Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa

Improving food security, health, and trade

UPDATE – September 2012

Aflatoxin contamination has wide ranging impacts on health, trade and food security throughout Africa. Prevention and control of aflatoxin requires a comprehensive, systematic and integrated approach, involving a broad range of stakeholders in Africa and globally. Stakeholders have endorsed the creation of a Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA) under the leadership of the African Union Commission. Participants in the seventh Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program’s (CAADP) Partnership Platform (PP) in March 2011 urged that the AUC to oversee the establishment of a Continental SPS Working Group to mainstream SPS matters in the CAADP framework and establishment of an Africa-led Partnership for Aflatoxin Control. Participants in the PACA Workshop, 3-4 October 2011 in Nairobi, Kenya hosted by the African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) recommended the creation of an interim Steering Committee and broad PACA membership to guide the formation of PACA in 2012.

Aflatoxin is a highly toxic substance caused by fungi. The toxin is linked to cancer, immune-system suppression, growth retardation, liver disease, and death in both humans and domestic animals. Already, governments, private companies, farmers’ organizations, research organizations, international institutions, donors, civil society organizations, and others are investing in and implementing key elements of solutions to better manage aflatoxin in Africa. As these areas for action are interrelated, actions need to be implemented in a holistic and integrated manner.

Overview of PACA

Within the general framework of CAADP’s continent-wide effort on SPS issues, PACA aims to provide consistent coordination and coherent leadership to the continental efforts on aflatoxin control, acting as the de facto clearinghouse of information, communication and control on aflatoxin in Africa. While the exact activities and shape of PACA are still being developed and will be informed by input from wide-ranging African and international partners, some initial short and long term objectives have been identified:

- **Establish a PACA network and information sharing platform**: The Partnership will provide tools for communication and coordination between the many organizations and individuals working on aflatoxin control throughout Africa.
• **Engage high level leadership:** PACA will seek endorsement of aflatoxin control by the highest political leadership in Africa, and a launch event is planned for 31 October 2012 in Addis Ababa on the margins of the Conference of African Ministers of Agriculture and Trade (CAMAT).

• **Create durable structures and transparent governance:** The Partnership will be guided by a Steering Committee comprised of representatives from a diverse array of interested parties that were identified during the AU-IBAR meeting and appointed by the AU. During the first eight months, the Interim Steering Committee has created the following documents to establish fair and transparent governance processes:
  - Vision, Mission, Objectives, and Organizational Structure,
  - Terms of Reference for Steering Committee and Subcommittees, and
  - Rules of Procedure

The Interim SC has formed a Budget and Finance Subcommittee and will also create three subcommittees in the areas of: health, agriculture and food security, and trade. The Interim SC is in the process of identifying priorities for aflatoxin control, and developing the following additional documents to guide PACA operations:
  - Membership Terms of Reference, and
  - Travel Policy

• **Support implementation of effective aflatoxin control projects:** Beginning in its first year, PACA is supporting on-the-ground projects to assess aflatoxin prevalence and economic impacts; prevent contamination; reduce exposure; and improve health, food security, and trade.

• **Mobilize resources and develop a funding mechanism:** One of the long-term objectives of PACA is to provide a coordinated funding mechanism, modalities for submitting proposals for aflatoxin related activities, and a process and criteria for evaluating proposals. Toward this end, the PACA Interim SC has developed Guidelines for Proposal Submission Selection. Terms of Reference for an Independent Proposal Review Team and Calls for Proposals are under development.

**Needs and Areas of Interest**

Through interviews and meetings with stakeholders, PACA has identified a need for multiple, inter-related areas of action, required for a comprehensive approach to aflatoxin control. Research and assessments provide the foundation upon which science-based interventions
will be designed and refined. These interventions will include approaches designed to prevent aflatoxin contamination pre- and post-harvest, reduce exposure, and direct contaminated crops to alternative uses. New information from studies, along with the results from field trials and grower experience, will inform policies, standards, and regulations that will drive scaling up of on-the-ground control activities and require testing at various points along the value chain. Simultaneous to all of this, education initiatives will be designed to raise awareness about the dangers of aflatoxin, as well as how to successfully implement proven aflatoxin control strategies.

**Overview of Existing Aflatoxin Research, Prevention, and Control Activities**

Numerous public and private funders are supporting aflatoxin research, prevention, and control projects around the world. The PACA has begun to catalogue existing and planned activities on aflatoxin control in Africa. These encompass over fifty individual projects that are supported and led by a wide range of parties and span continental, regional, and country scales. Examples of the type of work that is ongoing or planned include:

- Building an increased understanding and knowledge-base of Aflatoxin’s prevalence and impacts through literature reviews, country assessments, economic analyses, health impacts studies, and a baseline (ex-ante) digital mapping of aflatoxin prevalence and control interventions.
- Building capacity to implement aflatoxin prevention and control activities in an integrated manner. These activities include development of low cost diagnostic tests, training for farmers, construction of testing facilities, technical assistance, establishment of regional standards, and exploration of alternative uses.
- Further developing and scaling up existing and new technologies for preventing aflatoxin both pre- and post-harvest. Examples projects include variety improvement, food processing techniques, scaling up biological control, and improving and implementing low-cost storage and drying technology.

**Next Steps**

- The full PACA Steering Committee will be inaugurated during the PACA launch on 31 October 2012.
- Interested parties will be invited to submit nominations for membership to the PACA Subcommittees and Independent Proposal Review Team.
PACA Steering Committee

The Steering Committee will include representation from the following sectors. It was also agreed that the following institutions should represent each sector during the first one to two-year term of service:

African Union Commission (1)
Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture

Regional Economic Communities (2)
Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA),
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

Farmer Organizations (1)
Pan African Farmers Organization (PAFO)

Civil Society Organizations
Consumers International

Private Sector (1)
Pan African Agribusiness and Agro Industry Consortium (PanAAC)

African Health Institution (1)
African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF)

African Research or Academic Institution (1)
Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA)

African Food Safety and Trade Organization
Expert institution to be recommended and invited

Development Partner (1)
US Agency for International Development (USAID)

Technical Agencies (2)
African Agriculture Technology Foundation (AATF)
International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA)

For More Information about PACA:
Visit http://www.aflatoxinpartnership.org; or contact info@aflatoxinpartnership.org.