

Food Safety and Agenda 2063: How are Africa's Food Safety Regulations and Policies Aligned to its Agenda 2063?

Jane Ezirigwe

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Research Fellow, Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies and Doctoral Scholar, University of Cape Town, South Africa. Email: ezirigwejane@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Notwithstanding African Union's Agenda 2063's goal on healthy and well-nourished citizens, more than 91 million Africans fall ill due to foodborne diseases every year. In sub-Saharan Africa, where food insecurity, political instability, communicable diseases and natural disasters are rampant, food safety is of critical importance because of its aggravating impact over the above concerns. This paper adopted the doctrinal method to examine regional and national efforts in curbing foodborne diseases in Africa and achieving the Agenda 2063's goal. It was observed that the existing food legislation in most African countries is outdated, inadequate and fragmented, thus creating an inevitable confusion among food control enforcement agents. The paper urged African lawyers to act as agents of change, by holding companies responsible for their negligence and demanding compensation for victims affected by foodborne diseases. It concluded that the most significant approach to ensuring Africa's food safety is efforts made at the national level through laws, policies and judicial activism.

Keywords: Agenda 2063, Foodborne diseases, Food regulation, Food safety, Public health

INTRODUCTION

Food safety laws are laws that regulate the handling, preparation and storage of food by food and drink industry, in ways that prevent foodborne diseases and ensure public safety. Food safety laws consist of regulations on standardizing production processes of food and drinks by manufacturing companies. These would help prevent adulterated and substandard products. Secondly, they drive policies that discourage bad preservation methods of farm products which expose the public to infectious disease outbreaks. This is achieved through Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Good Hygiene Practices (GHP) and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) based management systems. Lastly, they integrate laws and policies that regulate the hygiene levels of fast food outlets and the informal sector engaged in the sale of fast and street food that could lead to foodborne diseases.

Foodborne disease is undoubtedly a public health problem (WHO Brochure). Today, foodborne disease is a leading cause of death and illness in Africa and is

poised to be a considerable burden on Africa's public health (WHO, 2015). More than 91million Africans fall ill due to foodborne diseases in a year (WHO, 2015). This is attributed to poor and ineffective food safety regulations in Africa as well as poor enforcement regimes. This study focuses on sub-Saharan Africa and excludes North Africa. This is because most of the discussions below apply to sub-Saharan Africa and are being better managed by North Africa. In a region where food insecurity, political instability, communicable diseases and natural disasters are rampant, food safety is of critical importance because of its aggravating impact on humanity (FAO/WHO, 2005). Persons suffering from diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and other various ailments affecting the region are at a greater risk to be debilitated by unsafe food, as their immune systems are already compromised (FAO/WHO Regional Conference 2005).

In addition, there is a close link between food safety and the deadly outbreaks of Ebola and Lassa fever in the

region. The Lassa virus can be transmitted to humans via contact with food items sullied with rodent urine or faeces (WHO, 2017). This is a grave concern in West Africa, where food processors sun dry and expose food items to rodents and other animals. In areas where food production is exigent, wildlife, including, fruit bats and primates are hunted for subsistence purposes and for bushmeat consumption (Omoleke et al., 2016). The Ebola virus had been contacted from the meat of hunted two species of bat-*Hypsignatus monstrosus* and *Epomops franqueti*, which are both reservoir species for Ebola viruses in Guinea (Omoleke et al., 2016). It has been alleged that it is safe to consume such food products that are properly prepared and cooked as Ebola virus is inactivated by thorough cooking (Chong, 2014). Ebola virus can be inactivated by thorough cooking of food products with core temperature reaching at least 70°C, a requirement for it being safe food.

Agenda 2063 is a strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of the continent over the next 50 years. It builds on and seeks to accelerate the implementation of past and existing continental initiatives for growth and sustainable development. Bearing in mind the African Union's Agenda 2063's aspirations for a prosperous Africa, based on inclusive growth and sustainable development and its specific goal on healthy and well-nourished citizens, this paper adopts 'the rule of law theory' as its theoretical framework to examine the region's efforts in curbing foodborne diseases in Africa. The rule of law is an 'essentially contested concept' (Rodriguez et al., 2010). It includes systems of rules and regulations, the norms that infuse them, and the means of adjudicating and enforcing them (Berg and Desai, 2013). The rule of law is influenced by norms such as 'equality before the law'; and equal access (Berg and Desai, 2013).

