priorities, PACA will reinforce its support to member states towards meeting the Malabo Declaration commitments on transforming African agriculture. We are tremendously appreciative of the continuous support from the diverse expertise and capabilities within the PACA community that is the driving force in PACA’s marked progress.

Finally, as we are implementing the outcomes of the successful First Partnership Platform Meeting (PPM) held in October 2014, the PACA Steering Committee identified tentative dates of 03-05 October 2016 for the next PPM. We humbly ask you to please save the dates.

Amare Ayalew (PhD)  
Program Manager, PACA/AUC

## The sixth PACA Steering Committee Meeting deliberated on strategic issues and made site visits

The PACA Steering Committee met on 17-18 February 2015 in Nairobi, Kenya. The Steering Committee's main focus on their sixth SC meeting was to review and give guidance on PACA's current country activity implementation in its pilot countries and progress made. In addition, the SC reviewed PACA's activities at the continental and regional level. The SC also reviewed and endorsed the revised M&E framework as well as the Mid-Term Operational Plan of the PACA Secretariat.

The two subcommittees, Technical (TSC) and Budget, Finance and Administration



(BFA), met on the 17 February 2015 to review technical and budgetary issues and make recommendations to the SC. The SC endorsed the Subcommittee recommendations to approve PACA's 2015 budget and work plan as well as provisionally endorsing the 2016 budget and work plan.

On the margins of the meeting, SC members visited the Crops

and Plant Protection Division of the Ministry of Agriculture of Kenya as recognition for the tremendous efforts that the Government of Kenya is making towards aflatoxin control in the country. The visit was part of PACA's commitment and support to aflatoxin control in non-pilot countries and on the continent in general. SC members also visited the Biosciences eastern and central Africa-International Livestock Research Institute (BecA-ILRI) Hub and the Storage and Drying for Aflatoxin Control Project (AflaSTOP) in Nairobi, Kenya. Steering Committee members appreciated the state-of-the-art laboratory facilities and the result-oriented regional efforts at BecA and the progress being made by the AflaSTOP project.



## PACA's support to country led situation analysis and action planning (CSAAP)

The Country-Led Aflatoxin and Food Safety Situation Analysis and Action Planning (CSAAP) is one of PACA's main activities within countries. The PACA secretariat is supporting its five pilot countries (Gambia, Malawi, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda) to conduct a country led situation analysis and action planning to enable

them to create empirical evidence on existing aflatoxin prevalence, legislation, policy and regulation, management practices and other existing control mechanisms that can effectively inform policy and interventions. The C-SAAP will also provide the necessary input to align aflatoxin control with broader food safety and

SPS issues within the countries. The PACA Secretariat will engage service providers to work with key stakeholders in drafting and supporting a concrete country action plan for mitigating aflatoxins based on the findings of the situation analysis. PACA and Pilot Countries expect to complete this important piece of work toward the middle of 2015.

## Women farmers and the groundnut value chain in West Africa

In much of Africa, groundnuts are an important source of income for small holder farmers comprising of majority women. In West Africa in particular, groundnuts are an essential part of the diet and economy. For example total cultivated area in Mali, Niger and Nigeria is 36, 15 and 34 percent respectively.

In many West African countries, groundnuts are considered a woman's crop. In Mali, it is estimated that 85 percent of private land belong to women as well as 35 percent in Ni-



ger. In Nigeria, women are highly involved in groundnut processing activities. Women are major contributors to groundnut production and entire value chain in West Africa.

PACA recognizes the importance of engaging and empowering women in aflatoxin management especially in the groundnut value chain in West Africa.



## Women farmers and the groundnut value chain in West Africa—continued

PACA is organizing a workshop on “revamping the groundnut value chain of West Africa through aflatoxin mitigation” where women involved in the groundnut value chain will play critical roles.

