**Inauguration and Maiden Meeting of the National Steering Committee for Aflatoxin Control**

**Date: 12th December, 2018**

**Time: 9.30 a.m.**

**Venue: CSIR-STEPRI Conference Room, Accra**

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|  | **CONCEPT NOTE** |
| **Title** | **Inauguration and Maiden Meeting of the National Steering Committee for Aflatoxin Control** |
| **Background** | Aflatoxins are harmful toxins produced by the fungi *Aspergillus flavus* and *Aspergillus parasiticus*. Aflatoxin contamination is widespread throughout Africa where it has been detected in grains such as maize, groundnuts, millet and sorghum as well as animal products including meat, eggs, poultry, and milk. Humans and animals are exposed to aflatoxin through consumption of contaminated foods and feed. Exposure to aflatoxins can also occur through inhalation and transmission from mother to child through the placenta and breast milk.  As of 2010, roughly 5 billion people worldwide were estimated to be exposed to high levels of aflatoxins. In most African countries, foods that are highly susceptible to aflatoxin contamination are mostly staples such as maize, groundnuts and sorghum that are frequently consumed by both humans and animals. As a result, the toxins continues to pose a significant threat to both human and animal health.  Exposure to high levels of aflatoxins results in acute health effects such as aflatoxicosis, which can cause internal bleeding and death in severe cases. In 2004, 125 people died from aflatoxicosis in Kenya, and as a result, the maize stocks, which were heavily contaminated were destroyed leading to food losses and food insecurity. Chronic exposure to low levels of aflatoxin over time can result in health problems such as suppression of the immune system, delayed recovery from kwashiorkor, stunting, impairment of liver function, and liver cancer. It is estimated that 30% of all liver cancers are caused by aflatoxins.  Aflatoxins also pose a barrier to trade due to the rejection of contaminated products by exporting countries especially the European Union. It is estimated that Africa loses up to $670 million annually due to aflatoxin contamination. In 2004, Ghana was ranked among the top ten countries with the highest number of alert notifications by the European Union’s Rapid Alert System of Food and Feed (RASFF). As a result, the European Commission carried out a mission in Ghana in 2006 to investigate the control measures Ghana has in place for aflatoxin control.  Considering the health, food security and economic implications of aflatoxins, there is an urgent need to put in place a comprehensive strategy to explicitly tackle the problem. Prioritisation of aflatoxin as a major food safety concern has already occurred at the African continental level with the establishment of the Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA) by the African Union Commission during the 7th CAADP Partnership Platform meeting held in 2011. PACA is an innovative consortium for coordinating aflatoxin mitigation and management across the agriculture, health and trade sectors. PACA has elaborated a 10-year Strategy (2013-2022) to guide its actions for aflatoxin control. At the Sub-Regional level, the ECOWAS Aflatoxin Control Action Plan (ECOACAP) has been developed and adopted by Ministers of Agriculture in November 2015 during the Global Forum for Review of Achievements of ECOWAP+10 and 2025 Outlook held in Dakar, Senegal. ECOWAS Member States are thus expected to be guided by the Action Plan to develop country-specific strategies for aflatoxin control.  Since its establishment, PACA has held three Partnership Platform meetings. During the first and second meetings held in Addis Ababa (2014) and Entebbe (2016) respectively, country teams were tasked to facilitate the establishment of National Steering Committees for Aflatoxin Control to ensure prioritisation of aflatoxin control in national policies and programmes.  In line with these, the Science and Technology Policy Research Institute, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR-STEPRI) with funding support from AGRA is facilitating the establishment of the National Steering Committee for Aflatoxin Control. |
| **Purpose and Objectives** | The objectives of this meeting are to   1. Provide a platform for members of the National Steering Committee for Aflatoxin Control to get acquainted with one another 2. Inaugurate the committee 3. Propose and elect executive positions of the committee 4. Develop the terms of reference for the committee. |
| **Outputs and Outcomes** | The following outputs are expected from this activity:   * Better insights into the aflatoxin problem * Terms of reference for the committee * Elected executives for the Committee * Committee inaugurated and ready to start work |
| **Approach and Activities** | The meeting will consist of the following activities   1. Opening statements by the Director of CSIR-STEPRI, and Director General of CSIR 2. A presentation on status of aflatoxin problem and the New AGRA-funded project 3. Remarks by Minister for MESTI and Inauguration of the Committee 4. Committee’s first meeting to propose and elect executives for the Committee and to develop the terms of reference |
| **Location, Date & Time** | Conference Room, CSIR-STEPRI, Accra, Behind Golden Tulip Hotel Off Opeibea Bypass  Date: 12th December, 2018 Time: 9.30 a.m. |
| **Duration** | One day |