



**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA**

Twenty-fourth Session

Virtual

5 – 9 and 13 September 2022

THE NEW FOOD SAFETY STRATEGY FOR AFRICA (FSSA), 2022 TO 2036

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(Prepared by Dr. Godfrey Bahiigwa)

Africa's development priorities are spelled out in Agenda 2063—the blueprint for the African Union's economic development in the coming decades. Agenda 2063 identifies agricultural development as a high priority, as detailed in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP). Agriculture is central to the African economy, accounting for about 40 percent of Gross Domestic Products (GDP)¹, 15% of exports and between 60 to 80 % of employment on the continent. The African agricultural and food market is expanding quickly as indicated by World Bank projections that show that the value of Africa's agriculture and agribusiness industry is expected to more than triple to reach USD 1 trillion by 2030, compared to 2010². It is therefore expected that agricultural commodities will contribute substantially to trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Africa is currently experiencing a rapid growth of the intra-African agrifood market fueled by high population growth, rapid urbanization and income growth. Intra-African food demand is projected to increase by 178% by 2050³. While these rapid transformations provide major commercial opportunities, they also present major challenges such as the management of food safety risks and related foodborne diseases. Critical and emerging issues such as climate change, antimicrobial resistance in food, new food technologies etc are likely to increase food safety risks. Antimicrobial resistance has already been observed in some of the most important foodborne pathogens such as *Campylobacter* spp., *Salmonella* spp., *Escherichia coli*, and *Enterococcus* spp. in food of animal origin⁴. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic and future pandemics will impact on how national authorities undertake routine food control functions such as inspection and audits, import and export control, market surveillance etc.

Mitigating the impacts of critical and emerging food safety issues affecting the agrifood value chain in Africa will require building resilient national food control systems through enhanced investment. Africa contributes one-third of the global death toll for foodborne diseases⁵. Mortalities and illness from consumption of unsafe food deprive the continent of valuable human resources needed to drive Africa's development Agenda 2063. Foodborne diseases further increase pressure on already strained health systems in some countries. This is why sustained investment is particularly needed to raise food safety standards to adequately manage food safety risks and assure the health of consumers.

African Union is systematically prioritizing food safety at various levels. The 40th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the AU endorsed the Food Safety Strategy for Africa (FSSA) in February 2022, with the goal of improving public health, food and nutrition security, sustainable livelihoods and economic growth in Africa.

¹ FAO Regional Conference on Africa: Intra-Africa Trade in Food and Agriculture: Issues, Challenges and Prospects in the Context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) www.fao.org/3/nc707en/nc707en.pdf

² World Bank. 2013. Growing Africa: Unlocking the potential of agribusiness. Washington, DC. 162 pp. (also available at: <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/327811467990084951/pdf/756630v10REPLA0ffrica0pub03011013web.pdf>).

³ AUC (2020). AU Sanitary and Phytosanitary Policy Framework

⁴ Mshana SE, Sindato C, Matee MI, Mboera LEG. Antimicrobial Use and Resistance in Agriculture and Food Production Systems in Africa: A Systematic Review. *Antibiotics (Basel)*. 2021 Aug 13;10(8):976. doi: 10.3390/antibiotics10080976. PMID: 34439026; PMCID: PMC8389036

⁵ FERG report: WHO estimates of the global burden of foodborne diseases (2015). https://www.who.int/foodsafety/publications/foodborne_disease/fergreport/e

The FSSA seeks to strengthen capacity of AU Member States to manage food safety risks along the food value chain through implementation of the following strategic objectives:

Strategic objective 1: Strengthen food safety policy, legal and institutional frameworks

Strategic objective 2: Strengthen the human and infrastructure capacity for food control systems

Strategic objective 3: Promote food safety culture, evidence-based advocacy, communication, information and knowledge

Strategic objective 4: Facilitate trade and market access at national, regional, continental and global levels

Strategic objective 5: Strengthen research, innovation, technology development and transfer

Strategic objective 6: Establish and strengthen coordination mechanisms and enhance cooperation and investments

The FSSA provides a continental approach to: defining guiding principles for establishing and/or implementing food safety systems in Africa based on Codex standards; reducing the foodborne disease burden on the continent based on international standards; building partnerships to develop competencies for managing food safety risks; enhancing Africa's participation in the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission to drive the harmonization of science-based food safety systems and standards in Africa; and generating data to inform food safety risk assessment and risk management.

The new FSSA, FAO and WHO food safety strategies also present a unique opportunity to synergize food safety interventions to amplify potential gains, however, this will require efficient institutional coordination. Enhanced coordination will contribute to addressing food safety challenges in a holistic, complementary and cost-effective manner.

CCAFRICA will also have a critical role to play in the implementation of the FSSA, this includes, promoting the use of Codex standards to manage food safety risks, and facilitating cooperation and mutual exchange of information on proposed regulatory initiatives to build trust and predictability in Africa's food market. The following areas will also need to be addressed:

- i. Continuously improve national food control systems using the good practices and principles adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.
- ii. Adopting a One Health approach to manage food safety risks in a holistic and systematic manner.
- iii. There is need to develop capacities of food business operators, and more specifically Micro, Small and Medium-size Enterprises (MSMEs) operating in the informal sector to adopt Good Manufacturing Practices, Good Hygienic Practices and other risk-based food safety measures.
- iv. Advocating for sustained investment in the generation, analysis and use of data for prioritization and management of food safety risks.

The momentum generated by the increasing political support and consumer awareness on food safety as well as the AfCFTA is an important driver for transforming the food safety situation in Africa. Africa can build sustainable smart partnerships to mobilize resources and investments to food safety systems that protect consumer health and facilitate trade.