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Federal Monitoring and Evaluation Team Reviews Ethiopian Food and Drug Authority's Progress

On April 22, 2024, a monitoring and evaluation team from various federal institutions visited the Ethiopian Food and Drug Authority (EFDA) to assess its on-going activities.

The visit was led by Dr. Kassahun Tesfaye, who outlined the primary objective of the evaluation to determine the extent to which directives issued by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed have been implemented. Dr. Kasahun emphasized that, beyond regular assessments, the team sought to incorporate insights from independent federal institutions to identify best practices and evaluate their scalability.

Heran Gerba, the Director General of EFDA, expressed gratitude to the monitoring and evaluation team for their visit, describing it as a significant opportunity for the institution.

Heran provided a detailed presentation on the Authority's five-year transformation plan and its achievements, including enhancements to the legal framework that have elevated EFDA to an internationally recognized supervisory body.



Heran also underscored the essential support needed from the government to bolster the institution with manpower, materials, and training. This support is crucial for realizing the vision of transforming EFDA into a center of excellence for health products control in Africa

within the next decade. The team was briefed on the integrated electronic control system and toured various laboratories at the headquarters that have received international recognition.

EFDA VALUES

- ◆ Public first
- ◆ Integrity and respect
- ◆ Continuous improvement
- ◆ Accountability
- ◆ Quality
- ◆ Commitment
- ◆ Transparency
- ◆ Excellence
- ◆ Teamwork

EFDA OBJECTIVE

To protect and promote public health through realization of the following objectives:

1. Protect the public from unsafe food
2. Safeguard the public from falsified, substandard and ineffective health products
3. Protect the public from tobacco and alcohol related health risks
4. Attain public confidence on food and health product regulation

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

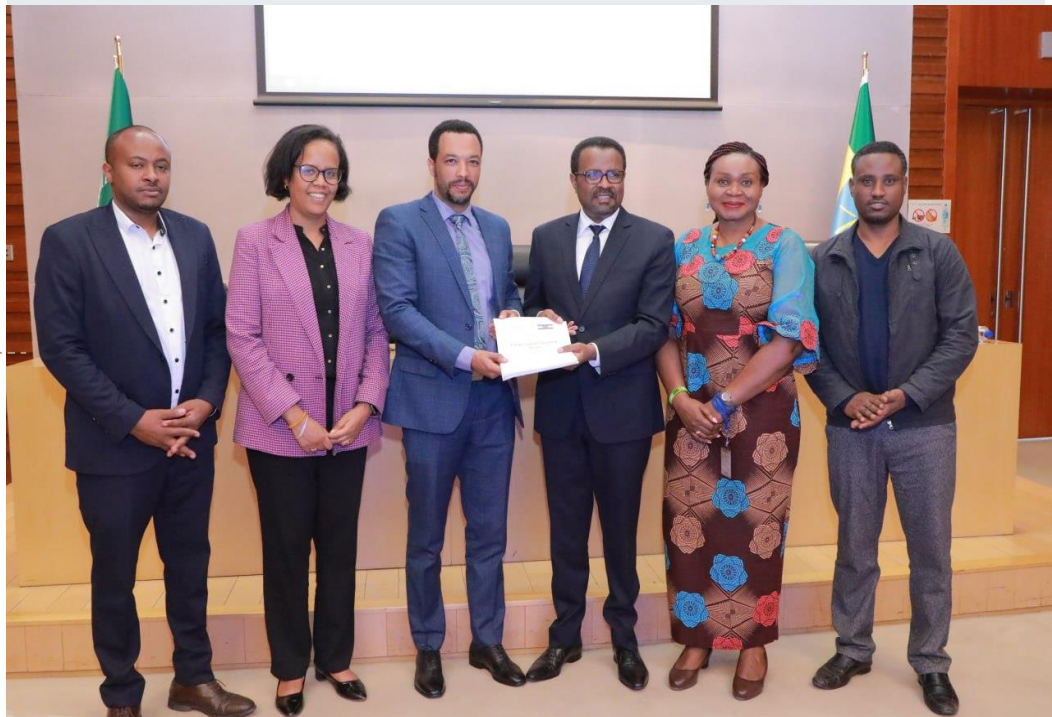
1. Strengthen food safety regulation.
2. Strengthen detection, prevention and response to food adulteration and illegal trade
3. Improve regulation of safety, efficacy, quality and proper use of medicines
4. Strengthen safety, quality and performance regulation of medical devices
5. Improve regulation of safety of cosmetic products
6. Strengthen tobacco and alcohol control system
7. Enhance public ownership
8. Improve efficiency and effectiveness
9. Enhance partnership and collaboration
10. Enhance good governance
11. Improve human resource development and Management
12. Improve evidence-based decision making
13. Strengthen Food and health products regulatory infrastructures
14. Improve quality management system
15. Improve formulation and implementation of legal frameworks

