Systems Approaches to Food Safety and Plant Health

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Background

• Aflatoxins are regionally important to East African Community (EAC) countries.
  • Widespread and important food safety concern.
  • Recognized and growing regional trade barrier.
  • Directly relevant to millions of small farmers and urban consumers.

• Implementation of EAC harmonized standards has been difficult.
  • Reliance on expensive tests distant from where aflatoxin problems begin.
  • Current controls both inefficient and ineffective.
  • Rejected food still ends up in the food chain.
  • Little incentive for farmers and upstream traders to improve.
Advances in technology have potential to greatly simplify aflatoxin analysis

• Lateral flow test strips are precise and with innovations in information and communications technology (ICT) can now be used reliably in the field.

• UV light boxes can be an even easier way to monitor for aflatoxins and, together with other tools, may help make better-informed buying decisions.

*Deployed systematically, could these technologies be used with other management practices to simplify regional trade and send improved market signals?*
Key elements of a systems approach

• Mutually recognized regulatory approach based on systematic use of field tests and good management practices.
  • UV light boxes that help send immediate market signals to farmers.
  • Test strips and mobile readers during assembly and storage.
  • Self-certification of grain lots by accredited traders using approved field kits and other methods.
  • Full acceptance of self-issued tags or labels for domestic and regional commodity trade.

• Regulators responsible for training and accreditation of supply chain participants, proficiency tests, and spot-checking to ensure compliance.
Unresolved questions (among others)

- **Would a performance-based systems approach...**
  - Send improved price signals to smallholder farmers and village offtakers?
  - Help improve rural incomes and market participation by women?
  - Improve competitiveness and confidence of buyers?
  - Provide cost savings compared to current systems?
  - Drive formal market participation by SMEs?

- **What new capacities are required for a systems approach to work?**

- **How to evaluate the level of protection compared to current arrangements?**

*Public and private stakeholders in Uganda and Kenya now working on a STDF Project Preparation Grant (PPG) application aimed at trialing the concept.*
Thank you

For more information: www.worldbank.org/tradefacilitation

EAC Aflatoxins: Paper; Blog
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