



STRENGTHENING RISK-BASED FOOD CONTROL IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Little is known about the chemical contamination of food in sub-Saharan Africa. In countries in this region, except for a few exported products, foods are not regularly monitored for toxic chemicals, and no country has an operational monitoring programme for chemicals in food. In the absence of risk assessment, countries in sub-Saharan Africa are vulnerable in terms of food commodities market access on the regional and global scale, as well as in terms of health for their populations, which are increasingly involved in subregional transactions. The project aimed to contribute to strengthening the capacity of risk managers to implement international standards in four countries (Benin, Cameroon, Mali and Nigeria), based on good knowledge of hazards, risks and exposure levels to harmful substances in commonly produced and consumed food.



WHAT DID THE PROJECT DO?

The capacities of the national food safety authorities from the four target countries were strengthened, enabling each country to carry out its own Total Diet Study (TDS). The results for 872 food chemicals from the total diet of the four countries were obtained. From these results it emerged that only a few chemicals might represent a health or a market access issue. The national food safety authorities identified priorities with regard to domestic public health; as well as contributing to securing exports through the identification of strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities in the trade sector. The project also supported national stakeholders to draft their own road maps for improving food safety and securing trade. These can be used to mobilize the necessary resources to implement mitigation measures. The Codex Coordination for Africa benefited from the acquisition of data, which were critically missing before the TDS were carried out. The regional TDS created an outstanding network of national experts, willing to contribute to better protect consumers and their national economies, which can be expanded at will. The preparation and dissemination of eight peer-reviewed publications with open access was made possible with the project resources, and will contribute to disseminating the useful knowledge acquired beyond the lifetime of the project. All of the data that were generated in the framework of this project can be used by Codex and national food safety authorities to update maximum limits and codes of practice, in the light of the first ever multicentre TDS results carried out in Africa.

IMPACT

The expected long-term impacts of the project are threefold: i) improved market access for producers of foodstuffs by increasing compliance with international standards; ii) mitigated effects of poverty through the reduction of the burden of food-borne diseases; and iii) increased contribution of African countries to the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. In addition, the overall results of the project will benefit consumers, primarily through the identification of major food chemical safety concerns and main food contributors.

KEY FACTS

Contribution
USD 1 191 353

Duration
April 2014 – December 2018

Resource Partner
Standards and Trade Development
Facility (STDF)

Partners
World Health Organization (WHO);
Centre Pasteur du Cameroun (CPC);
*Agence Béninoise de Sécurité Sanitaire
des Aliments* (ABSSA), *Agence
Nationale de la Sécurité Sanitaire
des Aliments* (ANSSA), National Agency
for Food and Drug Administration
and Control (NAFDAC)

Beneficiaries
Ministries involved in food safety
(public health, agriculture, trade,
research); consumers; farmers; food
producers, wholesalers and retailers

ACTIVITIES

- One-day national stakeholders meeting held (one per country), attended by a total of 160 invitees, including regulators at policy-making level, lead technical staff from Ministries of Agriculture, Health and Trade Sectors, civil society and private sector.
- Training organized on Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), and examples provided of Standard Operating Procedures complying with the highest standards. These were adapted to the African context, and a two-day training course was organized for more than 50 national technicians from Benin, Mali and Nigeria.
- Total of 4 020 subsamples collected, and prepared as consumed to form 335 composite samples (core food list); and 252 food commodities collected and pooled into 21 composites, and aliquoted according to the analytical plan.
- TDS food lists produced in the four target countries respectively, whereby the data of more than 70 000 households were processed at three levels of the food classification.
- Exposure assessment for sub-Saharan African countries based on food consumption data and analytical results for food contamination carried out; 68 substances were assessed for 7 291 households from eight study centres.



Project Code

FAO: MTF/RAF/487/STF

ID donor: STDF/PG/303

Project Title

Strengthening risk-based food control in Sub-Saharan Africa: implementation of a regional Total Diet Study as a tool to assess food chemical contamination

Contact

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