National Food Safety Master Plan Unveiled to Enhance Public Health and Trade

On May 24, 2024, the Ethiopian government officially announced the National Food Safety Master Plan, a five-year initiative set to run from 2025 to 2029. The plan, developed with the input of various stakeholders, aims to bolster public health and strengthen Ethiopia's position in international trade.

During the official launch workshop, his Excellence State Minister of Health, Dr. Dereje Duguma highlighted the governm

ents proactive efforts in ensuring food security. He emphasized that the creation of the National Food Safety Master Plan reflects a significant commitment to addressing food safety concerns. Dr. Dereje stressed that achieving food safety is not solely the responsibility of regulatory bodies; it necessitates coordinated efforts and cooperation from all sectors involved.



Heran Gerba, Director General of the Ethiopian Food and Drug Authority, underscored the importance of ensuring the availability of safe and high-quality foods. She pointed out that a robust food safety framework is essential not only for protecting public health and preventing foodborne diseases but also for enhancing export markets and fostering national economic growth. Heran cautioned that the food trade sector could face challenges in competing within the African market without stringent food safety measures.

Ambassador Diriba Kuma, Director General of the Ethiopian Agriculture Authority, expressed confidence that the National Food Safety Master Plan would

elevate the country's food safety and quality standards. He noted that this initiative aligns with national food and nutrition policies and would facilitate compliance with international food safety agreements. Driba emphasized that the plan would not only prevent and control foodborne diseases but also contribute to economic prosperity and sustainable development by safeguarding public health.

The comprehensive National Food Safety Master Plan is set to play a pivotal role in advancing Ethiopia's food safety systems, ensuring the nation meets global standards and secures a healthier future for its citizens.

Ethiopian Food Safety Day Emphasizes Long-Term Food Safety Measures.

On June 7, 2024, Addis Ababa celebrated the International Food Safety Day with a workshop themed "Preparing for Unexpected Challenges in Food Safety," marking the 5th observance in Ethiopia and the 6th worldwide. Heran Gerba, Director General of the Ethiopian Food and Drug Authority (EFDA), inaugurated the workshop, outlining EFDA's commitment to ensuring long-term food safety through strategic initiatives.

Director General Heran emphasized three key strategies to enhance food safety rigorous monitoring of sta



-andards, supporting stakeholders to achieve higher levels of compliance, and implementing preventive measures before products reach the market. These efforts align with the new national health policy, where food safety is a strategic priority supported by an approved master plan.

Dr. Solomon Kebede Executive Director of Animal Drug Control at the Ethiopian Agricultural Authority, highlighted the manifold benefits of robust food safety

practices. He stressed that ensuring food safety not only enhances consumer trust and access to safe products but also improves nutritional outcomes and reduces foodborne illnesses. The workshop featured various presentations, including past experiences and preparations for the festival by the Public Health Research Institute. Discussions centered on the recently approved national food safety roadmap, collaborative efforts, and best practices. Participants engaged in constructive dialogues, setting forth future directions to advance food safety initiatives in Ethiopia.

Ethiopian Food and Drug Authority Collaborates with Bahrain on Drug Production Control Systems.

On March 24, 2024, the Ethiopian Food and Drug Authority (EFDA) engaged in discussions with developers of Bahrain's electronic drug product control system to explore collaboration opportunities. The meeting involved a presentation by EFDA to the Bahraini developers, focusing on systematic drug monitoring and verification.

During the presentation, EFDA highlighted the development and implementation of electronic systems for drug control, showcasing successes, challenges encountered, and strategies employed to address these challenges within the sector. The Bahraini developers reciprocated by sharing their experiences with the drug production control technology currently utilized in Bahrain.

