

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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African Union (AU) Aflatoxin Mitigation Efforts Extended to 12 More Countries

A capacity-building workshop on “Domesticating the AU Strategic Framework for Holistic Aflatoxin Control” was held in Lusaka, Zambia, following its endorsement as a blueprint for further aflatoxin mitigation efforts in the AU members state by the 36th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council in February 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The workshop held from 1-3 October 2023 in Lusaka, Zambia, therefore, involved stakeholders from the 12 newly selected countries for the implementation of the next phase of aflatoxin mitigation using the framework. They include Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Rwanda, Togo and Zambia, as well as those from the six successful pilot countries: Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, The Gambia, Uganda, and Senegal for knowledge and information sharing. Some members of the academia and the scientific community were in attendance.

Aflatoxins are harmful toxins that can infect agricultural products like groundnuts, maize, rice, and sorghum, and if consumed in large amounts, can lead to severe medical conditions such as cancer. The presence of aflatoxin contamination has created significant challenges for health, trade, and agriculture in Africa. Therefore, in October 2012, the African Union Executive Council endorsed the creation of the Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA) as a program to help coordinate and support efforts to manage and reduce aflatoxins in Africa.

To begin, PACA chose six countries as pilot nations: Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, The Gambia, Uganda, and Senegal. Encouraged by their success, a strategic framework called "Domesticating the AU Strategic Framework for Holistic Aflatoxin Control" was developed to further guide the implementation of aflatoxin mitigation efforts on the continent.

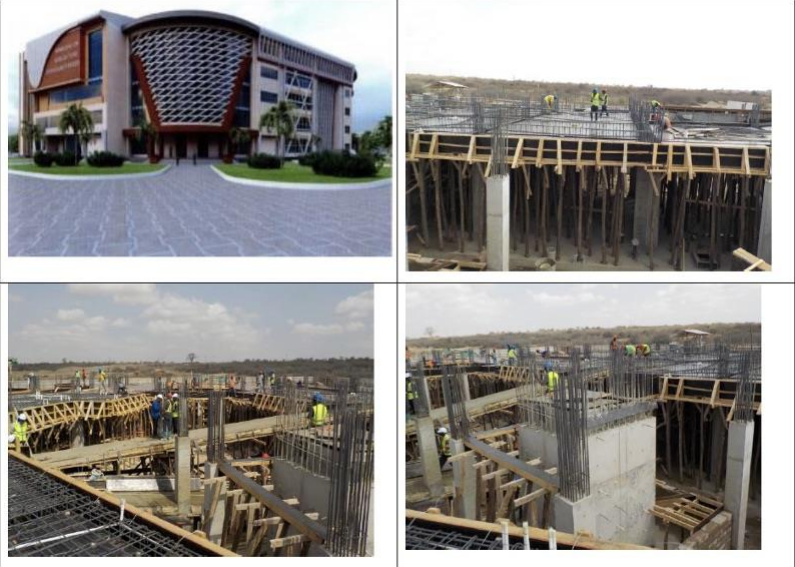
The workshop, therefore, focused on the following: The successes and challenges in implementing the country-led model – the processes of engaging country stakeholders to identify, design and implement aflatoxin mitigation efforts in a five-stage approach; identification of ways of scaling up the country-led model for aflatoxin control in all 55 AU Members State; and the development of roadmap on how to implement the framework to scale up Aflatoxin Control in the continent.

The meeting was therefore characterised by a series of presentations, panel discussions and other discourses on how the 12 new countries can successfully launch their interventions, including awareness creation, formative research, resource mobilisation, and implementation approaches based on the framework.

Mr Chiluba Mwape, an advisor on SPS (Sanitary and Phytosanitary), Africa Union Commission addressing the opening ceremony, indicated that aflatoxin mitigation has been included in the broader AU food safety strategy to ensure it receives the maximum attention.

He explained that addressing food safety, including aflatoxin, is an important requisite for achieving the ‘Malabo Commitment’ by African leaders to improve food security under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

The highlight of the meeting and also a motivator for the 12 countries was the success story of the aflatoxin mitigation efforts by Tanzania, one of the pilot countries. With technical support from PACA -AUC, Tanzania has managed to pool-fund a total of USD 35.32 million (\$20 million grant from the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program - GAFSP, \$13 million loan from the African Development Bank AfDB and \$2.32 from the government of Tanzania) to implement a five-year project, 2019-2025 dubbed; Tanzania Initiative for Preventing Aflatoxin Contamination (TANIPAC).



Construction of a Central Laboratory to aid in testing aflatoxins in Tanzania under the PACA -AUC facilitated TANIPAC Project.

According to Mr Clepin Josephat, the National Project Coordinator, the project aims to benefit 67,960 individuals. This includes 679 extension workers, 60,000 farmers, 5,000 traders, processors, transporters, and SMEs, 420 youth artisans, 200 journalists, and 1,160 leaders at both the local and central government levels.

He explained that the success of any aflatoxin initiative requires strong public awareness about aflatoxin and, more importantly, the buy-in and support of the government.

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