

25 OCT 2019

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Improving the Nutritional Value of Nigeria's School Feeding Programme

The African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), a fortnight ago, hosted school feeding managers from across the Nigerian federation at a capacity building workshop on the use of the School Meal Planner (SMP) tool; which enables users to create nutritionally-balanced and market costed school meals, using daily nutritional allowances, as recommended by WHO and FAO.

An adequate, well-balanced diet combined with regular physical exercise is considered a basic necessity of life – and integral to achieving quality health and well-being. However, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, over 800 million people across the globe are undernourished, with Africa accounting for more than 25% of the figures.

In Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria, about 2 million children are suffering from severe acute malnutrition – the second highest burden of stunted (malnourished) children of any country in the world – with a national prevalence rate of 32% among children under the age of five years, according to a 2018 report by the United Nations Children's Fund.

Poor nutrition leads to reduced immunity, increased susceptibility to diseases, impaired physical and mental development, and reduced productivity among children under-five. Consequently, malnutrition is regarded as the underlying cause of 45% of all deaths of under-five children around the world. Hence, the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) has for long identified the Home Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) as having an immediate impact on food and nutrition security in Africa, with a potential to contribute to the realisation of the African Union's long-term development master plan: Agenda 2063.

In 2003, AUDA-NEPAD in partnership with the World Food Programme launched a pilot HGSFP and Health Programme in 12 African countries including Nigeria; designed to link school feeding programmes to agricultural development through the purchase and use of locally produced foods to improve nutrition and quality of school meals on the continent. The HGSFP was later endorsed by the AU Heads of State and Governments as a means of tackling hunger, improving nutrition as well as increasing children's access, participation and achievement in school for sustainable livelihoods on the continent – as enshrined in the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme and the 2014 Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth And Transformation for Shared Prosperity And Improved Livelihoods respectively.

"In March this year, AUDA-NEPAD undertook a survey of the National Home Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) in 3 Nigerian states namely: Ogun, Oyo, and Osun, in collaboration with the government of Nigeria, R.T Briscoe Nigeria Plc (private sector) and the Imperial College London's Partnership for Child Development (PCD). The aim of the study was to assess the quality of school meals being served in schools towards the use and implementation of the School Meal Planner tool for improved nutritional impact," says Ms Kefilwe Moalosi, Senior Nutrition Officer at AUDA-NEPAD.

It was on this basis that about 70 participants from 27 states, including state-level school feeding programme managers gathered in Abuja, the Nigerian capital, for a three-day capacity building workshop on the theme: "Nigeria Home Grown School Feeding team capacity building workshop for use of the School Meal Planner." The training was funded and hosted by AUDA-NEPAD, in collaboration with Nigeria's National Home Grown School Feeding Programme and the Partnership for Child Development, a global consortium of civil society organisations, academic institutions and technical experts, domiciled at Imperial College London.

Among others, the objectives of the capacity building workshop were applying basic nutrition and menu planning guidelines to improve the nutritional composition of the NHGSFP and build nutrition officers' and school feeding programme managers' capacities for identifying and using relevant handy measures for use by cooks across Nigeria. This is to ensure school children's meals always contain the required nutrients and in the right proportions. **Source: African Newspaper www.africannewspage.net**

Creating Bridges for Medicines Regulatory Systems Strengthening in Africa



The AUDA-NEPAD African Medicines Regulatory Harmonisation Programme is creating bridges in Africa and abroad with the aim to improve access to Quality, Safe and Affordable Medicines to African citizens.

“The pharmaceutical sector in Africa has a huge potential, one of the key elements is to ensure the promotion of local production of pharmaceuticals in the continent in order to provide an enabling regulatory environment,” Mrs Margareth Ndomondo-Sigonda, AUDA-NEPAD’s Head of Health Programmes said. She added, “Developing pharmaceutical manufacturing plants in Africa will increase the continent’s access to medicines.” Mrs Sigonda was speaking at the 4th Scientific Conference on Medical Products Regulation in Africa (SCoMRA IV) held in Victoria, Falls Zimbabwe between 30 September and 1 October 2019 brought together over 300 delegates from 41 countries.