The rule of law also requires that citizens should respect and observe legal rules, even in situations where they disagree with the rules. Under the rule of law, prescribed laws should be consistent with international human rights norms and standards (U.N. Secretary-General, 2004). The above notions and roles of the rule of law will guide discussions on food safety below. First, the rule of law will be adopted in examining the food safety regulations at the regional and national efforts, to determine if they are consistent with human rights norms and standards. Secondly, the requirement that citizens observe legal rules will be used to determine whether the laws on food safety in Africa are obeyed. Lastly, the rule of law, through the principles of equality and equity prioritizes those who are being left behind (IDLO, 2014). This perspective of the rule of law will be employed in discussing regulation of the informal sector.

The Bolstered rule of law is critical to achieving the health outcomes of Agenda 2063 and other global and regional health frameworks in Africa. It is fundamental in adopting comprehensive laws and policies and for empowering the poor and marginalized, through greater awareness

and realization of their rights and needs (IDLO, 2016). The law and justice sectors play significant roles in any challenges in the health systems. States need explicit powers to regulate the production, marketing and sales of unhealthy foods and beverages. A functioning criminal justice sector is essential to curtailing the flood of contaminated, adulterated and substandard food across the African continent (IDLO, 2016).

After this introduction, section two deliberates on aligning Africa's food safety to agenda 2063. This section will establish the link between food safety and Agenda 2063. It will also entail discussions on incidents of foodborne disease outbreaks and the effect of these to Africa's public health and economy. Section three discusses regional and national efforts to ensure food safety. It examines the existence of food control systems in African countries and determines whether the national food legislation is in line with international requirements. Section four debates on the challenges encountered in regulating food safety in Africa, with a focus on balancing public safety and food insecurity in Africa as well as propose some measures that will help in promoting food safety and invariably public health in Africa. The last section is on concluding remarks.

ALIGNING AGENDA 2063 TO AFRICA'S FOOD SAFETY

This section discusses the relevant provisions of Agenda 2063 on food safety. It reports incidents of foodborne disease outbreaks and infectious diseases associated with unsafe food handling in Africa, to show the extent to which the reality reveals non-alignment with the provisions of the agenda. It concludes with the effect of these to Africa's public health and economy.

The first aspiration of Agenda 2063 is for a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development. Paragraph 10 of the Agenda aspires that by 2063, Africa shall be a prosperous continent, with the means and resources to drive its development, with sustainable and long-term stewardship of its resources and where amongst others:

- African people have a high standard of living and quality of life, sound health and well-being;
- Modern agriculture for increased production, productivity and value addition contributes to the farmer and national prosperity and Africa's collective food security; and
- Africa's unique natural endowments, its environment and ecosystems, including its wildlife and wild lands are healthy, valued and protected, with climate resilient economies and communities (Paragraph 10 of Agenda 2063).

Under paragraph 11, the Agenda aspires that by 2063, African countries will be amongst the best performers in global quality of life measures. This will be attained through strategies of inclusive growth, job creation, increasing agricultural production; investments in

science, technology, research and innovation; gender equality, youth empowerment and the provision of basic services including health, nutrition, education, shelter, water and sanitation.

"Health and Nutrition" are part of the priority areas for the first ten years of the Agenda, which ends in 2023 (African Union, 2015). Member states are required to "adopt/integrate Agenda 2063 and the associated Ten Year Implementation Plans as the basis for developing their national visions and plans". A review of the laws and policies of most African countries do not reflect the fact that the ten-year plan has been integrated. We are five years away from 2023. The ten-year implementation plan has as one of its targets - to reduce malnutrition by half, from its figures in 2013, by 2023. Malnutrition consists of undernutrition, micronutrient related malnutrition, overweight, and diet-related non-communicable diseases (including foodborne diseases) (WHO, 2018). Nine out of ten persons are also expected to have access to safe drinking water and sanitation. It is important to observe that the targets on health and nutrition, as one of the priority areas, are unrealistic and there were no concrete provisions to make them practicable. Targets should be practicable and realistic. The burden of achieving the targets was perhaps not factored in, nor the current state of these problems properly considered. This is because, for instance, the continent currently has several millions of persons without access to safe drinking water (WHO, UNICEF, 2017). Achieving a 90 percent access to safe drinking water for all Africans within the five years is not realistic because of the lack of the infrastructure to make it happen.

