



FOOD SAFETY IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY

WORLD FOOD SAFETY DAY 2022

TUESDAY, THE 7TH OF JUNE 2022

Preamble

World Food Safety Day is celebrated every 7th of June to draw attention and inspire action to raise awareness of food safety and help prevent, detect and manage food borne risks. This year's World Food Safety Day will be commemorated under the theme: "**Safer Food, Better Health**". Food safety is critical for community health and wellbeing. Foodborne illness can jeopardize the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals. Foodborne diseases have a global burden comparable to severe illnesses, malaria and tuberculosis. Foodborne disease is a significant public health issue that affects both industrialized and developing countries to variable degrees. According to recent estimates, foodborne infections cause 33 million years of a lost healthy life, with 600 million cases and 420,000 deaths—children under the age of five account for almost 30% of all deaths caused by foodborne illnesses.

Foodborne diseases impact one out of every ten persons every year. The good news is that the

majority of foodborne illnesses can be avoided. Infectious and toxic dangers, microbiological pathogens (bacteria, viruses, and parasites), chemical residues, biotoxins, and other unpleasant or harmful substances can all be prevented by our behavior, the way we create food systems, and the way we manage the food supply chains. Safe food is essential to human health and wellbeing. Only when food is safe can we fully benefit from its nutritional value and the mental and social benefits of sharing a safe meal. Safe food is one of the most critical guarantors of good health.

ESAFF Uganda believes that food safety is a shared responsibility from production to consumption. Everybody should collaborate towards supporting small-scale farming communities to secure a sustainable and gender-just, safe-food production system that serves everyone. Improving food safety is a collaborative effort that involves all relevant stakeholders. Food safety is a public good, and governments should ensure that goods on the market are safe to eat. Food safety is key to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that include ending hunger, achieving

food security and improved nutrition, and promoting good health and wellbeing while ensuring sustainable consumption and production. World Food Safety Day reminds us that we all play a crucial role in keeping food safe. We need to prioritize food safety throughout the supply chain, from farm to table.

Small scale farmers commend the government for developing and promoting standards for quality products and services; the government developed 3,621 standards (as of the 31st of March 2019), of which 1,317 compulsory standards are designed to protect health and safety of consumers.

Small-scale farmers also commend the media for promoting food safety through communication and education programs.

Small scale farmers further commend Civil Society Organizations for making a public call drawing attention to the growing concerns on Aflatoxins, which is one of the issues affecting the safety of foods and consequently our health, economy, and wellbeing. Aflatoxins can be found in nature all over the world. Aflatoxins can contaminate food crops and represent a significant health risk to humans and livestock. Consumption of aflatoxins-contaminated foods has increased the risk of liver cancer and other disorders.

Small scale farmers additionally commend research institutions for providing evidence to policymakers on the necessity of food safety and the difficulties that arise while ensuring food safety.

What small-scale farmers are doing to promote food safety:

Small-scale farmers are taking the following actions to promote and preserve food quality and safety for their livelihoods and also citizens of Uganda;

"We are actively practising organic farming that protects the food and soils from depletion through inorganic pesticides and fertilizers. Organic farming ensures the consumption of healthy and chemical-free food in our homes. We locally add value to our organic products such as coffee to avoid contamination at processing factories." – Miiro James, Small scale farmer, Mukono District.

"Silos have helped us to store our produce and prevent our food from contamination. Our maize is harvested and taken straight to the silos to ensure clean produce and contamination from aflatoxins." – Manderia Lillian, Small Scale Farmer, Adjumani District

"We must transform food systems to improve health, and we must do so long-term. To enhance health outcomes, policymakers, practitioners, and investors in the food system should focus on boosting the sustainable production and consumption of safe foods. Agricultural, food, trade, and industry development policies must all support food safety to make safe and healthy meals accessible to all." – Hakim Baliraine, Mayuge District, National Chairperson.

"One of the ways we are ensuring food safety is by ensuring good handling practices and adding value to our ground nuts and simsim". – Vicky Lokwiya, District Chairperson, Gulu district.

What government and other stakeholders should do to promote food safety:

Small-scale farmers are calling on government and other stakeholders to do the following to promote food safety in the country;

"Small scale farmers are calling on the government to promote agriculture policies, enact, and put measures to support the implementation of appropriate food laws that embrace agroecology, ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The government should further increase funding to sectors and programs that are committed to helping achieve safer food in Uganda" – Harriet Mulumba, Small Scale Farmer, Mityana District

"I believe that strengthening collaboration improves food safety shared responsibility for food safety requires working together on issues that affect us all – globally, regionally, nationally, and locally. Collaboration is essential across sectors within communities, businesses, governments, and across borders, to ensure the availability of safe food around the world sustainably now and in the future." – Masudio Margaret, A Small-Scale Farmer Leader, Adjumani District

"Consumers should always keep informed and promote food safety. Consumers can influence change. Consumers can help lower the global burden of disease and support sustainable food systems by adopting safe and healthy eating choices." – Muwanga Olivia, A Small-Scale Farmer, Masaka District

"Government should regulate and continuously supervise food processing companies to ensure that safe food is availed to consumers. Use the FAO/WHO Food Control System Assessment Tool to assess national food control systems, and conduct frequent checks to ensure food satisfies international food standards." – Ikaali Zeridah, Small Scale Farmer, Jinja District

"Consumers should always keep informed and promote food safety. Consumers have the power to drive change. Making safe and healthy dietary choices help reduce the global burden of disease and supports sustainable food systems. Consumers should practise safe food handling at home." – Mungu Acel Mario, Small Scale Farmer Leader, Zombo District

"The private sector dealing in food should encourage a food-safety mindset among employees. To grow and develop a food safety culture, involve employees, suppliers, and other stakeholders. They should organize regular food safety awareness sessions, training, or workshops for their staff and company leaders." – Beatrice Pangani, Small-Scale Farmer, Kasese District

"Private sector companies should observe international food safety regulations. Food safety is ensured by adhering to national and international food standards, which opens up

market opportunities." – Wauya Raymond,
Small Scale Farmer, Mbale District

"The media should disclose information on food safety to influence consumer preferences and choices."- Irene Nakijoba, Small Scale Farmer, Mukono District.

Conclusion

Small scale farmers further urge the government, academia, private sector and other stakeholders to increase support for safe and healthy food through research, extension, training, and increasing awareness so that foods produced and traded are safe for human consumption, thereby increasing household incomes, improving food security, and improving quality of life.

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About ESAFF Uganda

Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) Uganda is the most significant small-scale farmer-led advocacy movement in Uganda, with membership in over 54 districts. ESAFF Uganda brings together small-scale farmers, pastoralists, and fisherfolks into the movement to advance social and economic equality, agroecology, and food sovereignty.