

African Union



الهيئة القومية لسلامة الغذاء
National Food Safety Authority

High Level Senior Food Regulators Meeting of African Food Competent Authorities

*Towards Collaborative African Food Regulatory Frameworks,
Supporting the Implementation of the Africa Food Safety Strategy (AFSS)*

SUMMARY REPORT



African Food Regulatory Authorities Forum (AFRAF)
Inaugural Meeting: 11-13 October 2023
St-Regis Al-Masa, New Administrative Capital, Cairo, Egypt

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The African Food Regulatory Authorities Forum (AFRAF) was created by the African Union Commission (AUC), in partnership with the National Food Safety Authority (NFSA) of Egypt.

The inaugural meeting was organized in partnership with:

MI Engineering, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Chamber of Food Industries, Food Export Council (FEC) Egypt, Agricultural Export Council (AEC), Venture 37, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Feed the Future, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Health Organization (WHO), World Food Programme (WFP), Université Laval, Food Risk Analysis and Regulatory Excellence Platform (PARERA), Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GForSS), International Union of Food Science and Technology (IUFoST), Konzept.

1. Background and Rationale

Food safety and nutrition are key determinants of health and human development. Food regulatory decisions have far-reaching implications on the health, agriculture and trade agendas of any given country, both domestically and at the international level.

Africa's contribution to the global food and agrifood supply is increasingly important, considering the important water and land resources afforded by the continent. African countries are demonstrating increasing commitment to modernizing and further enhancing their agricultural output and their food and agrifood production, with opportunities of development that can have important positive impacts on the economies of African countries and the continent.

Producing safe and nutritious food for Africa's population and increasing intra-regional trade of food and agrifood products within the African continent were also identified as some of the objectives pursued by the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) launched in 2021.

In recent years, African leaders have prioritized actions in relation to food safety and SPS matters in an effort to address some of the public health and economic challenges. Several discussions have taken place on the possibility of establishing a unified food safety agency for the continent, sharing a common SPS policy framework and with the dual objectives of harmonizing SPS measures and supporting a common approach to food safety capacity building across the African continent.

Many changes are being witnessed in the African food safety regulatory context, with the development of new food competent authorities and agencies entrusted with the overall food safety regulatory mandate, such as the creation of the Food Safety and Quality Authority of the Gambia, the National Food Safety Agency of the Arab Republic of Egypt (NFSA) and similar agencies established in Nigeria, Ghana, and Mauritania.

These changes, along with efforts of coordination and food regulatory convergence led by African Regional Economic Communities (RECs), such as ECOWAS and EAC, would benefit from the creation of a favourable collaborative environment between African food regulators, through the development of an **African Food Regulatory Authorities Forum (AFRAF)**, under the leadership of the African Union Commission, its specialized departments and in partnership with the RECs.

This direction is further supported by the outputs of **36th Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government**, held on 18-19 February 2023 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia identifying the priority of the year as being **“Accelerating the Implementation of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area”** and highlighting the importance of the food and agrifood sector in the intra-continental trade.

The potential for growth of this segment of intra-continental trade is estimated to be exponential and needs to be further driven by **enhanced alignment of African food regulatory frameworks, which requires the development of the relevant forum for Dialogue and collaboration between African Food Regulators.**

Recognizing that collaboration between food competent authorities is imperative to address an increasingly complex and interdependent health, food production and food trade environment, food competent authorities in Africa supported by international partners, decided to convene a network of African food competent authorities **at the heads of authority level**, with the aim to facilitate **engagement and discussions amongst leaders of African food regulatory authorities.**

This network will be known as the **African Food Regulatory Authorities Forum** or **AFRAF**.