The workshop will create a forum where various stakeholders

from West Africa and elsewhere come together to collectively address the aflatoxin challenge in the region as well as creating solutions for revamping the groundnut value chain. Aflatoxin control is key to move forward the groundnut sector to its former glory. This would benefit millions of value chain actors and

their national economies. The workshop will take place in September 2015 in West Africa. For additional reading on empowering women- boosting rural economy, visit: <http://www.rural21.com/english/news/detail/article/empowering-women-boosting-rural-economy-0000899/>

## The East African Community (EAC) spearheads a regional aflatoxin project

The EAC Multi-Regional Aflatoxin Abatement Project (MRAAP) was launched in March 2014 to give a multi-sectoral strategic and pragmatic direction to a harmonized policy development and implementation. The projects main goal is to “contribute to food security and safety in the EAC and protect human, animal

and plant health”. The MRAAP is working closely with various stakeholders such as the agriculture and food security, industry, trade, environment, health and communication departments in the East African region. The MRAAP aims to develop an EAC Regional policy on prevention and control of aflatoxin; establish the foundation for a region-

al biocontrol program in the EAC; build capacity of the region on aflatoxin control and prevention in the region; and enhance levels of awareness on aflatoxin control and prevention in the EAC region. The EAC is working closely with various research institutions and PACA in the implementation of the MRAAP project.

## News and Information on Aflatoxins

### Kenya commits \$ 1.5 billion Shillings for aflatoxin control in highly affected regions

In January 2015, the Kenyan government allocated resources for aflatoxin control in the country. In its first cabinet meeting of 2015 chaired by H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta, president of the Republic of Kenya, the cabinet approved 1.5 billion shillings to scale up interventions in aflatoxin control and management in the most affected counties of

Kenya. A substantial amount from this budget is set to be allocated for research on aflatoxin prevention and management. The government acknowledges the challenges the country is currently facing in post-harvest losses exacerbated by aflatoxin contamination of its staple crops. Currently, a number of interventions are being implemented in Kenya by diverse institu-

tions in collaboration with the government. The government's conscious decision to allocate 1.5 Billion shillings for two years for aflatoxin control is a major step forward in the fight against aflatoxins in the country. This is an exemplary move for African ownership and commitment to address the vexing aflatoxin problem.

### The 8th World Mycotoxin Forum was held in Vienna, Austria

The 8th conference of the World Mycotoxin Forum was held in Vienna, Austria in November 2014 where hundreds of people gathered in an aim to share information and experiences in integrated solutions approach to minimize mycotoxin contamination of raw materials. The World Mycotoxin Forum is the leading forum where

experts and industry representatives and governments from around the globe meet to discuss ideas on prevention and management of mycotoxin contamination and exchange information on current state of knowledge on mycotoxins. Dr. Amare Ayalew, program Manager of PACA presented on recent outbreaks of aflatoxicoses in

East Africa as part of a plenary discussion aiming to address why the outbreaks happened in various parts of the world and why they couldn't be prevented. The workshop was highly attended by experts from around the globe. The 9th World Mycotoxin Forum will be held in June 2016 in Winnipeg, Canada.

## The BecA-ILRI Hub aflatoxin platform: partnering to help ensure safe food and feed in Africa

*Invited contribution by Dr. Jagger Harvey*

Many African scientists and their partners have recently amplified their efforts to improve nutritional security and food safety in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), with support from the BecA-ILRI Hub and our Australian and other partners. Compared to the range of nutritional security and food safety issues in SSA, there is a dearth of well-equipped laboratories in the region available to African scientists and their partners. Through stakeholder consultation and analysis, the team initiating the Australian Government-supported Biosciences eastern and central Africa-Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) Partnership recognized a unique opportunity to fill this gap, through establishment of a shared research and capacity building laboratory and team

of experts at the Biosciences eastern and central Africa-International Livestock Research Institute (BecA-ILRI) Hub in Nairobi, Kenya. Since its establishment in 2011, the platform has hosted work of more than sixty researchers, from seven African countries, Australia, Europe and North America. Collectively, the community around the laboratory has made initial assessments of aflatoxin contamination in a

number of African countries, conducted the first inoculated field trials in the region to identify maize varieties less susceptible to aflatoxin accumulation, developed models estimating aflatoxin risk at harvest, and produced a range of other important findings and tools which are beginning to reach end users to help ensure safer food and feed for Africa.