The goal of SCoMRA IV was to stimulate discussion on progress made over the last decade of regulatory harmonisation and alignment of regulatory networks, identify regulatory challenges facing Africa and lessons learnt, and propose a path forward for the next decade with a special focus on the new African Medicines Agency.

The Zimbabwean Minister of Health and Child Care, Mr Obadiah Moyo, said that lack of locally produced goods puts the whole continent at risk as it faces high rates of diseases. The Minister reiterated that 80 per cent of Zimbabwean medicine is imported into the country. “[Since] we are threatened by substandard medicines, it is important to build capacity for harmonising our regulations so we are able to independently manufacture our own drugs,” said Minister Moyo.

Over 90 per cent of generic medicines in Africa is still being imported from mainly India and Europe. University of Cape Town Organic Chemistry professor Kelly Chibale, said new generic medicines take between 5-10 years from its date of manufacture to be introduced in Africa. “There is an urgent need to move towards more innovative approaches based on the science and the supporting data for regulatory decision making in Africa,” he continued to say.

The key recommendations were; (i) increased collaboration between regulators, researchers, academia and the industry is critical for improved capacity on regulation and drug discovery on the continent (ii) there is a need to strengthen research capacity and regulatory oversight focused on the young generation in order to achieve long-term sustainable benefits; (iv) re-thinking the review process to be underpinned by science and data for regulators to make science-based decisions driven by data and should be prioritized (v) acquiring the necessary skills to leapfrog and take advantage of innovations in medicines discovery and development is vital.

The conference brought together key stakeholders such as regulators, policymakers, academia, the scientific community, private sector and civil society from across Africa, providing a platform for stakeholders to brainstorm on their role of ethical and regulatory approval of clinical trials of new medicines. This year’s theme was **“A Decade of regulatory harmonisation in Africa: Where are we? Where do we go from here?”**

SCoMRA has been held every two years since 2013, SCoMRA IV was a special one as the African Medicines Regulatory Harmonisation Initiative is celebrating its 10th year anniversary leading medicines regulatory systems strengthening and harmonisation work in Africa since its inception in 2009. SCoMRA IV also came at the opportune time when the continent is looking into the establishment of the African Medicines Agency as an offshoot of the AMRH Initiative following the adoption of the AMA Treaty by the AU Assembly in February this year, and subsequent signing by five AU Member States. SCoMRA IV was organised in partnership with Medicines Control Authority of Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Ministry of Health and Child Care, the Southern African Development Community, World Health Organisation, The World Bank, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations and other key development partners.

Parliamentarians' Technical Seminar on Niger's Biosafety bill

The African Union Development Agency–NEPAD, in partnership with the Ministry of Environment, the *Centre National des Études Stratégiques et de Sécurité (CNESS)* and the Parliament of Niger organised a technical seminar to discuss the biosafety bill provisions on 30 September 2019, in Niamey. The seminar follows previous meetings organised by CNESS and the Ministry of Environment with the support of AUDA-NEPAD to sensitise stakeholders on biosafety.

Fifty participants attended the seminar including members of the Parliament Select Committee for Rural Development and Environment, at which the opening ceremony was chaired by Hon. Iro Sani, First Vice-President of the National Assembly.

Hon. Iro Sani highlighted the importance of the seminar, stating that it will open discussions on biosafety principles and their relevance to a country like Niger. “The Parliament will pay special attention to the outcomes of the meeting, hoping that they will serve as a basis for constructive discussions on the biosafety bill during the parliamentary session coming soon,” he added.

Dr Moussa Savadogo, AUDA-NEPAD Principal Programme Officer, on behalf of the Head of AUDA-NEPAD West Africa Regional Office, recalled that Niger is a party to the Cartagena Protocol on biosafety. He also congratulated the country for its active participation in the international negotiations that led to the adoption of protocol and in the subsequent meetings.

Dr Savadogo further stated that, AUDA-NEPAD highly appreciates the efforts made so far by Niger Ministry of Environment and the whole Government to table to the Parliament such a draft biosafety bill that is modern and well balanced. He stressed that the adoption of the biosafety bill has been long-awaited and now needed to allow the country comply with its obligations vis-a-vis the international agreement on biosafety.

