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Rural Development Briefing in Eastern Africa A series of meetings on ACP-EU development issues

**Improving investment and stimulating agricultural growth to achieve food security in East Africa
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The SPS measures at regional level: AU-EU experience

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Executive Summary

As part of the AU/EU joint strategy, a programme called BETTER TRAINING FOR SAFER FOOD (BTSF) has been completed in 2009 and 2010 (10 Millions Euros).

With regard to food safety (as part of food security), this programme aimed especially at producing not only harmonised food safety requirements in order to more easily trade food between African countries but also guidelines in order to help its implementation by food business operators (FBO) and its harmonised control and enforcement by competent authorities (CA). Certain African countries or Economic Regional Communities (CER) plan to use these requirements as national or sub-regional food safety legislation. These requirements are mainly targeting food businesses which nevertheless must ensure the safety of their raw material, especially with regard to chemical contaminants of various origins.

The approach focused on food hygiene objectives and principles rather than on means to achieve them in order to allow small scale producers to adhere to it (good hygiene and manufacture practices implementation) and also highlighted the need or the possibility of reflecting about a time table for an implementation in all sectors, providing for adaptation periods, taking into account an evaluation of the significant relevant food risks. A complementary module explained the additional requirements which are necessary to export to the EU. However, it was clearly demonstrated that for poorly processed food, especially those of vegetal origin, but this applies to fresh/frozen whole fish or even filleted fishery products, these requirements are not too difficult to be reached. Regarding food safety, the activities encompassed:

1) training of over 250 trainers through 10 five-day "train the trainers" workshops covering the 5 Economic Partnership Agreement regions. These WS were key in this programme as they were in charge to elaborate the "intra Africa trade food safety requirements and guidelines for their application". Theoretical sessions and site visits for appropriate/reflected use of these requirements were really appreciated. Plant protection programmes, food import requirements and border control legislation and rapid alert and information system for live animal and food intra Africa trade and import which have been identified as important needs

3) three intensive fora/training sessions specifically for officials of the African Union Commission, REC and other specialist bodies; these sessions have contributed to definition of cooperation priorities in relation to food safety in Africa and subsequent capacity building within the African Union, REC and its specialised bodies. Themes identified in sub regional WS have been confirmed as priorities in these special WS .

2) strengthening of the capacity of SMEs through targeted missions and ad hoc assistance in 26 countries which have concentrated on addressing deficiencies identified by the Commission Inspection Service (Food and Veterinary Office/FVO). Within this same activity a continental-level event was held in Malawi to evaluate what has been done and what needs still to be done.

Similarly, activities related to animal health and major contagious animal diseases have been carried out in order to reduce animal morbidity and mortality, additional costs due to veterinary treatments and thus to improve farmer incomes and availability of proteins of animal origin. Such achievements need an important development in terms of veterinary services, associating private veterinarians on the field, adoption of relevant legislation where necessary, especially to empower officials, and to ensure, due to transhumance practices, traceability and animal movement registration by means of appropriate systems and more generally animal health information exchange to settle trust between countries. These activities were as follows:

- 1) evaluation of the performance of veterinary services in 11 countries and completion of gap analysis of veterinary services' performance in 28 countries.
- 2) improvement of national and regional animal health and food safety legal frameworks in 13 countries.
- 3) strengthening of the capacities of laboratory technicians through twinning programmes between African and European laboratories. This has led to the launch of four twinning projects.
- 4) strengthening of the capacity of Chief Veterinary Officers and National Focal Points on international sanitary standards and was intended for all African countries. This activity has comprised a total of six SPS workshops.

The geographical coverage achieved by these activities is equally impressive. Practically every country on the African continent has been involved to some degree, with the majority actually hosting training actions, be it by accommodating workshops, receiving assistance missions or participating in twinning activities.

As far as food safety is concerned, the main principles pointed out were as follows:

- 1) Needs for knowledge on food hazards and risks; training of both producers/processors and official controllers is key to acquire it
- 2) FBO liability along the whole food production chain (including primary production i.e. feed and agriculture chemicals); hazard and risk control and verification are key to discharge this liability.
- 3) a regional harmonised food hygiene, adaptable regarding means and with a timetable in order to be progressively implemented in all food sectors and steps of the whole production chain: official checks by competent authorities: competent (knowledgeable and well trained) authority (free of conflict of interest) thus budget/fees for controllers, control activities, monitoring plans, labs, analyses and on going training.

EU and AU believe in training, especially training of future trainers and experience sharing as well as transfer of expertise and networking. It is what we did during the sub-regional workshops, half of the experts intervening regularly were from Africa; this and the further spread of the knowledge by the new "trainers" will allow the respect of the food hygiene principles while understanding the local constraints of producers in order to find adapted technical solutions.