2. Objectives of the AFRAF

The AFRAF aims to:

- ❖ Serve as an information exchange, experience sharing and collaboration development Forum, between food competent authorities of countries of the African Union, joining the Forum.
- ❖ Shape an agenda of collaborative initiatives to contribute to the development of a path forward for **African food regulatory harmonization** and integration as part of the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and to address common challenges faced by African food competent authorities and the food and agri-food production sector.
- ❖ Contribute to the delivery of **commitments of the Food Safety Strategy for Africa (FSSA) - 2022-2036**, through supporting the operation of a science-based and efficient food regulatory environment in Africa leading to delivering *“safer agrifood value chains across the continent, reduced foodborne disease burden in Africa, improved*

competitiveness of Africa's food commodities for increased intra-African and global trade."

- ❖ Develop a **foundation for the governance structure** of the soon to be established African Food Safety Agency (AFSA).

3. Inaugural Meeting of AFRAF: Participants and Delegations

The first meeting of AFRAF gathered over 200 participants from the Arab Republic of Egypt, Africa and around the world:

- ❖ 55 participants from food regulatory agencies, representing 38 African countries.
- ❖ 10 participants representing the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and African Organizations.
- ❖ 20 participants from 6 organizations of the United Nations, working in areas pertaining to food safety and food security, namely:
 - The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).
 - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).
 - The World Health Organization (WHO).
 - The World Food Program (WFP).
 - The Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), hosted by the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- ❖ 8 non-African countries were represented at the Forum:
 - Australia.
 - Germany.
 - Lebanon.
 - The Netherlands.
 - The Sultanate of Oman.
 - Portugal.
 - The United Kingdom.
 - The United States of America (USA).

4. Key Interventions and Meeting Outputs

The meeting's opening Ceremony showcased an important level of mobilization with respect to country representatives and international organizations supporting the creation of the Forum, including cooperation from African food regulators. Some highlights include:

- ❖ Mr. Ali Badarneh, Chief of Food Security and Food Systems Unit at UNIDO expressed the need to use non-traditional regulatory approaches to address food safety and called on development partners and UN agencies to have a coordinated approach in supporting Africa regarding food safety reformation in the continent.
- ❖ Dr. Eva Al-Zein, Representative of the World Health Organization (WHO), recognized the public health impact of consuming unsafe food, stating that approximately 33 million years of life are lost due to consuming contaminated food. She called for modern regulatory approaches and structured management system(s) for enhanced food safety. She reminded the meeting of the Global Food Safety Strategy which exists and compliments the Africa Food Safety Strategy which should be implemented in the region.
- ❖ Mr. Melvin Spreij, Head of the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), World Trade Organization (WTO), highlighted the need to develop enablers of safe food trade in Africa, which would contribute to protecting health, to stimulating economic development, to reducing poverty and to enhancing food security.
- ❖ Speaking on behalf of Ms. Kate Newton, Deputy Regional Director, Middle East, North-Africa and Eastern Europe, World Food Program (WFP), Mr. Fernando Ubarana (Food Safety and Quality Assurance Officer, WFP), emphasized the importance of addressing food safety for regional markets and of enhancing regional and intra-African procurement of safe food for global food programs.
- ❖ Mr. Abdul Hakim Elwaer, Assistant Director General and Regional Representative, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), recognized the efforts deployed by the African Union (AU) in addressing food safety through the AU's Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA), the Food Safety Strategy for Africa and the SPS Strategy for Africa. He encouraged participants to propose recommendations that could be translated into initiatives for improving food safety in Africa and neighbouring regions.

- ❖ Dr. José Emilio Esteban, Under Secretary for Food Safety, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), recognized how the inaugural meeting of AFRAF was a unique opportunity to enhance collaboration in the region's food regulatory space. Dr. Esteban stressed the need to rely on 3 key principles that will contribute to enhancing food safety in Africa: (1) innovation - with the development of standards that “take us to the future”; (2) science - through establishing science-based regulations that help ensure food regulatory decisions are robust and transparent “in how data is collected and interpreted”, and (3) accountability - in developing and implementing food regulatory decisions.

