

FOOD SAFETY IN AFRICA:

Past Endeavors and Future Directions

APPENDIX B: IMPLEMENTING IDEAS

Introduction

The report recommendations in Chapter 5 call for significant changes in the strategic direction of donor-funded capacity building and new approaches to achieving food safety goals. This appendix contains implementing ideas based on input from a diverse cross-section of stakeholders and experts and the report analysis. These ideas are illustrative examples of steps donors and national governments could take to set and implement a new strategic direction – one that heightens the focus on food safety for African consumers and puts the future of food safety squarely in the hands of African governments, businesses and consumers. The purpose of this broad menu of implementing ideas is to stimulate the dialogue that is needed to identify actions that would be relevant and impactful in particular countries, markets and value chains, taking into account local needs, priorities and resources.

1. Better address the health of domestic consumers dependent on informal markets

Recommendation. SSA governments and international donors should put citizen health at the heart of national food safety systems. National governments and regional institutions in SSA, in dialogue with the donor community, should establish health-based goals, priorities, metrics and implementing strategies and help generate the missing evidence needed for rational planning.

Implementing Ideas

1. To help mobilize commitment and resources and inform future investments, convene a continent-level follow-up to the 2005 FAO/WHO Africa regional food safety conference for the purposes of:
 - a. reviewing progress since 2005,
 - b. highlighting the public health problem in Africa’s informal and formal markets, and
 - c. establishing continental and regional goals, priorities, metrics, and implementing strategies that consider public health and informal markets alongside trade and formal markets,
 - d. supporting informal markets alongside trade and formal markets.
2. At country-level, convene multi-sector stakeholder conferences to forge locally tailored goals, priorities, metrics, and implementing strategies for food safety investments that directly benefit public health.
3. Support efforts in sub-Saharan Africa to elevate the domestic public health aspect of food safety, including building the political will for addressing food safety in informal markets.

4. Increase international donor investment to implement interventions by the public and private sector that will reduce the health burden of foodborne illness in SSA.
5. Improve transparency and reporting on levels and purposes of donor investment in food safety capacity building, including the population(s) impacted.
6. Support WHO, Africa CDC¹, African universities and other Africa-based research institutions in collecting and analyzing data at the national level to identify priority hazards risks and document the domestic health and economic burdens associated with unsafe food.
7. Support FAO, WHO and African researchers to develop and document cost-effective and feasible strategies for reducing the burden of illness in SSA, tailored to national- and local-level conditions and taking account of practical barriers to change.

2. Build capacity for well-governed, evidence- and risk-based food safety systems

Recommendation. The donor community and national governments should endorse principles of science- and risk-based prevention, adapted to local conditions. Donors and governments in SSA should mutually commit to improving food safety governance. These include: SSA country ownership of building food safety; government commitment to improving institutions and tackling corruption; donor harmonization and alignment with national priorities; and managing for results and mutual accountability.

Implementing Ideas

1. Through a collaborative process involving donors and SSA governments and institutions, develop and adopt “good capacity building practices” for food safety, including:
 - a. As a key element of good capacity building practices, consider how every proposed project contributes to a sustainable improvement in food safety,
 - b. To increase impact and sustainability, make public-private collaboration and partnership central elements of capacity building at both the planning and execution levels,
 - c. To improve management for results and mutual accountability, increase transparency and reporting of both donor and SSA government investments in food safety,
 - d. Develop and disseminate information on the cost-effectiveness of food safety interventions and establish metrics and data systems to monitor and evaluate progress toward achievement of capacity building and public health goals.
2. Establish metrics – at both the continental and national levels – to monitor progress toward food safety goals, including for public health.
3. Create capacity at the AUC, REC and national levels to collect, analyze and report data showing progress on food safety.

¹ See Africa CDC website. <https://au.int/en/africacdc>

4. Establish “good capacity building practices” for food safety that include examining donor projects for alignment with Codex principles and guidance and with risk-based national strategies.
5. Enhance government and non-government surveillance of foodborne illness, testing of food and the environment for foodborne hazards and analysis of the risks posed to consumers in local settings.
6. Invest in projects by universities, governments, and non-government research institutes to (a) identify locally applicable, holistic interventions for reducing risks in both informal and formal markets, (b) implement large-scale pilots of such interventions and (c) establish platforms for sharing of best practices developed through such projects.
7. Invest in a quality-assured and sustainable regional network of accredited laboratories to support illness surveillance, food testing for research and compliance, and research on hazards and interventions.
8. Invest in research to adapt food safety technologies and strategies to local needs and conditions.
9. Develop targeted strategies and funding streams to support the water, sanitation, hygiene, cold chain and other physical infrastructure improvements needed for safe food production, distribution and marketing.

In the formal sector:

10. Invest in a larger and stronger African cadre of food safety experts and practitioners to work with food companies, focusing on university-level training and credentialing.
11. Pool donor, government, and private sector resources to establish and sustain national and regional food safety centers, possibly at universities or private sector entities, to provide an array of training and technical support services to the food industry, including:
 - a. Training of private sector food safety managers,
 - b. Collecting and disseminating research and best practices on hazards and interventions,
 - c. Fostering laboratory best practices,
 - d. Building an awareness and culture of food safety,
 - e. Fostering public-private dialogue on food safety policy and capacity needs.
12. Continue donor and government investment to strengthen food safety practices in the formal sector and support trade in safe food by:
 - a. Modernizing food safety legislation and regulatory standards to be consistent with Codex principles of risk-based prevention,
 - b. Harmonizing food safety regulatory standards at national, regional and international levels, to the extent possible,
 - c. Supporting Bureaus of Standards with accredited labs and certification programs to promote food safety and trade,
 - d. Providing technical guidance for producers, processors, traders, and retailers on how to comply with food safety standards.