BTSF programme focused on food safety control in food businesses, but FBO depend of raw materials that must be safe too, especially with regard chemical contamination. Therefore, control of the primary should be taken into account. Indeed, primary production is of paramount importance for providing food security and as far as possible self-sufficient food production for each country; it is key to prepare a raw agricultural product (fruits, vegetables or animals) for a safe food (and of quality) to be put either on the national, regional or global market. However, in DC primary production is currently a weak step in the whole food production chain as food hazards and risks are insufficiently known and controlled by producers (origin, agricultural/husbandry practices, chemical inputs). Liability is also central with regard to food safety legal environment, therefore food poisoning or crisis, or even rumours on food safety (e.g. Lake Victoria Nile Perch and possible pesticide contamination) have very serious economical consequences and to regain consumer confidence could be a huge challenge. Moreover epidemiological investigations would be carried out coming up to primary production and even feed. So at each steps good hygiene practices and own checks are paramount and documented controls will be more and more required. Technical support provided by professional organisations will be an important task in the coming years.

During the 4 sub regional CTA briefings in Africa the current conditions and trends of the primary production were at stake, I identified some potential direct or indirect sources of food safety risks that should be kept in mind and controlled (see annex). However, a positive point has been recorded with regard to the move of food processing plants from city centers to industrial/craftwork areas, offering more space for better design of the plant (structure, room organisation) and hygiene of operation, less pollution, less pest risks or easier to fight against such hazards and finally recent, better and sustainable water and power networks.

What ever would be the organisation of the production (small scale producers, extensive or intensive/industrial production, the same food safety objectives to deliver the appropriate level of protection are to be respected by FBOs (including retail/catering sectors), and farmers/producers who supply them. Good agricultural practices, good production and hygiene practices, risk evaluation and management, own checks and official checks are the necessary actions and must be proportionate to the identified risks.

Discussions are on going regarding the SPS actions to be conducted by African countries, REC and AU, and that could be supported by the EU. Plant protection programmes, food import requirements and border control legislation and rapid alert and information system for live animal and food intra Africa trade and import which have been identified as important needs. In countries, implementation of the pan African food safety requirements for intra Africa trade (and its guidelines) should be developed; availability of sources for financing this action should be investigated. Other actions should be maintained as PIP regarding use of pesticides and good agriculture practices, extended to small producers with the technical support of the professional organisations. OIE activities focusing at better governance in veterinary services have already been considered by DG DEV and AIDCO for next years.

Taking into account the importance of the food of vegetable origin in African diet, this sector should be considered as a priority. The current conditions regarding agriculture and the trends (climate change, land acquisition, investment, financing..) that have been presented during these briefings should of course be taken into consideration and their associated risks in terms of food safety. Nevertheless, needs for further development of processing plants in order to produce more added value products "at home" should not be forgiven as sources of incomes for all actors involved and in order to reduce import of such products, to exchange more with neighbours, and to export new products. As food from animal origin cannot be ignored, feed is to be considered as hazards could be in (dioxins crisis, pesticides, prions..) and good husbandry practices (including animal welfare issues) as well as basic good hygiene practices need to be taken into consideration to ensure a safe raw material for processors and consumers.

If food processing grows in quantities and goes for more added value products, especially those of animal origin (more valuable while more difficult to control from a food safety angle), leading to less imports, these profits could be reinvested in primary production for further development of agriculture and could keep the youth on land.

I cannot conclude this intervention without outlining the needs for basic needs, structural and infra structural that are common to many human activities and of paramount importance to develop food businesses and primary production; I mean: roads; water (potable), power, health of workers, civilian security (producers, farmers, workers), a food security policy based on a agriculture policy, fishery policy (including sustainable aquaculture). On such bases, food safety legislation, good agriculture, husbandry, production and hygiene practices would be much easier to implement as well as the official control and enforcement of such legislation.

ANNEXE

Primary production:

is of paramount importance for providing food security and as far as possible self-sufficient food production for each country,

is key to prepare a raw agricultural product (fruits, vegetables or animals) for a safe food (and of quality) to be put either on the national, regional or global market,

in DC is also currently a weak step in the whole food production chain as food hazards and risks are insufficiently known and controlled by producers

Agriculture conditions and trends in Africa and associated food safety risks

- **Climate change:** less accessible and arable land:(more chemical inputs, less water: recycling and potability , T° increases: more needs for cold chain (including cooling of working rooms)
- **Land acquisition:** knowing the « sanitary land history»
- **Urbanisation:** pollution and translation of the arable land see above
- **Rural exodus, namely of the youth:** more urbanisation see above, less « hands » on land see below
- **Producing differently, for an increased productivity:** more chemicals to be properly controlled.
- **Environmental and agriculture chemical contaminants:** risks for fish and aquaculture projects.
- **Limited investments:** difficulties to comply with SPS standard
- **Food value chain not enough thought about or taken into account:** insufficient processing (less added value food and dependence of processed products), dependence of imported raw materials
- **Move of food producing plants from the city center to industrial/craftwork activity zones:** very positive.