During the seminar, participants got insight into the global and regional context that must shape the Niger biosafety bill, especially the status of the biosafety governance at global and regional levels. They also gain insight on the progress made so far, globally, to ensure effective applications of modern biotechnology tools to improve agricultural productivity and food systems as well as in the health sector. Participants were also provided with detailed information on the ongoing process led by the CNESS to develop a national biosafety/biosecurity strategy as well as the detailed steps followed by the Ministry of Environment to develop the current biosafety bill.

Parliamentarians expressed appreciation for the opportunity given to them to improve their understanding of the biosafety/biotechnology landscape, and they commended the Ministry of Environment, CNESS and AUDA-NEPAD for the quality of the information shared with them and the relevance of the bill that has been prepared.

Below are some of the impressions from two participants:

Hon. Maman Rabiou Maina, Chairman of the Parliament Select Committee for Rural Development and Environment



“We have been well informed about the bill that is important for the protection of biodiversity in Niger. This meeting has equipped us with good knowledge and will facilitate the examination of the bill by the Parliament until its adoption by the plenary of the National Assembly. Niger is among the countries that have become aware of climate change and steps are being taken to ensure the protection of the

environment in the country. ”

Hon. Souleymane Hamed, Member of Parliament Select Committee for Rural Development and Environment



“Our impressions on this meeting are positive given the interest that all participants have shown in this biosafety bill. We have been very impressed by the content of the bill and we have noticed that all the members here are adhering to it. The biosafety law will solve a number of issues. Countries bordering Niger already have such a law and if we do not take measures we risk the consequences of our inaction. We can say that this bill is really timely.”

Country consultations on the West Africa Rice Business Case Study



The West Africa rice sector is under stress as its rising demand outpaces increases in production. Because of economic growth and rapid urbanization, changes in consumption patterns and consumer preferences have shifted rice from a luxury food to a staple for a growing number of households in West Africa. It, therefore, becomes critical for the subregion to develop its rice sector to reduce imports and meet the demand.

The development of sustainable rice systems in West Africa will also lead to improved food and nutrition security for millions of people while adding value to the entire business model and rice food chain.

Grow Africa in partnership with IDH, initiated a study on West African rice sector to establish a roadmap to build commercially viable rice value chains that could support the subregion's self-sufficiency, with focus on four countries: Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, and Nigeria. Fieldwork took place from July 22 to August 9, 2019 and was done by a team from Dalberg consulting firm. From October 8 to 17, 2019, Grow Africa convened national consultation meetings in each of the four countries to bring together all relevant stakeholders to align with the key findings of the study and build collaboration in implementing the recommendations.

In the four pilot countries of the study, preliminary results showed that among the top common challenges impeding the rice sector are limited access to production factors (land, capital and labour); low level of supply and access to certified production inputs and services; low adoption of Good Agricultural Practices, mechanization and best postharvest practices; weak processing technologies and marketing strategies.

The rice system analysis in the various countries helped identify and prioritise potential business opportunities and policy reforms and interventions needed to create the enabling environment to unlock these business opportunities in order for the sub-region to be self-sufficient in rice. The total private sector investments identified through the first three top-ranked business opportunities with potential anchor companies amounted \$21.1 million in Burkina Faso; \$7.0 million in Côte d'Ivoire; \$21.5 million in Niger and \$12.1 million in Nigeria. For a total of US\$61.7 million in top twelve business opportunities in all the four countries.

The national consultation workshops were another opportunity to raise awareness among stakeholders on the urgency to act for the benefit of the rice sector, and subsequently the food sector in West Africa.

On each occasion, Mr Ibrahim Gourouza Magagi, Grow Africa Chief Operating Officer, thanked country participants for their collaboration. He commended IDH for its partnership and support in funding- and the Dalberg team in conducting this study in the four countries. "The issue of rice self-sufficiency in West Africa can only be tackled with a regional approach which will connect all the segments of the value chain" said Ibrahim. A regional consultation is planned early next month to further discuss opportunities for stronger regional integration.

APET: Expansion of Modern Technologies are Driving Development in African Societies



Addis Ababa, October 23, 2019 - The expansion of modern technologies such as information technology, biotechnology, material science and communications are driving development in all dimensions of African societies.

