PACA | Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa | Partenariat pour la lutte contre les aflatoxines en Afrique | Parceria para o controle das aflatoxinas na África | الشراكة من أجل التحكم في الافلاتوكسين في أفريقيا

Aflatoxin Partnership Newsletter

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Dear PACA Community Member:

We are pleased to present this issue of your newsletter with important updates and information. This year has seen tremendous progress in the effectiveness and maturity of PACA and it has been a very good year for PACA and aflatoxin control. Following PACA's engagement of pilot countries in 2014, country level activities progressed in earnest in 2015. Country-led Situation Analysis and Action Planning (C-SAAP) reports of the highest standards with reasonable consistency in the methodology and approaches for the generation of home grown, locally relevant data will be available to users in early 2016. In parallel, mainstreaming of country-specific aflatoxin control plans into national strategies and frameworks has been underway. Deliberating, consulting, and engaging stakeholders have been the hallmark of this country-led approach, ensuring deliverability in terms of endorsement and the much needed implementation of national plans. We count on PACA Community support to achieve meaningful impact through implementation of evidence-based and cost-effective interventions identified in national plans and roadmaps. Moreover, a lot has been achieved in terms of awareness generation and grassroot results by PACA Community members throughout Africa, that are too many to list here. Kindly share with us updates about your relevant projects and activities even if they are already profiled and are part of the list on the PACA website.

Building on the experience from the successful workshop on "revamping the groundnut value chains of West Africa through aflatoxin" in September 2015, PACA Secretariat plans a similar workshop in mid-2016 to enhance maize value chains in Eastern and Southern Africa. The 2nd Partnership Platform Meeting of PACA is planned for October 2016.

Message from PACA Manager—continued

We hope the next PPM will raise the bar further because of the anticipated shift from planning to sharing results and outcomes related to evidence generation, aflatoxin mitigation interventions and solution pathways, awareness generation programs, partnerships built, institutional innovations tested, progress monitoring and accountability measures in place, and implementation challenges faced, among others. We hope to work with many of you in the preparation and conducting of these forums.

Finally, I take this moment to heartily welcome new PACA Steering Committee (SC) members and introduce them to the PACA Community. Based on the decisions of the SC in September 2015, Mars Incorporated (representing the global food industry), Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, GAIN (representing global nutrition initiatives), and African Society of Mycotoxicology, ASM (representing a cross section of African research and academia) have joined the PACA Steering Committee. These organizations bring along new perspectives to the apex leadership organ of PACA. PACA is honored to have contributed to the establishment of the ASM. Please check the PACA website for updated list of PACA SC members.

Thank you for your support to aflatoxin control in Africa

Amare Ayalew (PhD)
Program Manager, PACA/AUC

The African Union Commission and Mars, Incorporated sign agreement to tackle aflatoxins

The African Union Commission and Mars, Incorporated signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to share food safety resources and expertise to control aflatoxins in food crops – a significant threat to food safety in Africa and a major deterrent to use of key African raw materials in global supply chains. Mars Inc., a global private company, operates in six business segments including Petcare, Chocolate, Wrigley, Food, Drinks and Symbioscience. Mars sources its raw materials/ingredient base from various parts of the world and ensures that the quality of each product is at the highest standard possible.

The agreement will facilitate the sharing of food safety research, knowledge, and best practice, and will aim to build and enhance capability for aflatoxin testing and controls. AUC, through the Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA), will leverage Mars' Global Food Safety Center, and together PACA and Mars will work in partnership to help raise awareness of aflatoxin issues across Africa, and identify opportunities to pilot and implement practical efforts to harmonize food safety management in Africa.

"The cooperation between the African Union Commission and Mars is in line with our efforts to tackle the complex aflatoxin challenge by working together with a wide array of stakeholders. We value the competencies of the private sector and particularly the experience of Mars in food safety and quality and the creation of pre-emptive food safety research platforms all of which are of direct relevance to aflatoxin control. Africa is the only region in the world where the supply of aflatoxin prone raw materials, such as groundnuts, will far exceed the internal demand for the years to come. This MOU should serve as a launching pad for collaborations to improve food quality and safety standards that eventually benefit millions of small scale farmers in Africa, who depend on crops such as maize and groundnuts for their income and food," stated H.E. Rhoda Peace Tumusiime, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture of the African Union Commission.

