Flagship 3: Food Safety

Highlight 3: Developing a Food Safety Index for Africa

As food systems transform, food safety is an increasing concern for consumers and policymakers alike. A4NH researchers at the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) with the Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA) and the Global Food Safety Partnership, alongside other partners, have advocated for some time for an Africa Food Safety Index (AFSI) to help African countries measure, monitor, and benchmark progress on key food safety indicators across the continent. In 2019, the African Union (AU) launched its second Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Biennial Review (BR) to monitor progress on agricultural development in the continent and, because of those advocacy efforts, in this second review, an index on food safety was added for the first time.

The index composition was developed by a multidisciplinary team of experts led by PACA, in consultation with ILRI scientists and with support from A4NH, and validated by AU country member states. A core team of experts translated the recommendations into a quantitative numerical index in line with the CAADP BR requirements. The AFSI breaks down into three sub-indices, or indicators, that capture three distinct elements of food safety:

- **Food Safety Systems Index**, tracking the existence of regulations, infrastructure, legal frameworks, and other institutional systems in the country
- **Food Safety Health Index**, looking at public health impacts related to foodborne diseases
- **Food Safety Trade Index**, monitoring incidence of rejection, infractions relative to volume of trade and reasons

ILRI and PACA worked closely with food safety experts across Africa in offering a series of trainings to build country-level capacity in data collection and submission. Fifty of 55 Member States submitted data to the AFSI in 2019, evidence of the high level of acceptance of the index by the AU states. ILRI researchers are now working with PACA to evaluate and validate the AFSI in order to assess its robustness and appropriateness for monitoring food safety progress. That process includes analyzing data that countries have submitted to see how indicators support each other, where there may be redundancies, and how the data combine to provide a country-level picture of food safety. In addition, they have shared an online questionnaire with CAADP and Codex focal points in all AU Member States to learn about their experiences using the index. The team has also conducted in-person visits to nine countries representing different regions, languages, and degrees of participation in AFSI to gather information on the in-country experiences in obtaining and reporting data on the food safety indicators. The visits included group consultations with ministries and other stakeholders invited to hear data presentations and give feedback on reliability and usefulness, as well as individual interviews with CAADP and Codex focal points and other relevant individuals to discuss the quality, reliability, and accessibility of data.

The researchers will analyze this information and feedback to see whether and how to improve the AFSI moving forward, including recommendations on how to ensure the index is relevant for food safety in a particular country, provides meaningful rankings across the continent, and gives countries something substantial to work with. This type of information will encourage countries to pay attention to food safety and perform and improve on indicators, and will enable them to identify gaps, take action, and seek targeted investments from international donors. This type of data-based evidence helps countries allocate resources to and focus on food safety in their domestic as well as international markets. The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA) co-funded implementation of AFSI.

We would like to thank the Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA) and all funders who supported this research through their contributions to the [CGIAR Trust Fund](https://www.cgiar.org/trust-fund/). Specific contributions to A4NH come from: Australia, Ireland, The Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.