The two hosts of the AFRAF, Her Excellency Ambassador Josefa Sacko, the African Union Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment (ARBE), and Dr. Tareq El-Houby, Chairman of the Board of the National Food Safety Agency (NFSA), Arab Republic of Egypt welcomed participants to the Forum and officially opened the inaugural meeting of AFRAF, with the following notable calls for action:

- ❖ The Forum be a key foundation of the food safety regulatory development pyramid in Africa, as stated by Dr. El-Houby.
- ❖ AFRAF be a vehicle of active transformation of food regulation in Africa by setting a course for future collaborative action, both within Africa and globally, helping to address food safety concerns.
- ❖ AFRAF acts as the General Assembly of the soon to be operationalized African Food Safety Agency (AFSA), as stated by Amb. Sacko.
- ❖ Take advantage of the opportunities outlined in the meeting agenda ([Annex 1](#)), to:
 - Take stock of priorities, challenges, and opportunities of food regulatory authorities in Africa, including the review of the AU Commission's efforts to bolster food safety interventions in the continent through various initiatives, such as the Food Safety Strategy for Africa and the creation of the African Food Safety Agency.
 - Deliberate on efforts of harmonization of food regulatory measures across the continent, particularly through the review of particular interventions being implemented by Regional Economic Communities, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

- Share the perspectives of representatives of the agri-food sector on the food regulatory landscape, with the review of impediments to trade and avenues to alleviate such market access limitations for intra-African Trade.
- Identify capacity building needs and discuss opportunities to address these needs through collaboration with regional and international partners contributing to the discussions.
- Share modernized approaches to food control, such as the reliance on Voluntary Third-Party Assessments (vTPA) and the possible use of remote audit and certification frameworks as part of the development, modernization and deployment of food regulatory requirements in Africa, in a manner that supports improving risk-based inspection, targeting and optimization of food regulatory resources.
- Review lessons learnt and experiences of food regulators from other parts of the world, present at the forum, and discuss opportunities for future collaborations.
- Reiterate the commitment to the operationalization of the African Food Safety Agency, as a key component of the food safety governance structure in the continent.
- Develop a path forward for the operationalization of the African Food Regulatory Forum with the discussion of its proposed charter and conditions of operations.

A questionnaire ([Annex 2](#)) was developed to obtain feedback from participants in the forum on their expectations vis a vis AFRAF and how it can contribute to enhancing food regulatory cooperation in Africa.

Approximately 60% of registered participants responded to the survey representing 70% of African countries present at the meeting. These respondents represented food regulatory authorities that exercised their regulatory oversight as part of a single food agency system (33%) or as part of a multi-agency system (66%).

Respondents indicated that they expected AFRAF to:

- ❖ Strengthen food safety awareness amongst policy makers in African countries.
- ❖ Support networking and collaboration amongst African food regulators.
- ❖ Support discussions and recommendations related to policy development.
- ❖ Enable to share experiences between food regulatory authorities.

- ❖ Foster harmonization of food regulatory frameworks at the level of the African continent.
- ❖ Offer solutions to common challenges and issues related to food safety and regulations.

Respondents also commented on their expectations that the operationalization of the African Food Safety Agency will contribute to:

- ❖ Enhancing capacity building and training of food producers and regulatory bodies in Africa in areas related to food safety.
- ❖ Helping Africa align with global food safety standards and to streamline regulatory processes.
- ❖ Collaborating with other organizations and technical working groups within Africa.
- ❖ Identifying priorities, challenges and opportunities for food regulatory authorities to help resolve common food safety issues.
- ❖ Trade facilitation of food and agri-food products, within Africa and with international markets.

Finally, the meeting witnessed:

- ❖ The launch of the the voluntary Third Party Assurance (vTPA) Programme Assessment Tool, by UNIDO, a tool aimed to provide guidance to implement the Codex Guidelines on the use of vTPA, which will greatly benefit pilot projects in Mali, Rwanda, Senegal and Uganda.
- ❖ The signature of the Memorandum of Understanding between the FAO and the Arab Republic of Egypt, to implement assessment of the food control and plant protection systems through support of EU-funded SPS for Africa Project, being implemented by FAO and the African Union.