The African Union Commission and Mars, Incorporated sign agreement to tackle aflatoxins—Continued

Mr. Dave Crean, Vice President of Corporate R&D at Mars, Incorporated, added: "Aflatoxin contamination in humans continues to have a devastating impact across the globe, causing premature death, high liver cancer rates and childhood stunting. With UN estimates that 25 per cent of food crops are affected and 4.5 billion people are potentially exposed to contaminated food annually, it's clear that action is needed. Our agreement with PACA marks an important step in our mutual goal of tackling aflatoxins and strengthening the global food supply chain. By working in partnership to share food safety knowledge and expertise, our aim is to help tackle the aflatoxin threat, moving us all closer to the mutual goal of access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food for all."

PACA and Mars have previously collaborated to raise awareness on the scale of the aflatoxin challenge and underline the critical role of an open, collaborative multi-sector approach in tackling malnutrition and driving food safety and security. In July this year, they partnered on a food safety panel at the United Nations' (UN) Third Financing for Development conference in Addis Ababa entitled, 'Uncommon Partnerships Address Aflatoxins - An Urgent Worldwide Food Safety Challenge'; and in November 2015, they co-sponsored a food safety side event at the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in Rome to drive discussion on 'Multi-Sector Partnerships Drive Food Safety Solutions'. These discussions have highlighted the need for further mutual alignment and engagement, resulting in the desire to collaborate more closely through the MOU.

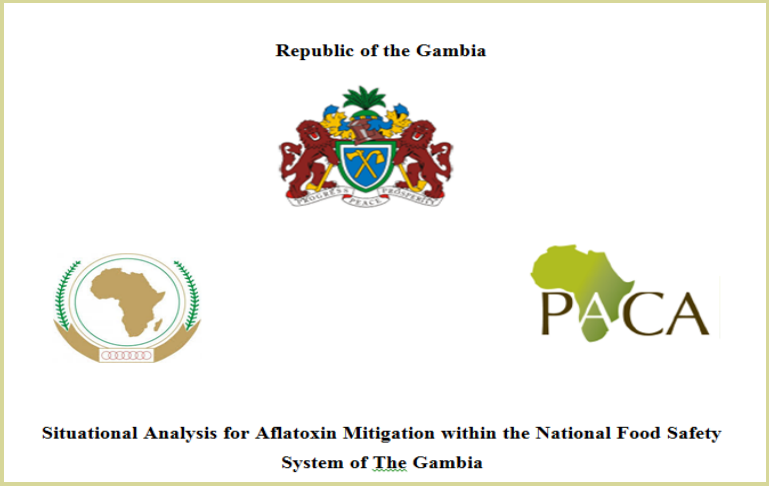
Stakeholders in the Gambia validated situational analysis and aflatoxin control action plan supported by PACA

On September 30 and October 01, 2015, the Gambia held a workshop to validate its Country-led Situational Analysis and Action Planning (CSAAP) conducted by a national consulting team. The CSAAP is one of the various activities being implemented in collaboration with the Gambian government on generating evidence on the current situation of aflatoxins in country. This activity also assesses the food safety policy environment and regulatory enforcement to identify gaps within the existing system. The African Union Commission, through PACA, supported the Gambian government to conduct a situation analysis on aflatoxins and the food control system to enable the development of a national aflatoxin mitigation strategy and implementation plan.

The validation workshop was opened by the Permanent Secretary, Office of the President who emphasized the importance of the study in collaboration with PACA, ECOWAS and other stakeholders on aflatoxin control in the Gambia. The consultants presented the study to a multi-stakeholder group.

The CSAAP report showed aflatoxin prevalence on identified crops in the country as well as policy and regulatory gaps that exist in the food safety system which could be leveraged to develop a comprehensive but feasible action plan for aflatoxin mitigation in the country.

The multi-stakeholder group validated the report, further identified gaps and intervention areas to be elaborated by the consultants, and supported the initiation of an action plan. The inputs from stakeholders feed into a national aflatoxin mitigation strategy and implementation plan for the Gambia.



The PACA Model gets endorsed at the Inaugural Conference of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment of the African Union Commission in October 2015

Specialized Technical Committees (STCs) are ministerial bodies adopted as Organs of the African Union by The African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government. The Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA) of the African Union Commission in collaboration with the NEPAD Planning and Coordination Agency (NPCA) organized the Inaugural Conference of the specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment (ARDWE) from 05-09 October 2015 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The STCs are composed of Ministers or senior officials who are responsible for ensuring the supervision, follow-up and evaluation of the implementation of decisions taken by the organs of the Union. They are also responsible for the coordination and harmonization of projects and programmes of the Union.

