

Value of national studies on burden of foodborne diseases in food safety risk management: Regional perspective

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Partnership
for Aflatoxin
Control in Africa

Partenariat pour
la lutte contre
l'aflatoxine en Afrique

Parceria para o
Controle da
Aflatoxina em África

الشراكة من أجل مكافحة
الافلاتوكسين في أفريقيا

Background

- Ensuring safe food for all is arguably one of the key public health challenges of our time throughout the world
- Africa is disproportionately impacted by unsafe food
 - Africa bears one-third of the 420,000 global death toll for foodborne diseases (WHO, 2015) with just 16% of the world population
 - An example from the trade impact shows that Africa's share to world peanut exports has declined from 77% in 1960s to less than 4% in the 2000s mainly due to difficulty in meeting aflatoxin limits and unfavorable policies earning USD 64 Million per year instead of estimated USD 2 billion



The famous groundnut 'pyramids' of West Africa in the 1960s

Embracing risk-based approaches crucial to elevate food safety in Africa using the limited resources

- Countries should build the requisite capacity to generate quality and timely data for science- and risk-based approaches
- If so, LMIC will benefit the most from such approaches:
 - Allow rational approaches in allocating meagre resources
 - Allow focusing on the biggest risk and the biggest potential impact in reducing risks, eventually markedly reducing burden of disease and trade violations
 - Compelling evidence will increase political buy-in and policy and decision makers support

Evidence is critical at every step of the risk management framework

1. Preliminary risk management activities, beginning with risk profiling
2. Evaluation of risk management options, which could involve cost-benefit analysis
3. Implementation of the risk management decision, usually involving but not limited to regulatory food safety measures
4. Monitoring and review, collecting and analyzing data to assess performance of risk management

RMF source: Food safety risk analysis (FAO/WHO, 2006)

Reporting on the Africa Food Safety Index data show paucity of data, especially on public health and trade outcomes

Indicator	Parameter	Countries reported (N=55)
Food Safety Systems Indicator	Legal, policy and institutional frameworks	48
	Monitoring and surveillance programs	48
	Lab infrastructure, analytical capacity and lab performance	46
	Programs to facilitate compliance to standards	46
Food safety health indicator	Rate of reduction in food borne diarrheal diseases	26
	Rate of reduction in diarrheal mortality in children under 5	12
	Rate of reduction in liver cancer cases caused by dietary exposure to aflatoxin	13
Food safety trade indicator	Rate of reduction in unit rejection of food commodities due to food safety violation (non-compliance) disaggregated by type of violation	8-11

African countries need to invest significantly more in food safety data: Why?

- Most cases of food-borne disease in the region are not reported or investigated, so the true extent of the burden is unknown
- There is a need to generate home-grown evidence relevant to the local context – e.g. the large informal markets (aligned to global efforts!)
- Governments will be forced to use the risk assessments carried out at global level in their food safety decision-making
- Global estimates of underreporting create uncertainty in burden of illness reports and could be potentially misleading:
 - e.g. the DALYs for chemicals in WHO 2015 report considered as “tip-of-the-iceberg in terms of foodborne chemicals and their impact on the global burden of disease”.
 - “The global liver cancer envelope may be underestimated, particularly in Africa, leading to underestimation of the aflatoxin attributable incidence” (WHO, 2015) – yet such data are widely cited and could be used by policy makers

Approaches to sustainable data collection in Africa

- Undertaking national studies to determine burden of foodborne disease, crucial for country, regional and global level efforts
- Progressively build national monitoring and surveillance programs
- Finance academia to undertake epidemiological studies
- *Build manpower, analytical infrastructure*
- Strengthen the Africa Food Safety Index
- Attempt to harmonize approaches through the Africa Continental Free Trade Area following international best practices
- Set up a regional risk assessment center that will conduct risk assessments required by national governments, which could help in identifying and filling data gaps
- Work with partners in capacity building and commissioning specific tasks such as risk profiles, risk assessment while long term initiatives should be country-owned (for sustainability)
- International obligation to report on foodborne disease could create incentive
- Better coordination and information and knowledge sharing

Main messages

- Generation of reliable data through national studies on burden of foodborne disease will enhance its understanding and development of risk based management of priority food safety challenges
- Improving food safety systems including data has short and long-term costs but will be rewarding to countries in better achieving food safety management system objectives (public health and trade)
- Integrating data generation and coordination in government and regional frameworks is useful for fast tracking and sustainability

The logo of the African Union is centered in the background. It features a map of the African continent in orange, surrounded by a green laurel wreath. Below the wreath is a red banner with the word 'AFRICANA' in white capital letters. The entire logo is set against a white background that is part of a larger design with green and yellow curved shapes.

Thank you