Food safety is an essential part of achieving good nutrition, sound health and a high quality of life. In order to achieve these, the legal and regulatory regimes of most African countries on food safety need to be revamped and strengthened. This is because the incidents of foodborne disease outbreaks are alarming, thereby revealing ineffective regulation. Every day, over 1,300 children die due to diarrhea caused by contaminated food and water, most of them African children (WHO, 2015). Diarrhea is a type of foodborne disease. Foodborne diseases comprise a wide collection of illnesses caused by ingestion of contaminated food or beverage (Gabida et al., 2015). Contamination typically occurs during food preparation or proportioning but could occur at any point from farm to fork (Ameme et al., 2016).

Evidence from West and East Africa

Several studies and reports have narrated incidents of foodborne disease outbreaks in these regions. In Nigeria, there is currently an outbreak of cholera disease, transmitted through infected water, with about 5,607 persons already affected (NCDC, 2018). This has resulted in the death of several persons in eight states of Nigeria (This Day, 2018). In 2017, in a settlement predominantly inhabited by Fulani herdsmen, gastroenteritis, a diarrheic ailment triggered by zoonotic

bacteria, was identified as the cause of 62 deaths in Yagba West, Kogi state (Ololade, 2017). There was also a report of food poisoning caused by toxic metals in Zamfara state which resulted in the death of numerous infants and children (Pepple, 2017).

In Ghana, on 30th October 2017, it was reported that over 50 students of the Ghana Senior High School in Koforidua were admitted for treatment at the St. Joseph's Hospital, arising from a food poisoning episode (Coleman, 2017). The Ghana Web, a media house had reported a suspicion of the 'Jack and Jill biscuits' being poisonous in 2017 (Yeleliere et al., 2017). A study in Ghana recounted a foodborne disease outbreak associated with food items of "waakye" and "shitor", consumed from a popular community food joint (Ameme et al., 2016). These are popular Ghanaian dishes of boiled rice and beans, usually eaten with locally prepared pepper sauce.

In Kenya, a study in 2018 reported that ready-to-eat chicken was contaminated with bacteria such as *E.coli*, *salmonella*, *staphylococcus*, enterobacteriaceae and coliforms and tested positive to sodium metabisulphite, a preservative that scientists alleged causes cancer if consumed in large amounts (Kubania, 2018). Another study in Kenya in 2017 revealed that compliance with food handling practices and health measures as laid out in the Public Health Act Cap 242 and the Food, Drugs and Chemical Substances Act Cap 254 of Kenya was not satisfactory (Kariuki and Orago, 2017). Consequently, foodborne illnesses and food handling practices are still a major threat to public health in Embu Municipality, the place of the study.

Evidence from Southern and Central Africa

In South Africa, between the end of 2017 and 2018, about 1,000 persons have been infected and over 200 (Telegraph news, 2018) persons have died as a result of a widespread outbreak of *Listeria monocytogenes*. The source of the outbreak has been linked to contaminated meats from Tiger Foods (Kelland, 2018). This outbreak has been described as the world's worst recorded listeria outbreak. In Zimbabwe, there was a reported study suggesting that a foodborne disease outbreak of food poisoning due to *staphylococcus* intoxication was caused by chicken served for lunch in December, 2016 (Sithole et al., 2017). In Zambia, there was a report of a foodborne disease outbreak as a result of contaminated food served at dinner and consumed by students at a college in Lusaka on 19 March 2017 (Kapaya, 2018). These several incidents of foodborne disease outbreaks highlight the need for effective regional and national food safety laws and programmes.

The effect of these foodborne outbreaks is enormous on the health, health systems and the economy of Africans and African states respectively. Stunted growth and high mortality rate are recorded for children under 5 years (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2017). Preventable additional burden is imposed on healthcare

systems across Africa. The loss of productive hours reduces economic productivity. In addition, ineffective regulatory regimes and the subsequent non-compliance to food safety procedures result in low buyer and investor confidence. It also leads to rejection of African products at regional and international markets leading to loss of income (WHO, 2017) and subsequently, perpetuating poverty in Africa.