5. Conclusion of the Inaugural Meeting of the AFRAF and Next Steps:

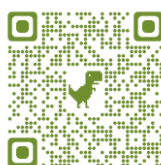
African regulators present at the inaugural meeting of AFRAF:

- ❖ **Adopted** the Cairo “Declaration” establishing the Africa Food Regulatory Authorities Forum ([Annex 3](#)).
- ❖ **Discussed** initial input to a draft charter, aimed to support the governance of the membership and operations of the of the AFRAF **and Agreed** to further discuss this Charter until its adoption at a future virtual meeting of the AFRAF.
- ❖ **Recommended to** use the African Food Regulatory Authorities Forum (AFRAF) as an engine to foster the development of food regulatory cooperation between food regulators in Africa.
- ❖ **Supported** the operationalization of the Africa Food Safety Agency offering the scientific support and expert advice needed to existing SPS coordination mechanisms currently underway under the auspices of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) of Africa.
- ❖ **Requested** the African Union Commission support Member States to fully operationalize AFRAF and AFSA without further delays.

ANNEX 1: Inaugural Meeting of AFRAF – Agenda



Inaugural Meeting of the African Food Regulatory Authorities Forum



MEETING AGENDA

11-13 October 2023

DAY 1: WEDNESDAY 11 OCTOBER 2023

A. Official Opening of the Forum

B. Taking Stock of African Food Regulatory Collaboration – Current Status and Future Perspectives

9:00-10:00 Registration and Coffee

10:00-11:00 Ceremonial Opening

Welcoming Remarks by:

- *Dr. Tareq El- Houby, Chairman of the Board / Meeting Host, National Food Safety Agency (NFSA), Arab Republic of Egypt*
- *Mr. Ali Badarneh, Chief of Food Security and Food Systems Unit, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)*
- *Dr. Eva Al-Zein, Representative of the World Health Organization (WHO)*
- *Mr. Melvin Spreij, Head of the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), World Trade Organization (WTO)*
- *Ms. Kate Newton, Deputy Regional Director, Middle East, North-Africa and Eastern Europe, World Food Program (WFP)*
- *Mr. AbdulHakim Elwaer, Assistant Director General and Regional Representative, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)*
- *Dr. José Emilio Esteban, Under Secretary for Food Safety, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)*
- *H.E Amb. Josefa Sacko, Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment, African Union Commission (AUC)*
- *Official Statement from the Senior Official of the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt*

The Ceremonial Opening will be adapted according to Protocol Requirements adopted by the Arab Republic of Egypt, host country, and the AUC.

11:00-12:30 Media Briefing and Coffee Break

- Senior Officials Leave
- Media Briefing
- Health Break

12:30-13:00 Introduction of the Forum, its Rationale and Goals

- *Dr. Tareq Al-Houby, Chairman of the Board / Meeting Host, NFSA, Arab Republic of Egypt*

13:00-13:30 Technical Session 1a: Keynote Address

- **Presentation 1:** Priorities, Challenges and Opportunities of Food Regulatory Authorities in Africa
 - *Prof. Samuel Godefroy, Université Laval; Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GForSS) / International Union of Food Science and Technology (IUFoST)*

13:30-14:30 Technical Session 1b: Scene Setting

- **Presentation 2:** A strategic partnership to advance food safety in Africa
 - *Dr. Blaise Ouattara, Food Safety and Quality Officer, FAO Regional Office for Africa*
- **Presentation 3:** Overview of the Food Safety Strategy for Africa and Introducing the African Food Safety Agency (AFSA): Expected Roles and Interaction with African Food Regulators
 - *Dr. Amare Ayalew, AUC*
- **Facilitated Plenary Discussions / Questions and Answers**
 - **Moderator: Dr. Doreen Sakala, Ministry of Health Zambia**
The discussion aims to help identify initial foundational requirements for AFSA to be operationalized that may be facilitated by the creation of AFRAF