During the Inaugural Conference of the STC on ARDWE, Ministers of the various sectors recognized the adverse impact of aflatoxins on public health, food and nutrition security and trade

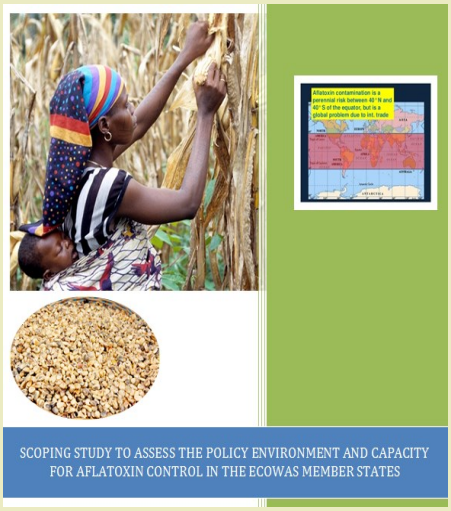
in agricultural commodities in Africa. The Ministers endorsed the PACA model, calling on Members States to mainstream aflatoxin control plans into National Agriculture and Food Security Investment Plans making it an integral part of national priorities. The AU Commission through PACA envisages to streamline its support to AU member states beyond PACA pilot countries, especially in terms of replicating approaches and frameworks developed and fine-tuned through piloting.

PACA commissioned a scoping study in the ECOWAS region

As part of its evidence generation efforts, PACA commissioned a scoping study in the ECOWAS region to assess the food safety systems including policies, regulations, and human and laboratory capacities in aflatoxin control within the ECOWAS member states.

PACA hired a consultant, an expert in aflatoxins, who administered questionnaires in all 15 ECOWAS countries.

The scoping study shows that more than 50% of the countries in the ECOWAS region have food safety legislation in place. Out of these, only 20% have a specific standard for aflatoxin. Most of the other countries use codex limits or the limits required by major trading partners such as China and the European Union.



For each country, the study summarizes the standards and regulations that are in place and the different institutional authorities that implement food safety laws and undertake food safety control.

Important recommendations in the areas of awareness generation, practical interventions for aflatoxin control and management as well as recommendations to improve institutional arrangements, policy coherence and enforcement. A report was presented at the regional workshop on "revamping the groundnut value chain of West Africa through Aflatoxin Mitigation" on 1-2 September 2015 in Dakar, Senegal. The report is expected to be used by ECOWAS Member States as a basis for setting standards where they don't exist or strengthening enforcement where standards and regulations do exist. Countries will also be able to use the findings to inform policy changes including strengthening of their food safety systems and capacities. For full report, please visit the PACA website at:

http://aflatoxinpartnership.org/uploads/ECOWAS%20Scoping%20Study%20Report%2018Nov2015%20Final.pdf

News and Information on Aflatoxins

ECOWAS Ministers of Agriculture approve a regional aflatoxin mitigation strategy

In November 2013, the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) in collaboration with PACA, the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), the Forum for Agriculture Research in Africa (FARA), West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF), and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) organized a regional workshop to address the aflatoxin issue in the ECOWAS region. The workshop identified challenges, intervention areas, and technical, institutional, and policy opportunities to address the aflatoxin challenge in West African States. The workshop led to the development of the ECOWAS Aflatoxin Control Action Plan (ECOACAP).

The regional aflatoxin mitigation action plan was finalized in 2014 after extensive consultations and reviews. The ECOACAP was then presented at a multi-stakeholder regional workshop on "Revamping the Groundnut Value Chain of West Africa through Aflatoxin Mitigation" held in Dakar, Senegal on 01-02 September, 2015. Stakeholders provided valuable inputs and endorsed the regional plan for aflatoxin mitigation.

On 14-16 November 2015, on the margins of the ECOWAS Agriculture Program's (ECOWAP) 10th International Conference, experts and Ministers of Agriculture met and unanimously approved the ECOACAP. The African Union Commission commends ECOWAS on advancing the efforts to mitigate the aflatoxin problem in the region. It is expected that the implementation of the plan will start soon.

The 6th Africa Day for Food and Nutrition Security (ADFNS) recommends to "embed aflatoxin control in nutrition and value chain development projects"

The 6th edition of the Africa Day for Food and Nutrition Security (ADFNS) was commemorated in Kampala, Unganda on 28-30 October 2015. ADFNS was launched in Malawi in October 2010 during the Conference of the African Ministers of Agriculture to be commemorated henceforth on an annual basis. The Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA) was officially launched by the AUC and endorsed by the Joint Conference for Ministers of Agriculture and Ministers of Trade on 31 October, 2012 during the commemoration of the 2nd ADFNS.

The year 2015 has been declared by African Union as the Year of Women's Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063 which has informed

the theme of the 6th ADFNS as: "Empowering Our Women, Securing Our Food, Improving Our Nutrition".