REGIONAL AND NATIONAL EFFORTS TO ENSURE FOOD SAFETY IN AFRICA

Food safety is a shared responsibility. It starts with the existence of extant laws, a strong regulatory regime, an enhanced institutional capacity building to ensure enforcement as well as an intensified education of the public. The provisions of the law will act as an intervention tool or as a barrier to action (Géraldine, 2016). Although the existence of laws is not sufficient in effective legal interventions, it is clear that the specific provisions of the law and the mode of enforcement matter for an effective food safety practice. Accordingly, there have been efforts both at the regional, sub-regional and national levels to use the law to tackle foodborne diseases and improve public safety in Africa.

Regional and sub-regional efforts

Certain regional policies on public health and food safety in particular are in existence. For instance, there is an attempt to establish a regional Food Safety Authority. After a comprehensive evaluation of food safety challenges in Africa was produced, and recommendations were made on the mission, structure and functions of an African Union Food Safety Management Coordination Mechanism (AU-FSMCM), the African Union Commission (AUC) was to set up African Food Safety Authority. This structure, which is expected to organize food safety management in Africa, has however not been established to date. The initiative to establish the African Food Safety Authority is commendable, but the delay in establishing it demonstrates the lack of political will to ensure food safety in Africa.

The African Health Strategy (AHS 2016 – 2030) is another commendable initiative. It is the primary document that consolidates all African commitments in the health sector. It provides Africa's Member States with strategic guidelines on establishing an improved health sector. The goal of the AHS 2016 - 2030 is to ensure healthy lives and promote the well-being for all in Africa in the context of "Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want" and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Another laudable regional approach to ensuring food safety is the Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy 2015–2025, (ARNS 2015-2025). It acknowledges that the lingering high level of malnutrition in Africa is a serious health challenge and proposes nutrition-specific interventions including providing food, in ways that do not

endanger health. The strategy demands improved quantity and quality of foods produced in the region. It recommends more developed mechanisms for production, processing, preservation, preparation and presentation of food, in order to retain its nutritional value and ensure food safety (ARNS 2015-2025). It demands that the AUC and its nutrition supporting and implementing associates, including the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), organize regional and sub-regional conferences and consultations on nutrition and food security issues that involve a common African position and understanding, at least once a year (ARNS 2015-2025). In addition, the African Union Commission cooperates with the RECs and donor agencies to plan and implement regional programmes that build Sanitary and Phytosanitary capacities related to food safety. On the sub-regional level, the relevant Ministers of the West African sub-region under the 'One Health Ministerial' Meeting in 2016 had decided amongst others; to enhance collaboration between projection, early warning and surveillance networks for human health, animal health and food safety (Paragraph 6, Communiqué of the One Health Ministerial Meeting 11 November 2016).

National efforts

There have been efforts made at the national levels to regulate the food and drinks industry, and related industries. Several countries in the region have made some efforts to update and strengthen their food safety systems and infrastructure in recent years. This has included restructuring of food control systems for better coordination and integration of services, adoption of food safety policies and engagement of the judiciary (WHO, 2014).

Nigeria currently operates a multiple agency Food Safety Control System which is mostly sectorial (Oni, 2017). Enactment and implementation of food safety legislation are also fragmented between the three tiers of Government: Federal, State and Local Government Area Councils. There is in existence the National Agency for Food Drug Administration and Control Act and its regulations, National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency Act, Standard Organization of Nigeria Act, Consumer Protection Council Act, Food and Drug Act, and so on. There is also the National Policy on Food Safety which was adopted in 2014. It aims to integrate and harmonize all existing laws, standards and codes that regulate food safety practices in Nigeria; redefine and coordinate existing food control infrastructures at various levels of government; and eliminate areas of overlap and conflict (Ezirigwe, 2018). South Africa also operates a multiple agency Food Safety Control with Ministries of Health, Agriculture and Trade and Industry as the relevant ministries. There exists the Agricultural Product Standards Act, 1990 and the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act, 1972 with its set of regulations that govern the manufacture,

sale and importation of all foodstuffs to ensure food safety (Guidelines For Environmental Health Practitioners). Resulting from the listeria outbreak, the government of South Africa is set to revise its weak food safety regulations expediently. The regulations are currently undergoing the second phase of legal processes (Georgina, 2018).

In Mali, a national food safety agency has been instituted by law and a national food safety council was established to harmonize food safety activities, including technical and scientific support, risk assessment, supporting surveillance activities, epidemiological networks and risk communication (WHO, 2014). In Ghana and Kenya, there are also efforts to coordinate food safety activities (WHO, 2014).

