



WORLD FOOD SAFETY DAY PRESS STATEMENT

Everyone Is A Potential Victim, As 1.3 Million People In Uganda Suffer From Foodborne Illnesses, 3,700 Are Diagnosed With Aflatoxin-Induced Liver Cancer, Costing Uganda Approximately USD 577 Million, While 90% Of The Chicken Consumed Contains Antibiotic Residues.

Issued on 7th June 2026

Virtual Press Conference

Today, Uganda joins the rest of the world to commemorate World Food Safety Day, under the theme **“From burden to solutions, safe food everywhere.”** We, the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) herein signed, are committed to advancing a safe and healthier food environment for consumer protection, sustainable trade, enhanced livelihoods, and socio-economic transformation.

Foodborne diseases remain a significant global public health challenge. Every year, an estimated 600 million people, nearly 1 in 10 individuals worldwide, suffer from illnesses linked to contaminated food, resulting in approximately 420,000 preventable deaths.

In Uganda, foodborne diseases continue to pose a significant public health and development challenge, placing considerable strain on households, health systems, and the national economy. According to the Ministry of Health (MoH 2021), an estimated 1.3 million cases of foodborne illnesses were recorded in the country, accounting for approximately 14 percent of the total disease burden treated nationwide.

These figures highlight the persistent risks associated with unsafe food and underscore the urgent need for strengthened food safety measures across the entire food value chain, from production, processing, transportation, and storage to marketing, preparation, and consumption.

Evidence further demonstrates that unsafe food contributes to a vicious cycle of illness, malnutrition, and poverty, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable groups, including children, adolescents, pregnant and lactating women, the elderly, and individuals living with chronic illnesses or compromised immune systems.

Beyond the immediate health impacts, food contamination undermines consumer confidence, threatens livelihoods, limits market opportunities, and constrains progress towards national health, nutrition, and sustainable development goals. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated action by government, the private sector, civil society, development partners, and consumers to ensure that safe, nutritious, and quality food is available and accessible to all Ugandans.

Food contamination arises from multiple hazards occurring along the food value chain, from production to consumption. Key drivers include the inappropriate and excessive use of agrochemicals in agricultural production, resulting in harmful chemical residues in food; contamination of water bodies and aquatic ecosystems through agricultural and industrial runoff, including chemicals from large-scale plantation



agriculture such as oil palm developments that drain into lakes and other water sources; the misuse of veterinary and public health products in food preservation and preparation; the use of non-food-grade materials during food processing and packaging; inadequate post-harvest handling practices; and limited investment in safe storage, transportation, and food processing infrastructure. Collectively, these factors increase the risk of foodborne illnesses, compromise nutritional outcomes, and undermine consumer confidence in the safety of food systems.

Of particular concern is the increasing use of highly hazardous pesticides and other hazardous agrochemicals in Uganda's agricultural sector, coupled with the widespread circulation of counterfeit and substandard agrochemical products on the market. These practices pose significant risks to food safety, public health, occupational safety, biodiversity, and environmental sustainability. The presence of pesticide residues beyond acceptable limits in food products not only threatens the health of consumers but also undermines the competitiveness of Uganda's agricultural exports in regional and international markets.

The economic consequences of poor pesticide management are substantial. Estimates indicate that Africa loses nearly USD 4 billion annually due to pesticide mismanagement, while Uganda is reported to lose approximately USD 60 million in export earnings each year as a result of pesticide residue violations and non-compliance with food safety standards (UBOS, 2021).

Uganda's Legal, Regulatory, and Institutional Framework for Food Safety

Uganda has made notable progress in establishing legal, policy, and institutional frameworks aimed at safeguarding food security, food safety, nutrition, and public health.

The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995 (as Amended), places a clear obligation on the State to respect, protect, promote, and fulfil the right to adequate food. The National objectives and directive principles of State policy, Objective XXII on Food Security and Nutrition, requires the State to take appropriate measures to encourage food production and storage, establish national food reserves, and promote proper nutrition through public education and other appropriate interventions.

The Food and Drugs Act, Cap. 307, which provides for the prevention of food adulteration and the protection of consumers from unsafe food products. This law was developed in 1959 and has not been amended to account for the current and emerging dynamics in the food environment, such as technology, rising food safety issues, and challenges related to agricultural practices, food production, preparation, storage, and transportation.

