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Press Release

Food Safety coordination and tracking on the agenda at a side meeting of the 14th CAADP Partnership Platform



April 25, 2018, Libreville, Gabon – The Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA) of the African Union Commission and the Global Food Safety Partnership (GFSP) jointly convened a side event during the 14th CAADP Partners Platform as a part of a consultative process to develop food safety indicators for inclusion in the 2nd Malabo Biennial Report in 2020 and to preview GFSP's study of food safety investments in Africa, to be released soon.

The Side Event titled *“Food safety coordination and tracking for boosting implementation of NAIPs towards Malabo Declaration Goals and Targets,”* was aligned to the CAADP PP theme on “Accelerating the Implementation of National Agricultural Investment Plans to Achieve the Malabo Goals and Targets,”

Raising food safety and quality standards at par with the rest of the world is foundational to making African agriculture a competitive and vibrant sector that promotes trade and agribusiness. In addition, food safety is critical to the health of consumers in Africa. Whilst African Governments have been focused mostly on food production and sufficiency to ensure availability of food to their population, food safety, quality and nutrition have been mainly ignored until recent years. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 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. Food safety risks not only pose significant threats to the health of the population, but also the competitiveness of African agriculture, undermining potential and actual gains to be made in improving public health, food security and nutrition, as well as thwarting efforts at boosting trade in agricultural commodities. Such gains are the foundations of inclusive growth and sustainable development in the continent and are crucial to meet continental initiatives such as Agenda 2063 and the Malabo Declaration Commitments.

Without addressing food safety issues, Africa will not be able to effectively attain the Malabo Declaration especially in relation to Commitment #3 on ending hunger in Africa by 2025; Commitment #4 on poverty reduction; Commitment #5 on tripling intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services; and Commitment #6 on enhancing resilience of livelihoods and production systems to climate variability and related risks.

In June 2014, the African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government adopted the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agriculture Growth and Transformation for Shared prosperity and Improved Livelihoods. In January 2018, the AUC prepared an inaugural biennial Agricultural Review Report which was presented at the 30th Ordinary Session of the AUC Summit. The first Biennial Report provided a solid starting point to track progress towards attaining the Malabo Declaration. However, out of the many indicators in the Biennial Report, food safety was not adequately captured, yet, without raising food safety standards, Africa will not be able to effectively attain the Malabo Declaration. Therefore PACA and GFSP convened a side event to consult stakeholders on indicators for national and continental tracking of food safety results for possible inclusion in the 2nd biennial report.

The meeting was chaired by Lystra N. Antoine, CEO of the GFSP. The presentations made by Dr. Amare Ayalew on tracking improved food safety and Dr. Delia Grace Randolph on the GFSP food safety mapping report were received positively from participants and high level panel discussants. On the panel, Mr. David Wafula of the East African Community acknowledged the importance of raising food safety standards for a competitive African agriculture that can deliver on Malabo Declaration Commitments and the Continental Free Trade Area. He gave examples of using ongoing efforts, such as aflatoxin control as a precursor to addressing other food safety issues on the continent. Dr. Chris Muyunda, the Chairman of the Governing Council of CAADP Non State Actors Coalition highlighted food safety's tripartite effects on health, trade and agriculture and therefore called for balanced investments in the three sectors. He further endorsed the need to develop food safety indicators for inclusion in the second Malabo Biennial Report. Dr. Rose Omari of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research in Ghana pointed out the gap between research/policy and implementation. Mr. Malefetsane Nchaka, Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security in Lesotho, and Dr. Isaiah Okeyo Onyango, Director in the Ministry of Agriculture in Kenya shared lessons of on-going efforts in food safety interventions in their countries which placed food safety squarely on the agenda for inclusion in the National Agriculture Investment Plans. Participants also noted the importance of increasing awareness in order to inform consumers' decision making process in demanding safe foods. Overall, and as supported by the findings of the GFSP report, the meeting endorsed the need in Africa, for increased investments to reduce the public health burden of food borne disease, which according to the WHO, is comparable to that of HIVAIDS, Malaria or Tuberculosis.

Through the discussions, participants at the side event called for the development of food safety indicators for inclusion in the 2nd Biennial Report and agreed on a draft Roadmap for implementation.

About the Co-Conveners:

- The Global Food Partnership (GFSP) is a public-private initiative hosted at the World Bank with the goal of improving investments in food safety capacity in developing countries for both public health and economic development purposes. In parallel with increased AUC focus on food safety, the Global Food Safety Partnership (GFSP) has been conducting a study to map current donor investment in food safety capacity building in sub-Saharan Africa.

- The Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA) is a program of the African Union Commission (AUC) which provides the strategic leadership necessary on the continent to effectively mitigate the complex challenge of aflatoxin contamination of staple and cash crops. PACA was launched by Ministers of Agriculture and Ministers of Trade in 2012 and has since been supporting Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and AU Member States to address the multi-faceted developmental challenges caused by aflatoxin contamination.

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