Nevertheless, a cursory look at these regulations by most African countries reveals that the provisions are outdated, weak, fragmented (Recommendations for the Missions, Functions and Structure of African Union Food Safety Authority) and not in line with current realities (Recommendations for the Missions, Functions and Structure of African Union Food Safety Authority). In most African countries, the management of food safety is a multi-sectorial affair, often concerning the ministries of health, agriculture, science and technology, trade/industry, tourism, and local governments. This institutional structure is often typified by multiple organisations, with overlapping or conflicting mandates resulting in confusion and neglect, inadequate enforcement of regulations, and misallocation of resources (Recommendations for the Missions, Functions and Structure of African Union Food Safety Authority). Inadequate coordination between these ministries and agencies has aggravated the problem (WHO, 2014). Weak law enforcement and lack of political will are also evident (Recommendations for the Missions, Functions and Structure of African Union Food Safety Authority). Although most African countries are members of Codex and signatories to the Sanitary and Psycho-sanitary Agreement, their processes for setting standards and technical guidelines are not well defined, and do not indicate a scientific risk assessment (Recommendations for the Missions, Functions and Structure of African Union Food Safety Authority). A sound scientific risk assessment is a significant component in any food safety risk management decision. Risk assessments are required in establishing relevant food safety legislation, in establishment of food inspection priorities and other food safety policies (Recommendations for the Missions, Functions and Structure of African Union Food Safety Authority). There are also in existence inadequate technical capacity for food safety management and lack of scientific basis for food safety management decisions.

Food production, processing, and marketing in most African countries is typically through the informal markets and highly fragmented among a large number of small producers and handlers who do not possess adequate knowledge and expertise in the application of modern

practices and food hygiene (Recommendations for the Missions, Functions and Structure of African Union Food Safety Authority). The foremost concern with the informal sector, especially street foods is poor hygiene and sanitation (Malangu, 2016). It has been documented that quite a good number of street food vending facilities in different parts of Africa do not meet good hygiene standards due to several reasons, including weak regulatory systems, inadequate food safety laws, lack of financial resources to invest in safer equipment and lack of education for food handlers (Malangu, 2016). Interestingly, most countries do not have appropriate policies and legislation to regulate street vending (Malangu, 2016).

Finally, there is a critical lack of up-to-date knowledge and proficiencies to deliver professional food inspections services as required (Recommendations for the Missions, Functions and Structure of African Union Food Safety Authority). The majority of African countries have not instituted capacity building and training programmes for government food control officials, producers, food industry and/or the consuming public. These must go hand in hand with the regulations in the form of policies. Consumer education is a crucial part of preventing food-borne illnesses, but its importance is not manifested in African countries' policies and actions. The catalytic role, to be performed by consumer associations in promoting the quality and safety of food supplies, is not widely acknowledged, and in most countries, such groups are only weakly formed, and largely ignored. (Recommendations for the Missions, Functions and Structure of African Union Food Safety Authority). They have no formal responsibility set out in advising government and obtain no support to build their competences in representing the most important stakeholders in the food safety system – consumers.

CHALLENGES AND PROPOSED REFORMS

Effectively regulating food safety in Africa is confronted with similar challenges across Africa, including deficiencies in the legal, judicial, cultural, infrastructural, political, educational, economic, administrative, socio-security and capacity building frameworks of most African states. The regulations are not comprehensive for regulating the informal sector, an important group in the food industry in Africa (Malangu, 2016). There have been very limited cases on public interest litigations on food safety and there is no obvious judicial activism that promotes food safety in Africa.

Cultural inclinations and beliefs constitute another limiting factor. Food poisoning is usually associated with evil spirit, malice or curses in many parts of Africa, (Oyemade et al., 1998) as against improving on hygiene measures. There is also a popular assertion that “dirty/germ/disease no dey kill African man” (dirt does not kill an African man) popularly chanted by the consuming public (Naijaloaded news, 2018). This is rooted in the

argument that a hungry or poor man may not be bothered about the quality and safety of the food being consumed. These can be debunked by the statement that, "if it is not safe, it is not food" (Lipp, 2015).