The African Union recognizes the value of science, technology and innovation (STI) in accelerating its 50-year continental socio-economic development plan - Agenda 2063. As a result, several mechanisms have been instituted to assist the AU Member States to fully utilize emerging technologies (ETs) and innovations as effective tools for sustainable development.

In recognising the role of STI in Africa, the African Union High-Level Panel on Emerging Technologies (APET) was established in 2015 as an advisory body to steer conversations and engagements amongst member states to enable the harnessing of technology for sustainable socio-economic development.

Among the ten technological innovations which were identified as drivers of socio-economic development; (i) *the gene drive for malaria vector control*; (ii) *Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (Drones)*; and (iii) *Micro-grids are the first set of emerging technologies that have been explored as alternatives in improving health, agriculture as well as empowering communities to enable transformation in Africa.*

The Panel also reviewed and made recommendations on the next set of emerging technologies, including: *Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain technology and Next-Generation Batteries.*

The technologies were recommended with consideration of the continent's capacity strengthening needs, regulatory, as well as ethical and gender considerations. Consequently, the panel has reinforced the need for the African governments to play a leading role in setting up policy, guidelines and standard operating procedures regulatory requirements for the development and application of emerging technologies and innovations on the continent.

On 23 October 2019, the APET had its 5th annual meeting to review the actionable outcomes proposed during the 4th meeting in order to assess the progress on implementation of the recommendations in the APET reports. The Panel deliberated on the modalities, planning and implementation strategy for the 2nd Calestous Juma Executive Dialogue on Innovation and Emerging Technologies which takes place from 24 to 26 October 2019 at the African Union Commission.

The Panel endorsed the establishment of the APET STI and Entrepreneurship Dialogue Series (ASTIEDS). This programme will consist of in-country consultations, short courses and capacity-strengthening workshops to begin in 2020. ASTIEDS seeks to complement the Calestous Juma executive dialogue in providing capacity strengthening to non-executives and youth within the context of science and emerging technologies.

The discussions emphasised the enhanced role of APET in engaging Member States through the provision of technical advice, dissemination of APET reports and organising dialogues, conferences, capacity strengthening platforms and seminars through the APET Secretariat.

Announcements:

The UNWTO/AUDA-NEPAD Tourism Tech Adventure: Promoting African Tourism Innovation



The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), with the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD), initiated the Africa Tourism Start-ups competition in 2018. The title of the maiden edition was UNWTO/AUDA-NEPAD Tourism Tech Adventure: Promoting African Tourism Innovation.

The initiative was purposed to supporting the African tourism start-ups, to contribute to the transformation of the tourism sector. Five star-ups were selected in the 2018 edition and got exposed to the world's tourism leaders, investors, corporates, academia and supporting business partners, to pitch their start-ups. The pitching competition saw Mr David Gonahasa, the Managing Director of Roundbob in Uganda, and Ms Codou Olivia Ndiaye, Co-founder and Project Manager of LIVES in Senegal, emerge as winners. Mr Gonahasa and Ms Ndiaye were rewarded with scholarships by Madrid based IE Business School to further develop their start-ups into big businesses.

In addition, the five participants were introduced to various innovation hubs in Madrid, which included: Wakalua (Tourism Innovation Hub); the Amazons Innovation Hub; Airbus Innovation Hub and Google Campus for further mentorship. The call for application for the second edition of the completion is currently running globally. African youths are encouraged to join the rest of the world in submission of application. Please see application link here: <https://tourismstartups.org/>

Rethinking Development in Africa



The question is asked as to whether it is still prudent to continue to view 'development' in traditional paradigms, given that 'development' itself requires new thinking in order for real transformation to take place, in the present-day conditions.

Mr Mohamed Abdisalam, AUDA-NEPAD's Head of Environmental Sustainability was interviewed by CNBC's Esther Awoniyi on the Beyond Markets show, to shed more light on what needs to be done by the Agency in shaping the continent's future.

Be sure to watch the interview at: <https://www.cnbcfric.com/article/2019/10/23/rethinking-development-in-africa/>

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