Why the world must pay increased attention to food safety

Message from the Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Health

Hon. Mutahi Kagwe, EGH

Safe and nutritious food in adequate quantities is a prerequisite for the enjoyment and prolongation of life and the promotion of good health. Unsafe food is responsible for creating a vicious cycle of disease and malnutrition affecting consumers. Foodborne illnesses are a burden on public health and contribute significantly to the cost of health care. They impede socio-economic development by draining health care systems and hampering national economy, tourism and trade.

Everyone can contribute to making safe food, but the primary responsibility lies with the Food Business Operators (FBOs). The Ministry of Health regards food safety as a public health priority and is currently conducting risk categorisation of FBOs into high, medium and low risk to inform the frequency of inspection. This will go a long way in protecting the consumer.

During this period when the Ministry of Health is fighting the Covid-19 pandemic, safeguarding the health of the consumer is paramount. Food preparation outlets have been shown to have the potential risk of spreading Covid-19. Therefore, it is important for all workers handling foods along the food supply chains, including markets, to adhere to hygiene measures.

Food safety is everyone’s business.

Word from the WFP Kenya Country Director

Many people know the World Food Programme (WFP) as the provider of food assistance in emergency settings. The Government of Kenya increasingly takes the lead in emergency responses. WFP is offering skills and experience in food procurement, transport and storage in support of government efforts to ensure Kenya’s food systems are safe and efficient, and enabling children, women and men to consume high quality and nutritious food.

Ms. Annalisa Conte

As a member of the National Food Safety Coordination Committee (NFSCC), and in close partnership with the ministries of health, education, agriculture and others, WFP is supporting the development of food safety strategies and policies at national and county levels; establishing a national food safety surveillance and incident reporting system; and integrating food safety standards into training programmes for farmers, processors, retailers and school management committees.

To date, WFP has donated and equipped 13 mini-laboratories in three counties and trained 230 public health officers in 10 counties to test and analyse food for the presence of dangerous toxins such as aflatoxin and fumonisin, which are harmful to health when eaten by people or livestock.

In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, WFP has intensified outreach on food safety and hygiene to raise the benefit of retailers and consumers who can now access crucial information and guidance through SMS messaging, smartphone applications, radio talk shows and online services.

On behalf of the United Nations World Food Programme, we wish all Kenyans a safe and healthy World Food Safety Day.

Word from the CEO, Micro Enterprise Support Programme Trust (MESPT)

Ms. Rebecca Amukhoye

Safety is everyone’s business. It is about adopting collaborative approaches to build working and sustainable systems along the food chain and ensuring everyone is accessing safe food. MESPT is currently implementing the AgriFI food safety programme, a game-changing initiative that aims to strengthen the capacities of food value chain players in both private and public sectors. The programme also partners with key institutions and county governments on surveillance regarding food safety measures.

This has enhanced good health and wellbeing of the populace as well as increased competitiveness of Agriculture value chains.

Message from the Agriculture Sector Leader for Kenya and Burundi at SNV-Netherlands Development Organisation

John Otini Masinde

Food safety affects everyone, every day, and has huge implications on almost all development issues, including health, productivity, tourism, and, of course, food security.

To address these issues, the Voice for Change Partnership programme at SNV represents a movement towards the improvement of food safety in Kenya for domestic markets by facilitating honest conversations addressing food safety to understand what the issues are and then working collaboratively to arrive at solutions for all concerned sectors.

Message from the Chief Technical Advisor, UNIDO-MARKUP

Dr. Rudi Eggers

The food industry can neither be ignored, especially in a country like Kenya, where its economy is highly dependent on agriculture. However, the country is not just food just food, but SAFE food. If food safety is well observed, from production, throughout the value chain, right to consumption.

With funding from the European Union (EU), Market Access Upgrade Programme (MARKUP) Kenya has been actively advocating for food safety through a campaign that has reached out to different players along the food value chain.

MARKUP is implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and State Department of Trade.

Today, MARKUP Kenya is proud to join the rest of the world in marking the second World Food Safety Day (WFSD) and in calling for collective responsibility towards food safety.

Every day, almost everyone interacts with food at different levels – from production to transportation, trading and consumption. But, of greater concern is not just food, but SAFE food.

The significance of food safety has become of more interest due to the current outbreak of Covid-19 across the world. In this light, MARKUP Kenya has been carrying out a two-month food safety campaign. The campaign has gone beyond just concentrating on the current status, to advocating for a lasting food safety culture.

The last one week has been the peak of MARKUP’s food safety campaign, which has so far reached over 2.4 million people through digital, social media and posters. The posters were distributed in 15 counties, including Nairobi and Mombasa, which have been worst hit by Covid-19. The messages are targeted to reach out to all Kenyans. They are in both English and Kiswahili to widen the demographical reach.

Together, let us all play our part in ensuring food safety for all, every time, everywhere.

Message from WHO Kenya Representative

Dr. Rudi Eggers

WHO estimates that more than 200 diseases are spread through food. One in 10 people fall ill every year from eating contaminated food, and 420,000 people die each year as a result. Children under five years of age are at particularly high risk, with some 125,000 children dying from foodborne diseases every year.

Proper food preparation can prevent most foodborne diseases. In addition, greater concern is not just food, but SAFE food.

For infants, pregnant women, the sick and the elderly, the consequences of foodborne disease are usually more severe and may be fatal.

Word from the FAO Representative in Kenya

Hon. Peter Munya, MGH

Food safety, everyone’s business.

Message from the Chief Technical Advisor, UNIDO-MARKUP

Stefano Sedola

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World Food Safety Day 7 June 2020

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