Inadequate infrastructure and resources to support scientific risk management, inefficient food supply chain and poor traceability also constitute challenges (Oni, 2017). Poorly equipped laboratories, (Omojokun, 2013) and the paucity of relevant data and information on the incidence of foodborne disease outbreaks result in poorly appreciating their burden on food safety (Onyeneho et al., 2013). A major obstacle to food safety in Africa is infrastructural deficiencies including poor disposal systems, lack of toilet facilities for customers, (Fasoro et al., 2016; Ehiri et al., 2001) poor water supply and poor drainage systems (Ehiri et al., 2001). These ensue to food being prepared in unsanitary conditions, and predispose conditions favourable to contamination.

Political and administrative impediments also exist. The uncoordinated approach to food control, poor enforcement of legislation and regulatory limits (Omojokun, 2013), and lack of understanding of food safety and quality standards as outlined in international agreements (Oni, 2017), hinder effective regulation. The inter-sectoral nature of food safety and the difficulties that it poses for coordinating effective policies and actions across sectors is a major reason for the lack of coherent action (WHO, 2014).

The issue of foodborne toxicants in Africa is exacerbated by public ignorance on the subject as well as inadequate knowledge and skills in food workers (Recommendations for the Missions, Functions and Structure of African Union Food Safety Authority). Socio-security and climatic conditions like war, drought and political insecurity can result in a great challenge for effective regulation (Omojokun, 2013). Climate change, where temperature changes modify food safety risks associated with food production, storage and distribution, has an impact on food safety (Food Safety- Fact Sheet, 2017). The growing population rate also increases the burden on food security and a relaxed attitude by the consuming public and the regulators alike (Ezirigwe, 2018).

Poverty is also a contributing factor to non-compliance to food safety procedures. For instance, to avoid contamination from animals, people are educated to avoid sick animals especially those consumed as bushmeat. However, due to poverty and hunger, no amount of education or risk will stop a desperately hungry person from eating a sick animal, when he has no options (Richardson, 2012). After all, a 100 percent chance of death from starvation would be dreaded more than a less-than-certain chance of getting sick or dying from eating infected bush meat (Richardson, 2012).

Most of these challenges can be overcome with an intensive public campaign to educate the food handlers and the consuming public as well as a concerted effort to synergise amongst the relevant agencies. There is need to implement appropriate policies and strengthen capacity for food control, including those for foodborne

disease surveillance (WHO, 2014).

Litigation can be a central strategy in improving public health (Smith, 2006).

The need for a proactive legal and judicial engagement cannot be overemphasized in the bid to ensure an effective food safety regime. African lawyers can take a clue from Mr Bill Marler, a United States food safety lawyer and a food policy change agent in the U.S, whose law firm, Marler Clark, has represented thousands of individuals in claims against food companies whose contaminated products have caused life-altering injury and even death (Food Poison Journal, 2017). He has filed lawsuits against such companies as Chili's, Chi-Chi's, Cargill, ConAgra, Dole, Excel, Golden Corral, KFC, McDonald's, Odwalla, Peanut Corporation of America, Sheetz, Sizzler, Supervalu, Taco Bell and Wendy's, securing over \$600,000,000 for victims of foodborne illnesses. Some of his cases contributed to successfully moving forward the Food Safety Modernization Act in 2010 (Food Poison Journal 2017).

CONCLUSION

The importance of food safety in Africa is often outshone by incidences of food insecurity, political instability, and outbreaks of communicable diseases, which have tended to dominate government focus (Recommendations for the Missions, Functions and Structure of African Union Food Safety Authority).

The Agenda 2063 has however recognized the importance of sound health and nutrition, albeit in a very limited manner. Specific targets to be met, undernutrition, in the first ten-year implementation plan are unrealistic.

The need to protect the African populace from foodborne diseases has become imperative, given the frequency of its occurrence.

Efforts have been made by several African countries to regulate foodborne diseases and promote food safety. However, a review of the laws and policies on food safety by several African countries reveal that they are outdated, fragmented and there is usually lack of cooperation and coordination amongst the multiple agencies saddled with the responsibility. These result in enforcement problems and ineffective regulation.

Food safety is a shared responsibility. However, a focus on regional policies and initiatives will not yield the needed results as the most significant approach to ensuring Africa's public health and safety is at the national level. Explicit laws, strong regulatory infrastructure, mechanisms for coordination, emergency preparedness and effective health systems must be put in place. The use of litigation and judicial activism is another important approach to hold companies liable for damages caused by their products. Some of the responsibilities should also be on the food handlers and the consuming public.

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