Strengthening food safety systems across Kenya

MESPT has made notable progress in implementing the AgriFI Food safety initiative that supports food value chain actors

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MESPT observes this year’s World Food Safety Day while busy implementing a unique programme that supports the ideals of this day. The development organization has made notable progress in implementing the six-year Agriculture Financing Initiative (AgriFI) Food safety programme that was launched in 2018.

MESPT sees World Food Safety Day “as celebrations meant to inspire actions for safer food and give all other actors along the food value chain a chance to focus and create awareness on the need for food safety”.

AgriFI Food Safety, which MESPT/DANIDA is implementing in 13 counties, funded by the European Union (EU), aims at strengthening food safety systems for value chain competitiveness.

The programme is built on the premise that there is a skill-set gap among value chain actors that has affected the competitiveness of agricultural value chains. Further, lack of coordination and harmony in dissemination of the required skills and knowledge to value chain actors has exacerbated the situation.

For a long time, food safety had not been a priority in the dissemination of knowledge and skills in the agriculture sector. To change the narrative, MESPT has reviewed 4 curricula to integrate food safety, animal and plant health issues.

Some of the programmes milestones achieved in the last 2 years include:

- 4 curricula have been reviewed and certified by TVE CDACC to include food safety and Sanitary and Phyto Sanitary (SPS) aspects.
- 5 ATVETs have been developed for Nakuru, Meru, Kisii and Nyandarua counties.
- 10 ATVET Centers Infrastructure support/ investment have been completed and commissioned. (Kilifi, Makueni, Meru, Kikuyu, Nyandarua, Nakuru, Kakamega, Bungoma, Kisii and Migori).
- Sustainability plans for all selected ATVETs have been developed - six of them have been validated and accepted for adoption (Meru, Kilifi, Kakamega, Nyandarua, Machakos and Bungoma).

The food safety programme is also building the capacity of counties and regulatory authorities concerned with food safety.

All the 13 counties the programme is part of have formed County Food Safety Committees (CFSCs) which are now operational.

So far, 2 Food Safety policies have been developed for Nakuru and Makueni counties. Additionally, 18 County officials and 8 County Department of Veterinary Services staff have been trained in food safety regulation and enforcement.

Other achievements include:

- 51 county government officials and Competent authorities trained on food safety (Food and Feed Control).
- 3 Copies of self-assessment Industry Standards have been done.
- Developed Standard Assessment Guides (SAGs) and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to support actors in the value chains of focus.
- Supported draft Food Safety Policy for various counties.
- Supported the ATVET bill to ensure sustainability of the institutions.

It is envisaged that, by the time the programme ends in 2023, it will have:

- Trained at least 330 trainers of trainers (ToTs) on Sanitary and Phyto-safety Standards.
- Trained 13,000 Value Chain actors.
- Trained at least 330 trainers of trainers (ToTs) on Sanitary and Phyto-safety Standards.
- Built the capacity of 13 counties on Sanitary and Phyto-safety Standards enforcement systems.

How AgriFI, a MESPT project, helps food Value chain actors

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A programme funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by MESPT/DANIDA is boosting the fortunes of value chain actors along selected agricultural value chains, including consumers.

The Agriculture Financing Initiative (AgriFI) programme, funded to the tune of 7 million Euros, is helping build food safety systems for value chain competitiveness. It is focusing on aquaculture, dairy and horticulture (beans in pods - French beans, snow peas and sugar snap, mango and avocados).

AgriFI Kenya Programme has four Result Areas where DANIDA/MESPT are implementing Result Areas 2 and 3. Result Area 2 is aimed at building capacity of actors along selected agricultural Value Chains. Agricultural, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (ATVET) model will be applied in the capacity building process. This will encompass curriculum development aspect.

Result Area 3 is aimed at building capacity of selected county governments and private sector on implementation and enforcement of food safety, plant and animal health regulations. This is ultimately intended to have a private sector driven process as well as cascading some of the regulatory roles to the counties.

AgriFI food safety programme is training actors along selected agriculture value chains to enhance their capacity to produce and market safe food.

The initiative is expected to increase agricultural yields, open sustainable supply chains for farmers (both local and international), and improve food security in line with Kenya’s Big Four Agenda and the long-term development blueprint Vision 2030.

AgriFI was born out of a delegated cooperation arrangement (signed on 22 December 2017) between the EU and the Royal Danish Embassy, where MESPT was selected as the implementing partner.

MESPT was then given the programme implementation responsibility due to an already ongoing engagement with DANIDA under Green Growth and Employment Programme as well as Strategic Sector Cooperation initiative on food safety that have similar focus as AgriFI.

According to MESPT, AgriFI has brought together the private sector and the two levels of government to collaborate in ensuring farmers produce safe food.

MESPT has partnered with several county governments to enhance food safety as well as strengthening the capacities of various stakeholders involved in the food supply chain, to ensure efficient food safety systems are in place so that Kenyans and the global markets we supply to can consume food that is safe and healthy.

AgriFI, which runs from 2018 to 2023, is being implemented in 13 counties: Kilifi, Nyandarua, Nakuru, Kisii, Bungoma, Kakamanga, Migori, Kibiu, Kirinyaga, Makueni, Machakos, Meru and Embu. The counties involved were competitively selected on the basis of value chains.

The programme has also roped in various national authorities which include Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TVETA), the Ministry of Health (Department of Public Health), Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS), Directorate of Veterinary Services (DVS), Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS), Kenya Dairy Board (KDB), Kenya Fisheries Services (KFS), Horticulture Crops Directorate (HCD) and Pest Control Products Board (PCPB). These authorities are the key regulators of food business, mandated by the law with the exception of TVET CDACC and TVETA. Their capacity will be enhanced, and they are key in helping the building of counties workers’ capacity as well as for other selected value chain actors.