Heran Gerba, Director General of EFDA, led the discussions and underscored the importance of the electronic drug production control system in enhancing systematic monitoring and verification of drugs. The delegates expressed their commitment to supporting EFDA in modernizing and optimizing drug control efforts.

Furthermore, EFDA requested the Bahraini developers to extend their support to local drug manufacturers and importers in Ethiopia. Two days later, on March 26, 2024, at the commencement of further discussions, Director General Heran emphasized the imperative for local manufacturers and importers to implement drug tracking and traceability systems to ensure the quality, safety, and efficacy of drugs. He stressed the adoption of new technologies and the integration of international knowledge and experience across borders.



EFDA also briefed local stakeholders on the systematic monitoring and verification of drugs, elaborating on technology advancements, achievements, challenges, and mitigation strategies. The

constructive dialogue between EFDA officials, local drug manufacturers, and the Drug Manufacturers' Association focused on identifying collaborative opportunities in digital technology for enhanced control measures.



Transforming Addis Ababa: Efforts to Create a Smoke-Free Model City in Africa

On May 16, 2024, in anticipation of International No Tobacco Day on May 23, the Addis Ababa City Food and Drug Authority, in collaboration with various stakeholders, launched a tobacco awareness campaign. According to Heran Gerba, Director General of the Ethiopian Food and Drug Authority, significant measures are being implemented to protect the city's future from the harmful effects of tobacco.



Ethiopia has ratified the World Health Organization's tobacco control framework and enacted Proclamation 1112/2011, which includes stringent tobacco control laws. Heran emphasized that achieving the vision of nurturing a healthy, leading citizenry can be realized by continuously monitoring, evaluating, and researching tobacco reduction initiatives, supported by committed management and stakeholders.

Through an initiative launched three years ago, it has been demonstrated that making Addis Ababa smoke-free is achievable. Tobacco-free environments have been successfully established in the city's schools, shared housing areas, healthcare facilities, hotels, restaurants, youth centers, parks, and other popular gathering spots, showcasing a significant step toward a healthier city.

It has been emphasized that a partnership between the public and private sectors is crucial for preventing and controlling the resistance of germs to antimicrobial drugs.

The Ethiopian Food and Drug Authority, in collaboration with the Ethiopian Pharmaceutical Association, are organizing an awareness training session to address this issue from June 10-12, 2024, in Addis Ababa.

Opening the training with a keynote speech, Seyoum Wolde, Deputy Director General of the Pharmaceutical Sector at the Authority, stated that the objective of the training is to enhance healthcare resources by building capacity. He underscored the importance of providing awareness training to stakeholders at all levels and transforming the acquired knowledge into

practical measures. To effectively combat antimicrobial resistance, Ato Seyoum stressed that doctors must prescribe the appropriate medications, and pharmacists must ensure that these medications are dispensed accurately.

In his remarks, Kidu Hailu, Executive Director of the Ethiopian Pharmaceutical Association, highlighted that antimicrobial resistance is currently the most significant health threat. He called for immediate action to address this growing challenge.





Especial Message



His Excellency Dr. Dereje Duguma a State Minister of Health

His Excellency Dr. Dereje Duguma, State Minister of Health, launched the National Food Safety Master Plan and delivered the following opening speech.

It is a great pleaser to me to be here with you for this important meeting which deals a national food safety issues at national level.

First of all, I want to thank you all for taking out time and being present at this important food safety meeting.

Food is an essential part of what it means to be human.

The fate and well-being of every human being on our planet depend on reliable access to sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious foods.

Today, we know that foodborne diseases caused by different contaminants and kill hundreds of thousands of people every year. Those most affected are children under five in Africa and South Asia. Therefore, unsafe food is responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths every year. When food is not safe, children cannot learn, adults cannot work, human development cannot take place.

Food-borne hazards can be microbiological, chemical, or physical in nature and are often invisible to the plain eye: bacteria, viruses, or pesticide residues are some examples. Food safety has a critical role in assuring that food stays safe at every stage of the food chain from production to harvest, processing, storage, distribution, all the way to preparation and consumption.

Food safety is not an issue for one institution. It is an issue for researchers, academia, conformity assessment bodies and other stakeholders. Everybody has a role to play from farm to table to ensure the food we consume is safe and will not cause damages to our health.

