

THE 1ST NIGERIA FOOD SAFETY & INVESTMENT FORUM (NFSIF)

COMMUNIQUÉ

PREAMBLE/INTRODUCTION

The first Nigeria Food Safety and Investment forum took place on the 7th and 8th of February, 2017 at the Eko Hotel & Suites, Victoria Island, Lagos. In attendance were the Honourable Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, Honourable Minister for Health and the representatives of the Honourable Ministers of Environment; Industry, Trade & Investment; Science and Technology. Also present were the Acting Director General of National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Coordinating Director of Nigeria Agricultural Quarantine Services (NAQS); and representatives of the Director General of Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON), Director General Consumer Protection Council (CPC), and the National President of Nigerian Institute of Science & Technology (NIFST) who also doubles as the Chairman of the Council of Institute of Public Analysts of Nigeria (IPAN).

Also in attendance were representatives of the international community, which included representatives of the Director General of United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO); the UNIDO country representative and WHO Country Representative. Also present were various operators in the Nigerian food sector including academia/research institutes, organised private sector, Medium Small & Micro Enterprises (MSMEs), NGOs, and also the Media.

Objectives:

The objectives of the Nigeria Food Safety & Investment Forum were:

1. To focus on the promotion of inclusive and sustainable industrialisation by identifying, attracting and mobilising investments and appropriate technologies especially for small and medium size enterprises in Nigeria.
2. To address the global governance of food safety in regulatory systems and showcase models and best practices from all over the world.
3. To link the lessons learnt from extant national assessments with international best practices in the selected value chains.

4. To enlighten the operators in the food sector on the implementation of the normative references to achieve recognition for quality management systems and assessment of competence.

OPENING CEREMONY

During the opening ceremony, representatives of Government MDAs delivered goodwill messages to the forum. The Keynote Address was delivered by the Honourable Minister of Agriculture & Rural Development while the Honourable Minister of Health delivered the opening speech and subsequently declared the event open.

TECHNICAL SESSIONS

There were three technical sessions each consisting of lead paper presentations and followed by panel discussions and participation of the audience in form of questions and answers.

OUTCOMES & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The forum was briefed by Honourable Minister for Agriculture on the status of food production in Nigeria and also on the renewed focus of the Ministry in terms of capacity building for safe food production. This has led to successful reassignments of the supervision of the three Federal Universities of Agriculture in Nigeria to the FMARD to drive the training process of personnel for safe food production. He also informed on the proposed setting up of Colleges of Food Health and Nutrition Sciences in these Universities.
2. The forum was concerned about reported cases of increase in non-communicable diseases in Nigeria arising from contaminants. It therefore, advised on the usage of food grade stainless steel materials in the fabrication of daily used food processing equipment such as grinding machines.
3. The efforts of the Federal Ministry of Health towards improving the National Food Safety Management system was commended especially the ongoing implementation of the National Policy on Food Safety and its Implementation Strategy; the forum recommended adequate funding, involvement and participation of private sector and NGOs in this regards.

4. There must be an efficient and effective system of information transfer between public and private sectors. Collaboration, cooperation and communication between Government Ministries, Regulatory Agencies, Support Net, Industry, Consumers, Producers, and Research Institutes need not be over-emphasised.
5. Borrowing from Brazilian experience:
 - a. *Consumers must be empowered by appropriate legislation such that burden of proof could be placed on the company rather than the consumers.*
 - b. *Periodic surveillance of levels of contamination and incidences of food borne diseases is strategic to management of public health and should be legislated at all tiers of government.*
 - c. *Operators in the food industry should begin to look less towards banking industry for funding as there are other means of intelligent funding such as crowd funding, venture capitalists, etc.*
6. The Forum noted the creation of Food Safety & Applied Nutrition Directorate in NAFDAC, which is dedicated towards ensuring safe foods along food value chain. Accreditation of NAFDAC and SON Food Laboratories was commended and the need for more laboratories within the value chain should be looked into.
7. Since Government MDAs generate a lot of technical useful data from their activities, the forum advised that this information should be communicated to the larger audience through innovative and effective media including traditional town criers, TV drama episodes and not limited to internet medium.
8. Borrowing from European Union (EU) experience:
 - a. *There should be National Reference Laboratories located in areas of major production, for analytes and contaminants in food and agricultural products.*
 - b. *The implementation of SPS legislation must be harmonised amongst the regulatory bodies.*
 - c. *Competent Authorities in Nigeria must be effective and their reports reliable through documented official control system and programmes.*
9. In view of economic losses resulting from non-compliance to existing food control systems by exporters, the forum recommended better collaboration between public and private sectors; and increased self regulation through trade/umbrella association

10. Taking into consideration complexities involved in food processing, the forum strongly advised regulatory policy of having accredited food scientists in every food processing company especially high risk food.
11. In view of incessant reportage implicating pesticides, the forum encouraged promotion of integrated pest management application in pest control.
12. The Forum advocated formation of individuals, micro, small and medium food enterprises into a cluster of 100-150 groups to work together in order to reduce cost of establishment, to attract attention and supports from government, development agencies.
13. In order to promote and encourage safe and quality products, reward systems in form of Food Awards should be instituted for honouring companies that have done well yearly.
14. The forum strongly advocates for provision of funds and infrastructure for surveillance, enforcement and laboratory investigation since laboratory support is critical
15. The forum recommends the establishment of more accredited private laboratories across the country to complement the existing government laboratories.

Following the success of the forum, the HMH advised that UNIDO should consider organising subsequent Food Safety & Investment Forums in Nigeria to boost safe food production.

The outcomes of this forum is recommended to NFSMC for consideration and implementation