

EatSafe: Evidence and Action Towards Safe, Nutritious Food

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Ethiopian innovator emerges as winner of USAID-funded Food Safety Challenge



Unsafe food, a preventable hazard, is responsible for one in 10 people falling ill and the death of at least 125,000 children globally [every year](#). Low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) bear the largest burden of foodborne disease, which [costs](#) these countries an estimated US\$110 billion in productivity and medical expenses annually. In Ethiopia and Nigeria, food safety is an important [public health issue](#) across the food value chain. In 2019, a [survey](#) showed that 33% of Ethiopians and 20% of Nigerians experienced serious harm from food and water, leading to illness, malnutrition, stunting and death.

While innovations in high-income markets address food safety risks from farm to market, few of these ideas reach traditional markets and their regional value chains, where millions of consumers source food daily. In April 2022, the USAID-funded Feed The Future Initiative, EatSafe: Evidence and Action Towards Safe, Nutritious Food (EatSafe), launched the call for applications for the [EatSafe Innovation Challenge](#). The Challenge aims to enable lasting improvements in the safety of nutritious foods in Ethiopia and Nigeria, and over 750 applications were received.

[Ten innovative concepts emerged](#) from the applicants as finalists to proceed to the EatSafe National Innovation Challenge pitch events in both countries, five finalists from Nigeria and five from Ethiopia. After the National Challenge pitch events, the top three finalists from both countries proceeded to the Global Finale at the Technical University of Denmark Skylab FoodLab (DTU), Lyngby in October. From Nigeria,

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the [top three finalists](#) are Tijjani Ali Lawal, Ruth Ede, and Oyeyemi Fadairo. In Ethiopia, the top three finalists are Helen Weldemichael, Yezichalem Tessema, and Eyoel Legesse Arega.

After a highly competitive pitch session in Denmark, [Helen Weldemichael](#) was awarded the first place overall winner for her mechanized processing innovation that improves the safety and increases efficiency of processing [enset](#), which is a staple food to about 20 million Ethiopians.

Delighted at being announced as the first-place overall winner, Helen said 'It has been a great opportunity to represent my country at such a global event. I would like to express my gratitude to those who led the event and support providers for giving me a chance to deliver safe food to my community by reducing the workload of women.'

Oyeyemi Fadairo, whose innovation was an inflatable solar tunnel dryer to prevent food spoilage, took second place, while Ruth Ede came in third for her innovation that converts bio-waste from traditional markets into high-yield organic fertilizer.

The first-place winner was awarded with USD \$10,000, and second and third places were awarded USD \$5,000 and USD \$3,000 respectively.

Dr. Richard Pluke, EatSafe's Program Director and one of the judges during the Global Finale, congratulated all the finalists on their journey so far, recognizing their passion, and commitment to delivering safe food in their countries. Exciting opportunities continue to exist for the finalists with offers of support from mentors and other stakeholders in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Denmark, and beyond.

To learn more about all the finalists and their innovations, click [here](#).

About the Challenge

The Challenge is an activity led by the EatSafe Consortium, which includes the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition ([GAIN](#)), International Livestock Research Institute ([ILRI](#)), and [Pierce Mill](#) Entertainment and Education, [Busara](#) Center for Behavioral Economics. Supported by the Scaling Up Nutrition Business Network ([SBN](#)), the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Technical University of Denmark [Skylab FoodLab](#) and Innovative Food Systems Solutions.

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