14:30-15:30 Lunch

15:30-16:30 Technical Session 2: Review of Current Collaborative Food Safety Regulatory Agenda at Continental and Regional Level

- **Presentation 4:** Efforts of Harmonization of Food Regulatory Measures Across the Continent
 - *Dr. Liliane Kamanzi, African Organisation for Standardization (ARSO)*
 - *Dr. Hakim Mufumbiro, CCAFRICA Coordinator, CCAFRICA*

16:30-17:00 Wrap Up

Summary of the Day's Discussions and Review of Day 2 Agenda

- *Prof. Samuel Godefroy, Université Laval; GForSS/IUFoST*

18:00-22:00 Gala Dinner and Nile Cruise – Maxim Boat – Meeting Point: Hotel Lobby

DAY 2: THURSDAY, 12 OCTOBER 2023

A. Challenges and Opportunities Related to the Modernization and Integration of African Food Regulatory Frameworks

B. Reviewing the Outcomes of the Vienna Food Safety Forum – UNIDO

9:00-10:00 Introduction of Participants:

Participants from the different food regulatory authorities will be asked to introduce themselves, the organization they represent and its food regulatory mandate

10:00-10:30 ■ **Panel Discussion:** Status of Food regulatory cooperation and future perspectives of development

➤ **Facilitator: Dr. Lusubilo Mwamakamba, WHO**

- Dr. Gabor Molnar, UNIDO
- Dr. Benoit Gnonlonfin, ECOWAS Secretariat
- Dr. Hakim Mufumbiro, CCAFRICA Coordinator
- Dr. Blaise Ouattara, FAO
- Dr. Amare Ayalew, AUC
- Dr. Mary Muerthi, WFP

■ **Facilitated Plenary Discussions / Questions and Answers**

This discussion aims to review current status of food regulatory cooperation and integration of food regulatory frameworks being implemented in Africa. It should lead to identify needs and areas of support / investment that can be facilitated by the creation of the African Food Regulatory Authorities Forum and the operationalization of AFSA.

Representatives of international organizations and Pan-African organizations will share their current and future initiatives to further bolster efforts of food regulatory integration in Africa.

10:30-11:00 Coffee Break

11:00-12:00 **Technical Session 3a: View from the Food and Agrifood Sector – A Panel Discussion**

➤ **Moderator: Eng. Khaled Shedeed, Deputy Chief of Party, TAIB Project-USDA**

This session will feature short presentations from representatives of the food and agri-food production sector in Africa as well as representatives of the World Food Program, to review and document the challenges and impediments faced by the production sector to access African markets, resulting from regulatory / technical barriers, as well avenues to address such challenges.

Panel Discussion

- Reviewing impediments to intra-regional trade in Regional Economic Communities of the African Continent
 - Dr. Benoit Gnonlonfin, ECOWAS-US AID
- Facilitating regional/international trade in agri-food commodities to Support Economic Development and Food Security
 - Mr. Melvin Spreij, Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF)

- View from the Industry - Egyptian Experience in Accessing African markets, Challenges and possible enablers
 - *Eng. Ashraf El Gazayerli, President of the Egyptian Chamber of Food Industries*
 - *Eng. Hani Berzi, Chairman of the Egyptian Food Export Council*
 - *Eng. Abdelhamid Damardesh, Member of the Egyptian Senate and President of the Egyptian Agriculture Export Council*
- Impediments faced by WFP in the movement of food and agri-food commodities to address food security challenges, resulting from regulatory barriers and limited access to quality infrastructure – Discussion of challenges in developing food safety requirements for the movements of products supporting food aid programs
 - *Mr. Fernando Ubarana, Food Safety and Quality Advisor, Regional Bureau, WFP*

12:00-13:00 Technical Session 3b: Investing in Capacities and Competencies to Upgrade the Performance of the AgriFood Production Sector and Food Regulatory Oversight in Africa