## The BecA-ILRI Hub—continued

The BecA-ILRI Hub is a shared agricultural research and biosciences platform located at and managed by ILRI in Nairobi, Kenya. The platform increases access to world-class laboratories for African and international scientists conducting research on African agricultural challenges. It was established as part of the African Union/ New Partnership for Africa's Development (AU/NEPAD) African Biosciences Initiative (ABI); within the framework of NEPAD's Centers of Excellence for Science and Technology, the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), and in alignment with regional priorities set by Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA).

Focused on aflatoxin contamination of maize in Kenya and Tanzania, the first phase of the Capacity and Action for Aflatoxin Reduction in

Eastern Africa (CAAREA) project has achieved key outputs and findings, and analysis of the broad set of results is ongoing to further advance maps, models and tools to be used by end users to reduce aflatoxin in the region.

The project team has now evolved, in preparation for the next phase where interventions will be piloted and rolled out to farmers, millers and other end users, to help reduce aflatoxin levels in the region's food and feed. In addition to sustained efforts of many of the initial partners, others who have joined to take the research outputs to impact include: Farm Input Promotions Africa; the Kenya Cereal Millers Association (with whom the project has been working already); the Nelson Mandela African Institute of Science and Technology; and the Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa, which has been providing strategic advice and partnership with the project for

some time, to help contextualize and link the results with policy consideration at the national, regional and continental levels as appropriate. Together, the team seeks to enable researchers, the private and public sector actors, women and men farmers and civil society to collaboratively develop and apply new knowledge and innovations that contribute to reduced exposure to aflatoxin from maize.

The BecA-ILRI Hub aflatoxin platform has come a long way since it was first established in 2011. It now houses state of the art nutritional and aflatoxin analysis facilities supported by a dedicated team of researchers within the BecA-ILRI Hub as well as affiliated scientists from the region and internationally.

A further dimension of vibrancy and capacity has been infused by the range of other projects currently hosted in the laboratory.

## The BecA-ILRI Hub—continued

These include the AflaSTOP project, led by Sophie Walker, ACDI/VOCA and Agribusiness Systems International; the Aflatoxin Proficiency Testing for Eastern and Central Africa (APTECA) project, led by Tim Herrman, Professor, State Chemist and Director, Texas A&M Agrilife Research, which has achieved ISO 17025 accreditation of aflatoxin testing in the BecA-ILRI Hub lab; the MyDairy project in collaboration with Professor Erastus Kang'ethe, University of Nairobi and various CRP Agriculture for Nutrition and Health projects led by Dr Delia Grace (ILRI); and a number of others led by researchers from African institutes.

Support from the Australian

Government (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) has been instrumental in establishing and supporting this initiative. Further support from the Government of Sweden Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture, the United Kingdom Department for International Development, Helica Biosystems Inc and others has also supported the platform through funding for operations and/or for Africa Biosciences Challenge Fund research placements.

In the spirit of the BecA initiative, the aflatoxin platform is open for use by the greater

community of researchers focused on improving food safety in the region. In addition to hosting already funded projects, African NARS scientists can apply to use the platform via competitive research placement funds, through the Africa Biosciences Challenge Fund. For more information, visit [hub.africabiosciences.org](http://hub.africabiosciences.org) or contact Dr Jagger Harvey (Senior Scientist, BecA-ILRI Hub; CAAREA project and mycotoxin-nutritional analysis platform leader; [j.harvey@cgiar.org](mailto:j.harvey@cgiar.org)). BecA invites PACA Community members to join this exciting nexus of aflatoxin research, so that together we can help secure a safe harvest for Africa!

"AFRICA FREE FROM THE HARMFUL  
EFFECTS OF AFLATOXINS"

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