The AgriFI programme and how its implementation align to this year’s WFSD calls to action

The six-year food safety initiative is implemented by the Micro-Enterprise Support Programme Trust to strengthen capacities of actors along the dairy, horticulture, and aquaculture value chains.

BY MILLICENT MWLOLO

In 2018, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) designated June 7 as the day to raise awareness on food safety at all levels, and to promote and facilitate actions for global food safety on a collaborative basis of scientific principles and in line with World Trade Organisation measures. This year’s theme is “Safe Food Now for a Healthy Tomorrow”, which stresses that the production and consumption of safe food has immediate and long-term benefits for people, the planet, and the economy.

The Agri Food Safety Programme, which is implemented by the Micro-Enterprise Support Programme Trust (MESPT), is a European Union (EU)-funded initiative whose focus is food safety (sanitary and phytosanitary standards), plant and animal health. The programme’s interventions aim to address the food safety concerns for both domestic and international markets.

The six-year programme (2018-2023) is funded to the tune of €7 million. Through the programme, MESPT is strengthening capacities of actors along the dairy, horticulture, and aquaculture value chains through the Agricultural Technical and Vocational Education and Training (ATVET) system approach. The programme aims at increasing the capacity of private sector and county governments to implement and enforce standards on food safety, plant health and animal health.

Tremendous outcomes have been realised in 13 counties: Nyandarua, Nakuru, Kiambu, Kiirinjaga, Embu, Meru, Makueni, Migori, Kakamega, Bungoma, and at the county level.

Five action plans to keep food safe all the way

1. Ensure it is safe: Government must ensure safe and nutritious food for all.
2. Grow it safe: Agriculture and food producers need to adopt good practices.
3. Keep it safe: Business operators must make sure food is safe.
4. Know what’s safe: Consumers need to learn about safe and healthy food.
5. Team up for food safety: Work together for safe food and good health.

From production to consumption, food safety is a shared responsibility. Result Area 2 of the AgriFI programme aims at strengthening the capacities of actors along selected value chains through the ATVET model. Through the programme, the future of food safety is considered from the farm where growing of foods starts.

Good agricultural practices (GAPs) are therefore emphasised for a viable food safety system. GAPs will ensure continuous supply of safe food while minimising environmental impacts and adapting to climate change. Integrated approach on the sanitary and phytosanitary standards to ensure health of plants and animals, prudent use of chemicals in production and preservation, are all geared to ensuring safe food for the final consumer.

5. Team up for food safety: Work together for safe food and good health

The responsibility of ensuring the safety of food lies with all stakeholders, including government agencies, policymakers, producers, businesses, consumers, civil society organisations, academic and scientific institutions. While each of these stakeholders has specific responsibilities and accountabilities, the multi-dimensional nature of food safety and quality make their roles highly interconnected and interdependent.

In July 2017, competent authorities drawn from the government agencies teamed up to develop and commit to the Kenya Multi-Annual National Control Plan (MANCP).

The MANCP is a flexible quality assurance system for the control of food, feed, animal, and plant health including phytosanitary matters. The plan promotes active collaboration among the stakeholders at both the national and county levels involved in the food chain, therefore indispensable to ensure effectiveness.

On January 21, 2021, all competent authorities regulating food in Kenya agreed on implementing new Principles of Food Inspection as an integral part of MANCP. The common principles of inspection form part of the new food control system implemented by the Kenyan government in partnership with Denmark’s Danish Veterinary and Food Administration. The approval of the principles was followed by training of 90 food inspectors in Nakuru and Nyandarua counties by MESPT.

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WORLD FOOD SAFETY DAY 2021

Theme: Safe Food Now for a Healthy Tomorrow

The right to be free from hunger and have adequate food of acceptable quality is provided under Article 43 of the constitution of Kenya, which gives consumers the power to drive change. Given the complexity of food safety, consumers need access to timely, clear, and reliable information about the nutritional and disease risks associated with their food choices. Through an effective working relationship with the food industry, including producers, processors, and purveyors of food, AgriFI continues to support partnerships for proactive food safety education. The partnerships have so far fostered an active network of 465 trained Trainers of Trainers (ToTs) who are equipped with tools they can use to educate people about protecting their health through safe food practices including hygiene.

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