CONCEPT NOTE

Online Continental Consultative Meeting on Development of Food Safety Strategy for Africa

8th to 11th June 2021

1.0   Background

The African Union (AU) is a Pan-African body charged with the responsibility of spearheading Africa's rapid integration and sustainable development by promoting unity, solidarity, cohesion and cooperation among the peoples of Africa, as well as developing new partnerships worldwide. Within the AU Commission, the Department of Agriculture Rural Development Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (DARBE) of the AU Commission (AUC), leads the AU's efforts to promote agricultural development and sustainable environmental management across the continent.

Agriculture is central to the African economy, accounting for about 40 percent of GDP, 15 percent of exports and between 60 to 80 percent of employment on the continent. Moreover, about 75 percent of intra-African trade is in agricultural products. It is therefore expected that agricultural commodities will be major contributor to trade in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Hence, improving the overall performance of the agricultural sector will be vital to achieving sustainable socio-economic development of African societies and food security. There political will to drive Africa's agricultural transformation and several initiatives are ongoing to realize this objective. Key amongst the initiatives include:

1. Implementation of Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP)
2. Implementation of the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Policy for Africa which was endorsed by the AU Assembly of Heads of States in February 2020.

Despite the huge potential of Africa's agricultural sector, the continent has not been able to fully harness the sector's potential benefits. High cost of labor, inadequate infrastructure, low productivity and the presence of sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) risks and hazards are major constraints to Africa's agricultural transformation agenda.

2.0   Rationale

With regards to SPS risks and hazards, the Africa's agri-food trade has particularly been impacted by the occurrence of food safety hazards in food leading to documented episodes of foodborne diseases with fatalities. According to the World Health Organization's (WHO) estimate in 2015, 91 million people in

Africa fall ill each year due to food-borne diseases and 137,000 die of the same cause, representing one third of the global death toll for foodborne diseases. Economic impact studies by the World Bank in 2018 estimated that unsafe foods cost sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, about $110 billion in lost productivity and medical expenses alone. African countries have also witnessed costly trade rejections and in some cases loss of market share due to trade in unsafe food.

These public health and economic impact of unsafe food also demonstrate that trading in safe food will require significant investment by both the public and private sector to improve compliance with internationally accepted food safety requirements. AU Member States

Although there has been substantial investment in improving food safety on the continent, AU Member States are at different levels of capacities in terms of operating functional and efficient national food safety control systems that deliver safe food to the consumer. This capacity differential could undermine the integrity of the AfCFTA as some Member States may not have the requisite capacity to fully assert control, thus if not addressed this could result in circulation of potentially unsafe or low quality food. Empowering all AU Member States to attain an acceptable threshold of capacity to effectively address food safety challenges will be vital in building consumer trust and confidence in the AfCFTA and achieving the objective of facilitating intra-African trade in food.

The AU Commission (through its DARBE) will contribute to the continental standardization of food safety control systems and the overall improvement in food safety status by coordinating Member States to collectively define, develop, domesticate and implement an Africa Food Safety Strategy (AFSS). It is expected that the AFSS will contribute to the operation of science-based and efficient food regulatory environment, enhanced compliance leading to delivery of safer agri-food value chains across the continent, reduced foodborne disease burden in Africa, improved competitiveness of Africa's food commodities for increased intra-African and global trade.

As part of the process to develop the AFSS, the AUC is convening a continental consultative meeting with Codex Contact Point Officers and officials involved in food control from the 55 AU Member States.

3.0   Meeting Objectives

The objectives of the meeting are to:

1) Articulate the vision, mission and objectives of the African Food Safety Strategy;
2) Identify the guiding principles, strategic thematic areas and expected outcomes;
3) Identify strategic actions to achieving the objectives of the strategy;
4) Discuss coordination mechanism for implementation of food safety activities at the continental and regional level.

Prior to the meeting Member States will be requested to complete a survey on the four themes listed. The outcome of the survey will form the basis for discussion in the online consultative meeting.

4.0   Expected Outcome

Views collected on key elements of the AFSS from Member States. This information collated from the meeting together with information from previous consultations on the AFSS will form the basis for developing AFSS. Once drafted there will be a second round of consultations to solicit further input and to validate the draft strategy.

5.0   Date and Venue of the consultative meeting

The online consultative meeting will be held on 08 to 11 June 2021.

6.0   Budget

Description	Quantity	Unit Cost (USD)	No. of Days	Total (USD)
Hiring of facilitators	2	300	15	9,000.00
Cost of Interpretation (English and French)	4	468	1	1,872.00
Translation of online survey and survey report into AU languages	4	1200	1	4,800.00
Sub-total				15,672.00
Contingency (2%)				313.44
Grand Total				**15,985.44**

7.0   Participants

- Codex Contact Point Officer from the 55 AU Member States
- Other national officials responsible for food control
- Representatives of Regional Economic Communities
- AUC (DARBE and its technical institutions; Africa CDC)
- AfCFTA Secretariat
- AUDA-NEPAD
- ARSO