So; food safety is a shared responsibility across different government agencies, as well as with the private sector, consumer organizations and others involved in the food chain.

Building strong partnerships, among government institutions and stakeholders along value chains, and across the public and private sector is essential. Apparently the National Food and Nutrition Policy and Strategy through its strategic objectives gives direction for proper implementation of food safety.

Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

Food safety is not only important for fighting hunger and promoting health. It's critical for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Food safety is intimately linked to many other SDGS, including economic growth, innovation, responsible consumption and production, and climate action. Practices aimed at improving food safety also reduce food losses and increase food availability. In addition, countries that are able to ensure safe food can take advantage of international trade opportunities, thereby increasing income levels. Food safety is of critical importance to Africa because of its aggravating impact on food insecurity, political instability, communicable diseases, natural disasters and other major concerns dominate government agendas and the news media, the importance of food safety is often not well understood. The 1996 World Food Summit Plan of Action recognized the importance of food safety, as it defined food security as: "...when all people ... (have) access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food ...". As part of the United Nations

Decade of Action on Nutrition, many countries have made commitments on nutrition, but very few have made commitments on food safety. But there is no food security without food safety.

Improving food safety in countries requires sustained investments in several areas, from stronger regulation, to better laboratories, more stringent surveillance and better training and education. This developed national food safety master plan supports us to identify gaps and indicate focus area of priorities in these areas.

The support of African Union Commission (AUC) through its program Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA) to develop this National Food Safety Master plan is highly appreciated. Of course developing the National Master Plan is not the final goal rather a start to implement a national food safety system in a well-organized and coordinated manner by giving a priority on identified gaps and deficiencies. I hope all involved institution to develop this master plan will strongly

Involve for its implementation too. International organizations and UN agencies similarly collaborate for the fulfillment of this national master plan implementation and to achieve expected goal and objectives at national level.

Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

I hope the Food Safety Master Plan which we will launch today provides us the clear picture of the country status and gives as a direction where and how to focus on future implementation. As food safety is a global agenda coordination and collaboration also very vital. I consider that this workshop gives us an opportunity to create strong networks within concerned stakeholders and between institutions involved in food safety activity.

Food safety comes first

If the food is not safe, it is not food.

Need to ensure that our food is safely produced, processed, distributed and consumed throughout the entire supply chain.

Food safety is everyone's business.

Saying this; I declare that the workshop is official opened.



Her Excellency Heran Gerba Director General of EFDA

Her Excellency Heran Gerba, Director General of EFDA, was one of the Keynote speakers and delivered the following message.

On behalf of EFDA and myself I am highly privileged to welcome you in this special day of the Launching of National Food Safety Master plan at national level here at AUC HQ.

Food safety is a key element of health and human development. Africa's contribution to the global food and agri-food supply is increasingly important. In parallel keeping food safe is a

challenge that affects every aspect of our undertaking towards the development of the country and our continent. It hinders trade and the competitiveness of our food products on the world market. Food safety problem impacts the health of citizens and their productivity. It contributes to large post-harvest losses, reducing availability of foods locally and continentally.

Availability of safe and good quality foods locally is not only support the public health through protecting food borne disease but also has an important pre condition to increase export market and strengthen the national economic growth and for provision of ensuring food security; but if we are not addressed proactively, it can be an impediment to the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), particularly in food products and services, and the competitiveness of the food trade in Africa.

Africa needs and deserves safe food, but at present food borne disease accounts for more than 91 million cases of illness in Africa each year (WHO). Meanwhile, stunting and underweight affect 39 per cent of African under 5s. Contaminated foods are a major cause of morbidity and mortality in both humans and animals who consume contaminated foods. Unsafe food creates a vicious cycle of disease and malnutrition, particularly affecting infants, young children, and the elderly and immune compromised people

In this regards, in August 2021 the African Union Commission (AUC) through its program, Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA), invite 12 member countries out of which Ethiopia is one of selected member country to work on the food safety through developing a food safety master plan and further more. This food safety initiative supported by AUC is a country-led and will put member states in the driver's seat which is a hallmark of AU's efforts. The Commission will provide expertise and catalytic support to address the complex food safety challenge, which cuts across multiple sectors, in an effective and efficient manner and enable expedited progress and tracking of progress for continuous improvement

