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Food safety in Africa: Policy and programmatic perspectives

Boitshepo Bibi Giyose

Cornell University, USA

Food safety concerns in Africa remain a top agenda. This part is due to certain policy failures and to a large degree it is a result of poor technologies, weak programme designs and implementation. However, recently there has been a positive outlook for policy reviews, innovation, and building capacities for practitioners. Foodborne illnesses, from E. coli to listeria, threaten lives and everyone – consumers, companies and governments. And Africa is not spared. The cost of unsafe food is high. There are environmental and social costs to food production too. An estimated 600 million people, almost 1 in 10 people in the world, fall ill as a result of eating contaminated food and 420,000 die every year. In 2004, 160 countries voted at the United Nations to make food – safe food – a human right rather than a commodity, but risks to safety continue with many challenges putting strains on supply chains.

The Africa Union and AUDA-NEPAD support countries to establish harmonised standards, regulations and legislations and to adopt food safety and quality management frameworks that effectively combat food safety hazards. A recent initiative is the coming into force of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Food safety is an essential component of sustainable development and contributes to improved public health, poverty reduction, increased food security and environmental protection. Poor

food safety systems are responsible for foodborne diseases, which are an important cause of morbidity and mortality, and a significant impediment to socioeconomic development worldwide. Food safety and quality standards governing the food production and manufacturing sectors require further investments from the public and private sector.

Key words: Africa, guidelines, policies, programmes, harmonization, investments.

Biography

Boitshepo Bibi Giyose is a Senior Nutrition Officer for Policy and Programmes in the Nutrition and Food Systems Division at FAO, but currently on secondment to the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) as special advisor to the CEO since January 2018. Her work focuses on integrating and mainstreaming nutrition into agriculture and related development agendas, and to promote a multi-sector approach for addressing all forms of malnutrition. She holds a MS in International Nutrition from Cornell University, NY, and a BS in Nutrition and Dietetics from Appalachian State University, USA. She was awarded a “Distinguished Alumna Award” in recognition of exceptional professional achievement by Appalachian State University in 2007. She was also named Senior Policy Scholar in 2011 by the Global Child Nutrition Foundation – USA - for her work on Home Grown School Feeding. She has served on numerous international scientific technical and policy advisory committees.

bgiyose@gmail.com

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