The main purpose of the ADFNS is to serve as a rallying point for intensifying political and financial commitments at all levels to address contemporary challenges of food and nutrition insecurity in Africa. In view of that PACA showcased progress in mitigating aflatoxins on the Continent at the recent ADFNS to enhance awareness and further garner support for implementing aflatoxin mitigation strategies and actions in Africa. The ADFNS recognized the need for aflatoxin control for sustainable nutrition programming and recommended, as part of the call to action from technical discussions, to "embed aflatoxin control in nutrition and value chain development projects".

Researchers report high incidence of aflatoxin in milk in the Addis Ababa area, Ethiopia

Food Control 59 (2016) 773-779

Researchers at the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), a member of the CGIAR consortium,) published results of a cross-sectional study on milk and dairy feed in the greater Addis Ababa area of Ethiopia in 2014/2015 (Food Control 59: 773-779). The study aimed at detecting and quantifying the levels of aflatoxin M1 (AFM1) in samples of raw cow's milk and aflatoxin B1 (AFB1) in samples of dairy feed. A total of 110 milk and 156 feed samples were analyzed by enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA).

The study found that all the milk samples collected were contaminated with AFM1 at concentration of <0.05 to >2 micrograms per liter. All the feed samples were also contaminated with AFB1 ranging from 7 to 419 microgram per kilogram. The study found significant association between AFB1 level in feeds and the presence of noug cake in the feed as well as between AFM1 levels in milk and presence of noug cake in feed.

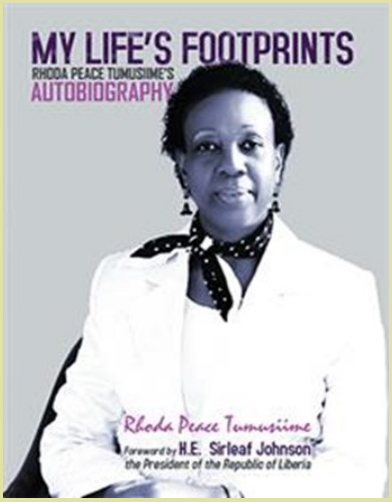
Noug is an oilseed crop indigenous to Ethiopia. Noug cakes examined in this study were highly contaminated with AFB1 ranging from 290 to 397 micrograms per kilogram while aflatoxin levels in other feed ingredients were found to be much lower.

The authors of the study have recommended that further research on noug cake as well as noug seed should be carried out in order to effectively reduce the risk of aflatoxin contamination in the peri-urban and urban dairy value chain.

It is noteworthy to mention that AFB1 is a potent cause of liver cancer. It is biotransformed into AFM1 and then excreted in milk of lactating mammals including dairy animals. Although AFM1 is less toxic than AFB1, daily consumption of contaminated milk, as is the case of children who are more susceptible to the deadly effects of aflatoxins, increases the risk of aflatoxin poisoning. Such reports reiterate the need for evidence-based policies and interventions to make sure African crop and livestock sectors meet quality and safety standards protecting public health and benefiting national economies.

H.E. Rhoda Peace Tumusiime's Autobiography

"True story of overcoming great odds told in new book"



Since joining the African Union Commission, Rhoda Peace Tumusiime has championed the agricultural development of Africa. At present she is the Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, of the AU Commission.

In her recently released book titled "My Life's Footprints: Rhoda Peace Tumusiime's Autobiography" (published by Xlibris UK), Commissioner Tumusiime looks back to the journey that brought her where she is today: a place of gratitude, commitment and social-consciousness.

H.E. Tumusiime grew up in a remote village in Uganda. Her family had marginal resources and girls in her society had limited opportunities; in fact it was common practice for girls to be married off at a tender age. In spite of these harsh realities, Tumusiime was determined to do something more. She shares her story in detail in her book, describing her early life, experiences in the African Union and her becoming elected as commissioner; a position which has given her the opportunity to give back and do more for her country.

"My Life's Footprints: Rhoda Peace Tumusiime's Autobiography" is a powerful true story of a girl who dared to dream. Above all, it is triumphant testament of the indomitable human spirit.

Commissioner Tumusiime is a strong advocate of aflatoxin control in Africa. She considers aflatoxin control a proactive intervention to make African agriculture competitive with manifold benefits to millions of smallholder farmers and urban consumers as well as national economies. She is one of the architects and an ardent supporter of PACA. Her leadership has been instrumental in the great strides that PACA is making.

"AFRICA FREE FROM THE HAMRFUL EFFECTS OF AFLATOXINS"

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