- **Presentation 5**
 - *Prof. Charles Aworh, President, International Academy of Food Science and Technology, University of Ibadan Nigeria*
- **Presentation 6:** Developing & maintaining laboratory infrastructure and testing standards to supporting African food regulatory authorities
 - *Dr. Owen Fraser, AOAC INTERNATIONAL, Past President AOAC Africa Section*

13:00-14:00 Lunch

14:00-15:30 Technical Session 4: Promoting a Food Regulatory Collaborative Agenda of African Food Regulatory Authorities

➤ **Moderator: FAO**

- **Presentation 7:** Assessments of national food control systems in Africa as a basis to improve the collaborative food safety agenda across and within countries.
 - *Dr. Catherine Bessy, Senior Food Safety Officer, Food Systems and Food Safety Division, FAO*
- Panel Discussion: Setting up strategic agenda to improve the delivery of food control services
 - **Facilitator: Dr. Saber Mansour, Food Safety Officer, FAO, Dr. Jean Kamanzi, FAO**

The Panel discussion will explore different strategies and approaches implemented by countries to improve the effectiveness of their national food control systems. The discussion should lead to recommendations in terms of successful approaches supporting sustainable improvement of national food control systems.

It should also lead to some recommendations as to what national regulators may require in term of support from Continental structures, such as AFRAF and AFSA to further enable their food regulatory functions.

15:30-16:30 Technical Session 5: Modernizing African Food Regulatory Regimes – Mainstreaming Voluntary Third-Party Assurance (vTPA) Programs in African Food Regulatory Systems

➤ **Facilitator: Dr. Gabor Molnar, UNIDO, Industrial Development Expert**

- Panel discussion on the uptake of vTPA in Africa and beyond
 - Mr. Cor Groenveld, Former Market Development Director, FSSC Foundation and UNIDO consultant
 - Dr. Mike O'Neill, Head of Codex Policy, UK Food Standards Agency, United Kingdom
 - Dr. Mahmoud Camara, Head of Codex, Codex Focal Point, National Food Safety Agency, Mali
 - Mr. Melvin Spreij, Head of the Standards and Trade Development Facility
 - Dr. Benoit Gnonlonfin, Senior SPS Coordinator, ECOWAS-USAID

*The Panel discussion will review experiences underway to mainstream the application of vTPA in African food regulatory regimes, including the development and uptake of the relevant food safety assurance schemes needed **by the African food production sector** that may contribute to facilitating intra-continental Trade.*

It should lead to some recommendations as to how such experiences can be leveraged to enable better integration of vTPA in African food regulatory regimes, supporting effective food safety conformity assessment.

- **Launch of the vTPA Assessment Tool**

16:30-17:00 Coffee Break

17:00-17:45 Technical Session 5: Modernizing African Food Regulatory Regimes – Continued

Introducing Remote audits and inspection in food conformity assessment

➤ **Moderator: Dr. Gabor Molnar, UNIDO Industrial Development Expert**

- **Presentation 8:** Codex Alimentarius Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems - Developing guidance on the use of remote audit and verification in regulatory frameworks

➤ Dr. Glen Edmunds, Australia

This session aims to review the progress of the development of the Codex text on remote audit and inspection and seek initial input from African food regulators to ensure its suitability to address the African Context.

This technical session will include a short presentation from the representative of the Chair of the Codex Committee on Food Import Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS), followed by a period of questions and discussions.

17:45-18:15 Reviewing a Proposed Charter for the African Food Regulatory Forum – Collective Discussion

18:15 Adjournment

19:00 Official Dinner

During the dinner participants may be called upon to further discuss some recent changes to their food regulatory frameworks, and how they see the role of AFSA and of the AFRAF in supporting their intervention

➤ **Moderators: Dr. Wezi Chunga-Sambo, AUC and Prof. Samuel Godefroy, GFORSS / IUFOST**

DAY 3: FRIDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2023

Technical Session 6: Reviewing the Development of the African Food Safety Governance in the Global Context

This session will include the participation of international regulators beyond the African continent.

