



Aflatoxin Control for Increased Trade, Improved Health and Vibrant Economies in Africa

Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA)

1 What are aflatoxins and their impacts?

Aflatoxins are invisible poisons produced by fungi which affect crops growing in the field, or during improper postharvest handling and storage. Aflatoxins are virtually indestructible by food processing. They occur widely in diverse food products including cereals, oilseeds, spices, tree nuts and milk. Aflatoxins cause liver cancer and liver disease, stunting in children and impaired immune systems. Aflatoxins significantly reduce agricultural trade and hamper agribusiness and economic development. They are a major barrier in linking African farmers to markets, as they prevent commodities from meeting set regulations and standards governing agricultural trade and food safety. It is estimated that Africa loses annually 670 million US Dollars in export trade alone, due to aflatoxin contamination.

The impact of aflatoxin increases as a result of climate change. As climate change progresses, crops will be more stressed and prone to increased aflatoxin contamination. Addressing aflatoxins is critical to mitigating climate change impacts on human health and agricultural markets and trade.

2 What is PACA?

The Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA) is a program of the AU Commission under the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture which was approved by the AU Joint Conference of Ministers of Agriculture and Ministers of Trade in November 2012, as endorsed by African Union Executive Council through Decision No. **EX.CL/768 (XXII)**. The rationale for this proactive decision was the need to support member states in addressing the complex problem on aflatoxin contamination in food and feed, so that they become competitive in global and regional markets as well as improving food and nutrition security, as well as public health. PACA is tasked with coordinating and supporting aflatoxin mitigation and management across the health, agriculture and trade sectors in many significantly impacted countries in Africa.

3 Where is PACA Active?

PACA works at three levels, namely, continental, regional and national levels. The AU Commission developed an objective criteria in consultation with stakeholders at the 10th CAADP Partnership Platform, worked closely with RECs and accordingly selected six Pilot Countries to implement

aflatoxin control actions and scale up good practices over time. The Pilot Countries are Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, The Gambia and Uganda.

4 Achievements of PACA

PACA has registered a marked increase in awareness about aflatoxins across Africa and among stakeholders, including engagement of public and private sector partners through strategic leadership and creation of information sharing platforms and best practices.

PACA has also pioneered regional scoping studies capturing the policy and capacity landscape while promoting regional aflatoxin control plans, now adopted in ECOWAS and in discussion with COMESA.

The PACA pilot countries have seen their governments prioritizing aflatoxin control and enhancing surveillance capacity by establishing data collection systems feeding into the Africa Aflatoxin Information Management System (AfricaAIMS); and involving provision of aflatoxin testing laboratory facilities and training of personnel. The government-led and stakeholder-aligned costed, national aflatoxin control action plans have been developed and embedded into national strategies and the pilot countries are currently finalizing resource mobilization strategies and convening business meetings. Countries have also established national aflatoxin Steering Committees that oversee aflatoxin control activities across health, trade and agriculture sectors; and each of the pilot countries now have a full-time PACA Country Officer supporting multi-sectoral coordination and implementation of the national aflatoxin control plan.

Within a few months into PACA Phase II, Tanzania with the support of PACA was awarded US\$20 million funding in March 2017 by the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP) to implement its national aflatoxin control action plan. Tanzania qualified for this grant because it has mainstreamed aflatoxin control in its CAADP priorities and sought PACA's support to deal with an aflatoxin outbreak that killed 19 people in 2016. PACA has also received US\$200,000 grant from USDA to finance its support to ECOWAS Commission and US\$100,000 from Mars, Incorporated to support its evidence generation and value chain improvement efforts.

5 PACA Phase II

The second phase of PACA will build on the asset base created so far and continue to drive systemic change to effectively mitigate aflatoxin contamination across food systems in Africa. PACA recognizes that scattered, incremental steps are not enough to address the complex aflatoxin challenge. The four key areas of interventions to achieve systemic change include:

1. Building and supporting a strong credible, locally relevant knowledge base;
2. Supporting in-country sustainability of aflatoxin mitigation strategies and systems;
3. Putting systems in place for ease of scaling and replicability; and

- Facilitating financial sustainability of aflatoxin control including systematic monitoring and evaluation.

6 The Systemic Change Approach through Support to Governments

PACA achieves systemic change by improving the effectiveness and efficiency of governments to tackle the aflatoxin challenge in Africa. PACA Secretariat has already forged the necessary strong partnerships and working relationships with key stakeholders involved in aflatoxin control (e.g., RECs, private sector actors, NGOs, development partners) to comprehensively support selected governments of Africa in addressing aflatoxin on the continent. Building on this foundation of existing relationships and national strategies, the Secretariat will directly support governments, and work with other aflatoxin control stakeholders, to tackle the aflatoxin issue. PACA Secretariat, as a small organization, needs to prioritize actions to have impact by supporting country governments and other stakeholders.

PACA II focuses on governments for two reasons. First, governments in Africa are central to controlling aflatoxin contamination and exposure, as they have a wide sphere of influence over other key stakeholders (e.g., consumers, value chain actors, NGOs, private sector companies). As a result, governments have the ability to change behaviours and set priorities across these stakeholders by enacting and enforcing policies, standards, and regulations; launching capacity building initiatives; and implementing awareness campaigns (Figure 1).