The Agricultural Chemicals (Control) Act, Cap. 35 (as Amended) provides for registration, manufacture, importation, distribution, storage, use, and disposal of agricultural chemicals.

Despite the existence of these and other relevant legal instruments, Uganda's food safety governance landscape remains fragmented. The country currently lacks a comprehensive and dedicated Food Safety Act that provides a coherent, risk-based, and farm-to-fork approach to food safety management.

In addition, food safety functions are dispersed across multiple ministries, departments, and agencies, each exercising distinct but interconnected mandates. While these institutions play important roles, the absence of a unified legal and institutional framework can limit coordination, create regulatory overlaps and gaps, and constrain effective surveillance, enforcement, and response to emerging food safety threats.



Recognition of Progress and Ongoing Efforts in Strengthening Food Safety in Uganda

As CSOs, we acknowledge and commend the Government of Uganda for developing and implementing legal, regulatory, and standards frameworks aimed at strengthening food safety governance and protecting public health.

We recognize the leadership of the Government through the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) for the significant measures undertaken to mitigate food safety risks within the agricultural sector, including the recent ban and restriction of 18 Highly Hazardous Agrochemicals, a critical step towards reducing exposure to toxic substances, safeguarding human health, and promoting environmentally sustainable agricultural practices.

We further commend the Government's sustained investments and policy actions aimed at addressing aflatoxin contamination, including support for research and development of biological control technologies such as Aflasafe, intensified public awareness initiatives, and the formulation and implementation of the National Strategic Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Aflatoxins (2018/19–2023/24).

We also recognize and appreciate the complementary roles of civil society organizations, development partners, the private sector, research and academic institutions, farmers, and food market actors. Their continued efforts in advocacy, innovation, capacity building, and the promotion of good agricultural and food handling practices have significantly contributed to strengthening Uganda's food safety system and advancing the collective transition from food safety challenges to practical, scalable solutions.

Notwithstanding these important achievements, significant gaps remain, such as the enforcement of existing regulations, limited availability and adoption of safer alternatives for farmers, inadequate market surveillance systems, and insufficient coordination across the food value chain. Addressing these gaps requires sustained investment, stronger regulatory enforcement, improved inter-agency coordination, and a more integrated, risk-based approach to food safety management.

Our Call to Action

As we commemorate this World Food Safety Day, we, here, call upon the;

a) Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries;

1. The Committee of the Agrochemicals Control Review Committee should consider banning or imposing stringent restrictions on all identified Highly Hazardous Pesticides within Uganda's agricultural sector to safeguard consumer health and environmental integrity. And expedite mechanisms of ensuring that all banned molecules are off the market.
2. Fast-track and expedite the review and finalization of key regulatory instruments, including the Regulations under the Agricultural Chemicals (Control) Act, Cap. 35 (as amended), as well as the Post-Registration Guidelines for pesticides.
3. Expedite the process of developing and establishing the Food and Agriculture Regulatory Authority.
4. MAAIF should expedite the process of the review of the Organic Agriculture Policy, 2019 and maintain agroecology as a sustainable agriculture practice.
5. The National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) should expedite the commercialisation phase of Aflasafe to make it available and accessible to farmers to prevent aflatoxins.



b) Ministry of Water and Environment

6. The Ministry should prevent and regulate the discharge of agricultural, industrial, and oil-related pollutants into lakes, rivers, and wetlands that support fisheries and food systems. And enforce the environmental and health impact assessments for large-scale agricultural and industrial projects located near fishing grounds and water sources.

c) Market Actors, private sector, and farmers:

1. Should comply with the food safety standards, regulations, and guidelines.
2. Farmers should adhere to good and sustainable agronomic practices and standards for food safety.

d) Civil society Organisations :

1. Undertake food safety advocacy
2. Conduct resource and community mobilisation for food safety initiatives

e) Consumers:

1. Demand for safe and healthier food on the market.

***“Food Safety is everyone’s business,
If it's not safe to eat, it's not food.”***

Signed by:

1. Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information and Negotiations Institute (SEATINI)
2. Food Rights Alliance (FRA)
3. Food Safety Coalition Uganda (FoSCU)
4. Global Consumer Centre (CONSENT)
5. Caritas Uganda
6. Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Uganda
7. Center For Food and Adequate Living Rights (CEFROHT)
8. FIAN Uganda
9. Action Against Hunger (ACF)