

## The U.S. Codex Office's Vital Role in Strengthening Food Safety in Africa

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The U.S. Codex Office (USCO) partnership with the African Union's Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) has played a significant role in enhancing food safety across Africa. Through close collaboration with the USCO, AU-IBAR has made substantial progress in setting Codex standards that are essential for the continent. With support from the USCO, African countries have spearheaded the development of important Codex guidelines and codes of practice, including Guidelines for Developing Harmonized Food Safety Legislation for the CCAFRICA Region and codes of practice for reducing ochratoxin A in cocoa and preventing mycotoxins in cassava. These accomplishments have established a solid foundation for robust food safety standards that protect consumers and facilitate fair trade practices.

The USCO and AU-IBAR partnership has increased the representation of African countries in key Codex meetings and enabled African nations to effectively voice their food safety concerns and integrate their priorities into global standards. Such representation is vital for the adoption and practical implementation of international standards within national frameworks, ensuring the protection of public health and safe food trade across borders.

The Codex Colloquium, a platform for dialogue, capacity building, and advocacy, has brought together food safety regulators, scientists, and experts from Africa, the United States, and beyond, focusing on pressing food safety challenges. The colloquia not only promote advancement of Codex issues of mutual interest and build capacity, but have also raised awareness and mobilized support to address critical food safety issues, reinforcing the importance of food safety on the African continent.

The USCO and AU-IBAR partnership has supported the establishment of functional national Codex structures in several African countries, including Botswana, Somalia, Namibia, Eswatini, Liberia, and The Gambia. This groundwork is essential for these countries to effectively engage in Codex activities and develop unified African positions on international food safety standards.

Looking ahead, the partnership between the USCO and AU-IBAR aims to further strengthen national food control systems across Africa. Plans include enhancing training programs to deepen understanding and implementation of Codex standards, as well as improving food safety in Africa's vast informal markets using Codex standards as a benchmark. This ongoing effort will continue to play a critical role in advancing food safety, protecting consumer health, and promoting equitable food trade throughout the continent.