Hence, the government of Ethiopia took this opportunity as a good chance and assigned EFDA as focal institution and started to communicate

with AUC and now we are here to see one of the activities achieved which is NFSMP. EFDA as focal institutions coordinate all concerned institution nationally (government institution under the MOA, MOTRI and research institutions, academia, conformity assessment bodies and even privet institutions involved in food safety activity) to contribute for the development of this national Food Safety Master Plan.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The National Food and Nutrition policy of Ethiopia in its policy direction (7.2) clearly stated that "**An effective food safety system is vital to safeguard the community from unsafe food consumption and contribute to economic benefits of the country from agricultural products. It is essential to build a system for ensuring food safety and quality using a comprehensive and integrated farm-to-table approach in which all value chain actors play vital roles. Therefore, food safety and quality is as a policy direction in Ethiopia and also in the National Food and Nutrition Strategy document** strategic objective 2 says that **"Strengthen and implement an integrated food safety and quality system is one of the objective of the FNS"**

Therefore, this developed National Food Safety Master plan in parallel with the national Food and Nutrition policy and strategy becomes a good instrument for the implementation of food safety system at national level. As document is developed in well-coordinated and collaborated manner its implementation also requires a well-organized coordination and collaboration.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Finally, EFDA highly acknowledge AUC PACA for its unreserved support for the successful completion of this indispensable document which support the proper implementation of food safety at national level and all involved institution who contributed to the development of this National document.

Thank you all and wish a successful meeting



His Excellency Ambassador Diriba Kuma Director General Ethiopian Agriculture Authority Key note

It is a great pleasure for me to deliver a key note speech on this most important workshop event signifying a launching of national food safety master plan which in my view will immensely contribute to the transformation of food safety in Ethiopia.

Recently, Ministry of Agriculture has launched national food safety and quality strategies that are aimed not only to transform national food safety and quality system primarily to protect consumers but also to create a favorable condition that will help to

Comply with international food safety protocols. The strategy is mainly focused on addressing the current pressing challenges related to safety and quality of primary agricultural produces across broader value chains through engaging multiple actors in a collaborative manner.

Food safety and quality are increasingly becoming an important public health issues in Ethiopia. In this regard, there are a number of cases where the health of consumers are challenged by foodborne diseases caused by high rates of adulteration, and lack of appropriate practices of hygiene in handling food throughout the food value chains. Moreover, there are also cases where incidences of foodborne illness have become major health threat in our society. In fact, the challenges of food borne diseases are not limited to national boundaries, according to World Health Organization (WHO) estimates, annually more than 600 million foodborne illnesses are occurred globally which lead to hundreds of thousands of deaths every year especially in poor countries.

Food safety has a critical role in assuring that food stays safe at every stage of the food chain from production to harvest, processing, storage, distribution, all the way to preparation and consumption. Generally, millions of people phases cases of foodborne illnesses more acutely in developing countries, severely affecting vulnerable and marginalized communities, particularly women and children, including populations affected by conflicts and natural disasters.



Scholars define food safety as the absence of hazards in food that may harm the health of consumers. More precisely, food-borne hazards can be microbiological, chemical or physical in nature and are often invisible to the plain eye such as bacteria, viruses or pesticide residues.

Excellences, ladies and Gentlemen Food safety is not only important for fighting hunger and promoting health but also It's critical for achieving the Sustainable Development Moreover, food safety is intimately linked to many other SDGS including economic growth, innovation, responsible consumption and production, as well as climate actions. Over the past few years, attention has given by policy and in most cases makers to improve nutrition and in most cases and food safety strategy has been developed as well national implementation is going on at various levels to improve food safety at national and community levels.

I am delighted that this meeting is bringing together representatives from national and regional stakeholders in such a way that it will help in enhancing deep collaboration to fight the burden of foodborne diseases. In my view, such type of collaboration will help to induce synergy and mobilize resources to address the challenges of food safety holistically.

Finally, the food safety master plan main objective is to draw attention and inspire actions to help prevent, detect and manage foodborne risks, contributing to food safety, human health, and economic prosperity and at end lead to sustainable development. So, this is a great moment for all of us to garner synergy to implement the master plan with a great responsibility to the transform the food safety status of our society.

Once again on behalf of my organization I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the AU-PACA project for their crucial support and leadership in advancing food safety efforts in Ethiopia. I thank you.