It will aim to support the strengthening of the food safety governance in Africa, with the addition of AFRAF as an enabler of this enhanced governance, contributing to the development and operationalization of the African Food Safety Agency.

Contribution of partner organizations from around the world will be reviewed with a strong emphasis on support of the development of capacities and competencies that may enable AFSA as an engine that drives evidence-based food regulatory decision making. The ultimate objective is to align these decisions across the African continent with the expected results on removal of impediments to intra-continental trade and support to food regulatory harmonization across Africa and beyond.

9:00-10:00 Introduction of International Food Regulators

➤ **Moderator: Dr. Amare Ayalew, AUC**

■ **Introductory Remarks**

➤ *Mr. Raj Rajasekar, Vice Chair of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), Representing the Chair of CAC*

■ **Introductory Remarks from Representatives of International Food Regulators:**

➤ *Dr. Donna Bennett, Regional Agriculture Counselor for the MENA Region, Government of Australia*

➤ *Dr. Mary Frances Lowe, United States Codex Office, US Department of Agriculture, United States*

➤ *Prof. Dr. Tanja Schwerdtle, Federal Institute for Risk Assessment, Germany*

➤ *Mr. José Pedro Vieira, Head of the International Relations Department, Economic and Food Safety Authority, Portugal*

➤ *Dr. Tycho Vermeulen, Agricultural Counsellor to Egypt and Jordan, Kingdom of the Netherlands*

10:00- 11:30 Plenary Discussion: Updates on Major Changes in Food Regulatory Oversight and Addressing the Needs of Building a Strong and Cohesive Food Regulatory Oversight in Africa

■ **Introductory Review of the Vienna Food Safety Forum**

➤ *Dr. Gabor Molnar, Food Safety Technical Lead, UNIDO*

■ **Open forum to engage with African food regulators**

➤ **Moderators: Dr. Wezi Chunga-Sambo, AUC and Prof. Samuel Godefroy, GForSS / IUFoST**

Discussions will focus on:

- A. Recent changes to their food regulatory frameworks, and how they see the role of AFSA and of the AFRAF in supporting their intervention.

- B. The needs associated with the operationalization of the African Food Safety Agency and how international regulators can play a leading role in supporting such operationalization.

The discussion will also serve to review and share experiences witnessed in other parts of the world that can be useful to enhancing the food safety governance structure in Africa.

This session begins with a review of the outcomes of the Vienna Food Safety Forum, convened by UNIDO in 2022 and which discussed various avenues of collaboration to promote food safety capacity building throughout the continent and beyond and conclude with a Facilitated Open Discussion between African and International Regulators on the topic of Opportunities of enhanced collaboration between African and International Regulators.

11:30-12:00 Coffee Break

12:00-12:45 Adopting the Path Forward for Future Collaborative Action in Africa and Globally

- Charter and Modus Operandi for an African Food Regulatory Authorities Forum
- Review of the Cairo Declaration “Advancing Integration of Food Regulatory Systems in Africa with Enhanced Collaborative Mechanisms: AFRAF and AFSA”
 - *Dr. Amare Ayalew, AUC and Prof. Samuel Godefroy, Université Laval, GForSS/IUFoST*

12:45-13:45 Friday Prayer

14:00-15:00 Closing Ceremony

Official Closing Remarks

- *Dr. Amare Ayalew, AUC*
- *International Organizations: UNIDO / WFP / FAO / WHO*
- *Dr. Tareq Al-Houby, Chairman of the Board / Meeting Host, NFSA, Arab Republic of Egypt*

15:00 Forum Adjournment followed by Lunch

Afternoon Activity Organized for Participants from African Countries – in Nearby Area

ANNEX 2: Participant Questionnaire

Participant Questionnaire

****Please complete and submit the form below – your input is vital to help inform meeting discussions and contribute to the Forum's success – thank you for your cooperation!***

The organization of the African Food Regulatory Authorities Forum (AFRAF) presents an exceptional opportunity to gather updated information and map the diverse structures responsible for providing food regulatory oversight in Africa. Each participant is requested to share an update on the food regulatory oversight exercised in your country – to the best of your knowledge – with particular focus on your own organization. Thank you for your support!

