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**DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION**

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**AUC Rallies Africa to Commemorate the 3rd World Food Safety Day**

Africa under the auspices of the African Union Commission (AUC) on Monday, June 7, joined the world to celebrate the 3rd World Food Safety Day with a virtual seminar on issues relating to food safety in the continent.

The United Nations General Assembly on 20 December 2018, proclaimed every June 7 as the World Food Safety Day (WFSD). Commemoration of the day, among others, is aimed at strengthening efforts to guarantee that the food we eat is safe, ensure that food safety is mainstreamed in the public agenda and also reduce the burden of foodborne diseases globally.

The theme for this year's celebration is "Safe food today for a healthy tomorrow".

Commemoration of the day in the continent has become more imperative because available data indicate that Africa continues to suffer the burden of unsafe food:

- According to the 2015 report of the World Health Organization, 91 million people in Africa fall ill each year by consuming unsafe, contaminated food;
- Africa represents one-third of the 400,000 global death toll for foodborne diseases although the continent accounts for only 16% of the world population; and
- A 2018 World Bank report demonstrated that unsafe food costs low and middle income countries US\$110 billion annually, from productivity loss and medical expenses alone, mostly in Sub-Saharan Africa and south and south east Asia

Commemoration of the day was therefore marked with speeches. H.E. Amb Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment, paid special tribute to all the actors in the food supply chain who continue to work tirelessly to ensure that safe and nutritious food is available to everyone.

She announced the commitment of the AUC to support in the development of a Food Safety Strategy for Africa to ensure that the continent is guided in its efforts to promote food safety in Member states.

In a speech read on her behalf, H.E. Mrs. Amira Elfadil Mohammed, Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development African Union Commission indicated that the approval of the World Food Safety by the UN General Assembly in December 2018 was a step in the right direction and required to be applauded because

unsafe food disproportionately affects the African continent.

According to her, Africa continues to be the most food insecure continent and the COVID-19 pandemic has made the situation worse by pushing more people to poverty and making it difficult to afford healthy diets for millions of Africans. She therefore called for holistic policy that would jointly address food security and food safety in the continent.

Other activities to mark the day included presentations on the following:

- The AU sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) policy framework and its role in advancing the food safety agenda in Africa and tracking food safety through the Biennia Review;
- SPS and food safety initiatives at different Regional Economic Communities (COMESA, EAC, ECCAS, ECOWAS and UMA) and the reflections from the different RECs on the far-reaching implications of the COVID-19 pandemic to food safety and regional trade in the continent; and
- Update from CODEX Committee for Africa related to the development of Africa's common positions within the global food safety context

A communique issued at the end of the occasion jointly by the organisers, stakeholders and participants among others called to action on the following:

- “• Cooperation among member states to build trust and transparency in the food regulatory environment in the continent;
- Promotion of regulatory coherence to facilitate intra-African trade in food;
- Enhancing capacity development to enable the adoption and implementation of science-based approaches to food safety management;
- Public and Private Partnerships to equip farmers, especially in the rural communities and Small and Medium Enterprises with tools for sustainable agricultural production and processing to ensure safety in the agriculture value chains;
- The need for food safety systems in Africa to undergo systemic transformation to ensure better health protection and market access;
- The need to mainstream food safety in national and regional strategies, as part of approaches to reduce inefficiencies in the food system, including embracing food safety in school feeding programs all over the continent;
- Continuous investments by Member States and Partners to improve the food safety situation in the region;
- Work together towards the goal of improving availability of reliable evidence on food safety; and
- Need for collective action, cross border cooperation, and strategic partnerships over unilateralism in addressing the food safety challenges the continent faces...” END

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