

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Voluntary _ Public

Date: 3/11/2011

GAIN Report Number: NI11013

Nigeria

Post: Lagos

GON Inaugurates National Food Safety Committee

Report Categories:

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

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Report Highlights:

Following frequent cases of rejection of Nigeria's food exports based on quality and health concerns, the GON recently inaugurated a multi-disciplinary National Food Safety Management Committee that will be responsible for food safety and quality control measures. The committee will manage the process of ensuring food safety from farm to table and ensure that Nigerian products meet international standards for exports, especially under AGOA.

General Information:

The Nigerian government (GON) has inaugurated the National Food Safety Management Committee. The committee was inaugurated by the Honorable Minister, Federal Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The committee will be responsible for food safety and quality control measures from farm to table.

The committee will provide training assistance on the implementation of Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP), Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points procedures (HACCP), and Good Agricultural Practice (GAP). The Committee is Chaired by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Commerce, with members drawn from Federal Ministry of Commerce and Industry; Federal Ministry of Agriculture; Federal Ministry of Health (Food and Drug Services Division); National Agency for Food, Drug, Administration and Control (NAFADAC); Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON); Nigeria Quarantine Service (NQS); Federal Produce Inspection Service (PPIS); Nigeria Export Promotion Council (NEPC); Federal Department of Fisheries as well as a representative of the commodities association and the All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN).

This new committee was established to increase inter-ministerial cooperation and cooperation with the private sector, to increase awareness in the government and industry about food safety and SPS issues. At the Inauguration, the GON recognized the need for Nigeria to take advantage of the trade liberalization under the WTO to boost exports. The GON appears to be lately recognizing that adopting global best practices will build confidence in Nigeria's food products and can lead to growth in exports.

According to the Minister, non-tariff barriers such as standards, sanitary and phytosanitary measures were being used by countries to protect human, animal and plant life or health. Nigeria's agricultural products destined for export encounter significant non-tariff barriers such as sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) thereby hindering access to international market. He recalled a particular incident where Nigerian groundnuts and melon seeds' exports were rejected by trade partners based on food safety considerations regarding aflatoxin.

The establishment of the committee is seen by many as a bold step taken by the GON to enhance the ability of farmers and food processors to export food items. Ten years after the enactment of the African growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), Nigeria has not been able to increase non-oil exports to the United States. Primarily, the GON expects the committee to create an enabling environment that will enhance Nigeria's capacity to comply with global standards to take advantage of AGOA.

The Director, Ministry of Commerce and Industry further stressed the need for Nigeria to show commitment to WTO rules in terms of sanitary standards and to ensure compliance with international sanitary standards for domestic and export foods. He added that the work of the committee will not result in technical barriers to trade but will enhance conformity in food safety issues.

The inauguration of the committee is coming on the heels of a recent USDA/FAS conference on HACCP held in Abuja, Nigeria in collaboration with NAFDAC. The objective of the USDA/FAS forum was to bring together all sectors in Nigeria that are responsible for food safety from farm to fork with a view to fashion out ways of taking care of the numerous challenges facing the safety of foods in the country and with the overall objective of having a National Food Safety Committee in place. The conference recommended an action plan for HACCP and food safety in Nigeria. Over the past five years, USDA has provided capacity building technical assistance in HACCP to enhance trade, reduce food insecurity and strengthen Nigeria's compliance to internal norm and harmonization in line with the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Program (CAADP).