GENERAL PARTICIPANT DETAILS

A. Country *

B. Food Regulatory/Competent Authority *

C. Name of Representative

First

Last

QUESTIONS

D. Describe briefly the authority / oversight of the organization you represent (for example: Who is responsible for standard setting and regulatory development in relation to commodities or horizontal standards? Who is responsible for enforcement, including inspection and compliance verification?). *

E. Identify the legislation that provides the authority, with the level of empowerment, to act in your area of oversight. *

F. Identify and briefly describe other entities in your country, with which your jurisdiction shares oversight, as part of the food regulatory mandate. Please summarize their mandate. *

G. Describe the latest developments / transformations / changes witnessed in your country's food regulatory oversight (for example: new laws, new regulations, new organizational structure, etc.) *

H. What do you hope the creation of AFRAF will accomplish? And, what aspirations do you have by participating in AFRAF? *

I. Indicate how you see the possible creation of the African Food Safety Agency will contribute in addressing your needs / the needs of your food regulatory authority? *

ANNEX 3: The Cairo Declaration



High Level Senior Food Regulators Meeting of African Food Competent Authorities

The Cairo Declaration

Agreed in Cairo, 13 October 2023

Promoting Collaborative African Food Regulatory Frameworks to support the Implementation of the Food Safety Strategy for Africa 2022-36, and the Operationalization of the African Food Safety Agency (AFSA).

African countries are demonstrating increasing commitment to modernizing and further enhancing their agricultural output and their food and agrifood production, with opportunities of development that can have important positive impacts on the economies of African countries and the continent.

The potential for growth of intra-continental trade of food and agrifood products is estimated to be exponential and needs to be further driven by enhanced alignment of African food regulatory frameworks, which requires the development of the relevant forum for Dialogue and collaboration between African food regulators

The representatives of the African food regulatory authorities undersigned, with the leadership of the African Union Commission, and with the support of international partners, gathered at the inaugural meeting of the African Food Regulatory Authorities Forum (AFRAF), convened in Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt from 11-13 October 2023:

Acknowledge the imperative of developing a sustainable mechanism of collaboration between food competent authorities in Africa, to address an increasingly complex and interdependent health, food production and food trade environment, and

Commit to create a network of African food competent authorities at the heads of authority level, known as the African Food Regulatory Authorities Forum or AFRAF with the aim to:

Serve as an information exchange, experience sharing and collaboration development Forum, between food competent authorities of member states of the African Union,

Shape an agenda of collaborative initiatives to contribute to the development of a path forward for African food regulatory harmonization and integration as part of the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and to address common challenges faced by African food competent authorities and the food and agrifood production sector,

Contribute to the delivery of commitments of the Food Safety Strategy for Africa (FSSA) - 2022-2036, through supporting the operation of a science-based and efficient food regulatory environment in Africa,

Act as the General Assembly of the soon to be operationalized African Food Safety Agency (AFSA).

The Regulators gathered in Cairo, agreed to work towards the adoption of a Charter governing the membership and operations of the AFRAF and to use this mechanism as an engine to foster the development of food regulatory cooperation between food regulators in Africa, in a manner that supports the operationalization of AFSA and is complementary to SPS coordination efforts carried out under the auspices of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) of Africa.



SIGNATORY COUNTRIES

Benin
Cameroon
Comoros
Djibouti
The Gambia
Lesotho
Madagascar
Mauritius
Namibia
Seychelles
South Sudan
Togo

Algeria
Botswana
Cabo verde
Côte d'Ivoire
Eswatini
Ghana
Liberia
Malawi
Morocco
Nigeria
Sierra Leone
Sudan
Tunisia

Angola
Burundi
Chad
Democratic Republic of Congo
Ethiopia
Kenya
Libya
Mauritania
Mozambique
Senegal
South Africa
Tanzania
Zambia