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GAIN Report

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Nigeria Inaugurates Committees for Food Safety Management

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Report Highlights:

On January 27, 2015, the government of Nigeria (GON) in Abuja, Nigeria's capital city, inaugurated: 1) Inter-Ministerial Committee on Food Safety (IMCFS) and 2) National Food Safety Management Committee (NFSMC). The two committees will enable the country to harmonize her food safety practices. A post-inauguration meeting of key stakeholders was also held the following day (on January 28) where technical committees were formed for managing and/or implementing the country's food safety system in line with global best practices. With these, Nigeria is expected to minimize the incidence of food-borne illnesses and make her food exports acceptable on international markets.

Post: Lagos

Introduction:

On January 27, 2015, the government of Nigeria (GON) inaugurated two committees for the country's food safety management in Abuja, Nigeria's capital city. The committees were: 1) Inter-Ministerial Committee on Food Safety (IMCFS) and 2) National Food Safety Management Committee (NFSMC).

A post-inauguration meeting of key stakeholders (numbering about 100) was also held the following day on January 28, where technical committees were formed for managing and/or implementing Nigeria's food safety system in line with global best practices. Nigeria's Ministry of Health organized the event in collaboration with UNIDO through an EU-funded National Quality Infrastructure Project.

Nigeria had in 2014, passed the National Food Safety Management Committee (NFSMC) bill into law. With the inauguration and committees' formation, Nigeria has accomplished the production of a National Policy on Food Safety Implementation Strategy (NPFSIS) after five (5) years of consistent efforts by both local and international stakeholders—including USDA, USAID/NEXTT, UNIDO, FAO, WHO, and a few others.

The committees drew membership from among public and private sector stakeholders resulting in the general acceptance of the strategy (NPFSIS). Under this, Nigeria will be able to harmonize the country's food safety practices (from farm to table)—minimizing the incidence of food-borne illnesses and boosting her economy by promoting the acceptance of Nigeria's food exports in the international market.

Structure of the new NPFSIS:

At the apex of the NPFSIS is the IMCFS. It consists of five ministers drawn from relevant Federal Ministries (Departments) of: 1) Health, 2) Agriculture & Rural Development, 3) Industry, Trade & Investment, 4) Science & Technology, and 5) Environment. Members will be responsible for advising and coordinating programs and activities required for driving the country's food safety system.

On the other hand, the NFSMC is a larger committee with 30 members representing stakeholders in both the public and private sectors including relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), organized private sectors, NGOs, Professional bodies, Tertiary institutions, Development partners, and the consumers. Guided by the stipulations of IMCFS, it will be responsible for managing and executing Nigeria's new food safety system in line with global best practices. The Chair of NFSMC will be rotational (a two-year term) with Director of Food and Drug Services Division of the Nigeria Federal Ministry (Department) of Health for a period of two years at the first instance. Members of the NFSMC will also function within five (5) Technical Committees: 1) Health, 2) Environment, 3) Trade, 4) Agriculture, and 5) Science & Research.

The Way Forward:

The five (5) Technical Committees of NFSMC were formed a day after the committees' inaugurations on January 28, 2015. The committees' terms of reference and implementation program were also presented to the respective committees for their inputs/reviews ahead of implementation workshop proposed to be held in Abuja, March 2-6, 2015.

Stakeholders and development partners such as USAID/NEXTT, UNIDO, FAO, USDA, WHO, and others see the need to further this effort and fill identified gaps through capacity building programs and activities for the new NFSMC. Hence, USAID NEXTT in collaboration with USDA has proposed the above indicated workshop/ training session for NFSMC. The objective is to equip the committee with tools that will enable them to effectively implement the food safety policy. This will be the first of the series planned for the new committee to achieve its objectives.