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NATIONAL AND TRANSBOUNDARY FOOD SAFETY EMERGENCIES

by

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tanzania wishes to congratulate and thank FAO and WHO for organizing this first Global Forum for Food Safety Regulators. We also wish to thank His Majesty, King Mohammed VI and the government of Morocco for accepting to host this very important world gathering. Indeed, we are grateful to FAO for supporting our participation in the forum.

The economy of Tanzania is based on agriculture (including animal production and fisheries) which accounts for more than 60% of the GDP. More than 80% of the population is rural based and depend entirely on agriculture for food and cash earnings.

For the last two decades, Tanzania has been carrying out micro- and macro-economic adjustments in line with globalization and market liberalization forces in the world. Such adjustments have recognized food safety as a prerequisite for national food security and for both regional and international trade in food. It is in view of this recognition that the food function in the country is in the process of re-organization to ensure food safety and quality. This paper seeks to enlighten on the current food safety and quality control functions and the proposed re-organization in the country.

2. FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY CONTROL FUNCTIONS

The Ministries of Health, Agriculture and Food Security, Natural Resources and Tourism, and Ministry of Industries and Trade carry out food safety and quality control functions in Tanzania. Laws empowering these ministries had hitherto, been considered to be adequate for monitoring and control of transboundary food safety emergencies. These laws include:

- **Food (Quality) Control Act** – empowers the Minister of Health to prepare regulations for the control of safety and quality of both locally produced and imported foods and foodstuffs. The National Food Control Commission (NFCC) established under this law, is charged with the responsibility of monitoring safety and quality of food exports and imports from and to the country, respectively.
- **The Plant Protection Act** – empowers the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security to regulate the importation and exportation of plant products to and from the country with the view of controlling diseases and pests. The Plant Protection Section in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security in collaboration with the NFCC under the Ministry of Health do issue permits for the export/importation of food products of plant origin. Such food products are inspected and certified for safety and quality at the points of entry/exit.
- **The Fisheries Act** – empowers the Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism to regulate and to ensure safety and quality of all fishery products produced and processed in the country. The Fisheries division in the very ministry collaborates with NFCC under the Ministry of Health to control and monitor the safety and quality of fishery products exported from, or imported into the country.
- **Radiation Control Act** – Under this law, a National Radiation Control Commission has been established and is charged with the function of monitoring all food products produced and/or processed in, and food products exported from or imported into the country for the presence of radioactive material.
- **Standards Act** – empowers the Minister for Industries and Trade, through the Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS), to promulgate national standards including standards for food products. These standards are used or referenced to by the sector ministries when preparing requisite legislation as stipulated under the relevant laws. TBS does also carry out product third party certification based on available compulsory national standards. Similarly, products (including foods) entering the country are monitored by TBS under a Batch Third Party Certification Scheme, again based on available compulsory national standards.
- **Tropical Pesticides Research Institute (TPRI) Act of 1979** - establishes the Tropical Pesticides Research Institute, which is responsible for registration and approval of pesticides for

use in the country. In the process of pesticides approval, TPRI takes cognizance of the toxicity rating of the pesticide in question with the view of ensuring acceptable residues levels in respective food products.

3. RE-ORGANIZATION OF THE FOOD SAFETY CONTROL FUNCTIONS IN TANZANIA.

As a result of the micro- and macro-economic adjustments made in the last two decades in line with globalization and market liberalization forces in the world, Tanzania opened its borders to both regional and international trade including trade in food and food products.

Consequently, there is now an increased national concern on the adequacy of the set-up of the current food safety and quality function. This is particularly critical in monitoring and the assurance of safety and quality of large volumes of food products entering the country through the porous border. In the aftermath of the international food emergencies like the mad cow disease outbreak in UK and the dioxin problems in Belgium, Tanzania found itself in an increasingly difficult position in control of imported foods and food products. To address these challenges, the food safety and control function is now being re-organized to make it more centralized under one Government Agency, the National Food and Drug Administration. As this process is being carried out now, we take our participation in this important world forum as being timely and educative. Experiences learnt from other countries will be very instrumental in our efforts to come up with an effective national food safety and quality control legislation. Also experiences learnt from this forum will greatly assist our country in formulating procedures for timely response to emerging transboundary emergencies.