A key note Speech by Dr. Janet Edeme
Head of Rural Development and Ag. Head of
Agriculture and Food Security
Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue
Economy, and Sustainable Environment (ARBE)
Division of the Africa Union.

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the African Union Commission Headquarters to launch the food safety master plan of Ethiopia and launch of the National Food Safety Technical Committee that will ensure that the Plan is implemented as outlined in the document.

Allow me on the onset to convey warm greetings from H.E. Amb. Josefa Sacko, AU Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment who wishes to pay tribute to Ethiopia for its longstanding commitments to the ideals of our Union and commitment to implementing key flagship projects of Agenda 2063 including the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) under which the Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA) was established to address the adverse effects of aflatoxins and recently food safety in general.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen. As you are aware, food safety is a challenge that affects our undertakings towards the development of our continent. It impacts the health of our citizens and their productivity. It hinders intra-African trade and the competitiveness of our agriculture products on the world market and can be an impediment to the Africa Continental Free Trade Area, particularly in agricultural goods and services. Unsafe foods contribute to large post-harvest losses, reducing availability of foods locally and continentally. Globally, more than 200 diseases from diarrhea to cancers are said to be caused by unsafe foods. Each year, millions are affected by foodborne illnesses and hundreds of thousands die of the same.

The continent faces daunting challenges in this respect, as exemplified by the almost 100 million Africans falling ill due to foodborne diseases and the more than hundred thousand deaths each year representing one third of the global death toll of foodborne illnesses. Children under 5 years of age represent 40% of the deaths and the impacts of unsafe food weigh heavily on the poor and disadvantaged segments of the society.

Unfortunately, over the past decades, governments, rightly so, have mainly focused on food production and sufficiency to ensure

availability of food for their population, while leaving food safety, quality and nutrition for others to address. While sustained efforts are being made to increase food production and availability, it is a matter of concern that lesser attention has been given to the issue of food safety.

It therefore gives me great pleasure to see stakeholders from different professions, institutions and competent authorities in this room today finally prioritizing food safety and coming together to discuss how to improve the food safety situation in Ethiopia and across the continent.

Over the past two years, the African Union Commission, through its initiative the Partnership for Aflatoxin Control

in Africa (PACA) has extended support to improve food safety to its Member States in 12 countries, one of them being Ethiopia. These countries were selected using a criteria developed in conjunction with AUDA-NEPAD and Regional Economic Communities. The selected countries were finally approved by the SPS Committee of the Commission.

The food safety initiative is country-led and puts member states in the driver's seat, a hallmark of AU's efforts. To this end, the AUC has been working with the Government of Ethiopia who have embraced this process to address food safety in the country.

In this initiative, the Commission using the FAO and WHO validated methods and tools, with the support of other partners, provided expert support to Ethiopia to conduct a self-assessment of its national food control system. Ethiopia has therefore developed the national food safety country profile, identified gaps in the national food control system and developed a costed national food safety master plan to enable evidence-based policies and interventions. The country profiles will also serve as a foundation for needs-based, in-depth assessment of the national food control system.

To this end, the Ethiopia Food and Drug Authority and the Ethiopian Agriculture Authority have played a major role as focal institutions to coordinate the initiative. As we gather here today, I am pleased to learn that Ethiopia has successfully assessed its food control system and the country now knows the status of its food safety. Learning on PACA's country-led models which were endorsed by the 36th Ordinary Session of the AU Executive Council, the food control assessment is accompanied by a strategic plan for implementation by all stakeholders. This will ensure that the documents developed are not shelved but are actioned for positive change.

As we all know, implementation requires resources, both financial and technical and I am therefore pleased to observe that we have a number of Senior Government Officials with us who I believe will facilitate the allocation of requisite resources for implementation. Additionally, I am equally pleased to see development partners present with us and on behalf of H.E. Amb. Sacko call on them to work with the Government of Ethiopia to support the implementation of the priorities they have outlined in their food safety master plan.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the Commission's support to the Government of Ethiopia in implementing the food safety master plan. The launch of this Plan is not the end of the project but the beginning of a process to transform the food safety systems of Ethiopia. Our team from the PACA Secretariat will continue to liaise with the National Food Safety Technical Committee that is also being launched today to support the Government of Ethiopia in this journey they have embarked on today. I thank you for your kind attention.