In the informal sector:

13. Invest in data collection and analysis to identify and prioritize from a public health perspective high-risk commodities and practices in the informal sector for better targeting of scarce resources.
14. Focus intervention efforts on commodities and value chains that are significant from a food security and nutrition standpoint and amenable to systemic, risk-based prevention strategies (e.g., smallholder farmers supplying fluid milk to rural and urban informal markets).
15. Invest in research and collaborative dialogue to devise holistic, development-oriented food safety strategies that: (1) include awareness raising and education on safe food handling and other simple steps that can make an immediate difference in local communities, (2) improve food safety as part of improving livelihoods and nutrition, (3) are based on integrating perspectives and knowledge from the traditional food safety sciences with nutrition, economics, culture and gender studies, and (4) harness social and economic incentives to ensure sustainability.
16. Pool donor, national government and private sector resources for large-scale pilot projects to test and demonstrate locally-tailored strategies to address prioritized hazards, commodities and value chains in the informal sector.
17. Build capacity in industry associations and cooperatives and other civil society organizations to work on food safety with smallholder farmers, traders, retailers and others in the informal sector, including raising food safety awareness and facilitating access to training.
18. Invest in development and implementation of policies for the informal sector that remove obstacles and increase incentives for improving food safety practices.
19. Invest in research on the food safety interactions and synergies between formal and informal markets – both positive and negative – to guide food safety policy and capacity building.

African Government Capacity and Actions

20. Support the efforts of the AUC to establish a continental food safety coordination mechanism or authority to provide integrative leadership and support to national governments on all aspects of food safety, including the planning and implementation of capacity building in accordance with both Codex and Paris Declaration principles.
21. Strengthen the commitment and capacity of governments to provide leadership on capacity building through:
 - a. Establishing in each country an empowered national government focal point for leadership on food safety, including capacity building, with a mandate to forge closer interface and collaboration among ministries and agencies with food safety responsibilities;
 - b. Continued development of national food safety plans with clear goals, priorities and implementing strategies, and
 - c. Assessment and prioritization of the capacity and resources needed to carry out the plans.

22. Build on past experience with stakeholder engagement to strengthen and, where necessary, establish effective, inclusive and empowered country-level mechanisms aimed at meaningful collaboration amongst food safety stakeholders to guide investments in and implementation of modern and results-driven food safety systems.

Donor Investments and Actions

23. Strengthen mechanisms for collaboration and pooling of resources among donor organizations and with African governments, including:
 - a. Building on current donor coordination mechanisms, at the regional and/or national levels, to establish empowered focal points for forging coherent donor strategies, mobilizing resources, and harmonizing donor initiatives in alignment with government priorities;
 - b. Linking Africa-focused donor coordination mechanisms with corresponding African institutions, including the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, the RECs, and national governments;
 - c. Expanding use of multi-donor trust funds – such as GAFSP, AgResults, GFSP and STDF – to pool resources for strategic and specific capacity building;
 - d. Expanding the role of development banks in funding larger-scale, value chain-focused food safety investments,
 - e. Establishing a central, publicly accessible repository of information on donor and African government food safety and capacity building plans, investments and activities.

3. Harness Today's Marketplace Drivers of Progress on Food Safety

Recommendation. Donors and national governments should use their resources and standing to recognize, catalyze, and support the consumer and marketplace drivers of progress on food safety. This requires well-informed and empowered consumers, able to demand food safety and a private sector that has capacity and accountability to respond to consumer demand.

Implementing Ideas

Consumers

1. Convene and collaborate with stakeholders to elevate consumer awareness of food safety problems and solutions through education, the media and other communications channels, and build national-level capacity for consumer advocacy to improve food safety.
2. Use enhanced illness surveillance and food testing data to generate sound evidence and educate consumers about hazards and risks.
3. Support consumer-oriented food safety education to improve household food safety practices across the diversity of SSA households.
4. Support organizations that can represent the consumer interest in food safety and advocate for increased government priority and resources for food safety.

5. Build specialized capacity in the media to accurately report on outbreaks and other food safety incidents, build consumer awareness of problems and solutions, and act as a “watch dog” that improves performance of both the public and private sectors.
6. Consider novel settings in which to elevate food safety awareness and pursue preventive interventions, such as schools, maternal and child health clinics, and HIV clinics.

Private Sector

7. Build public understanding of the complementary roles played by the private sector and governments to protect food safety as the basis for expanding and legitimizing public-private collaboration and partnerships.
8. Identify through research and implement through the marketplace and public policy feasible market-based incentives and strategies to stimulate improved food safety practices by the private sector.
9. Identify and recognize private sector food safety leaders as a way to motivate stronger food safety commitment by others.
10. Support the capacity of farmer organizations and industry associations to provide leadership on food safety through both member-oriented training and capacity-building programs and public advocacy for stronger government food safety systems, extension, and other support for improving private sector practices.
11. Build incentives and capacity for private audits and expand their use to verify sound food safety practices.
12. Build a cadre of qualified private auditors and accreditation or other systems to help ensure the independence and quality of audits.
13. Support capacity building for small- and medium-size enterprises that are seeking certification of their food safety management systems.
14. Mobilize the private sector to advocate for –
 - a. Elevating the public-sector priority on food safety;
 - b. Increasing public investment in food safety;
 - c. Better targeted public investment to meet private sector needs;
 - d. Public policy that incentivizes improvement in food safety.