

EatSafe: Evidence and Action Towards Safe, Nutritious Food

EatSafe in Ethiopia Municipal Roundtable Discussion on Developing Safe Markets for Nutritious Food in Hawassa

July 2022

This EatSafe report presents evidence that will help engage and empower consumers and market actors to better obtain safe nutritious food. It will be used to design and test consumer-centered food safety interventions in informal markets through the EatSafe program.

Recommended Citation: Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition. 2022. EatSafe in Ethiopia Municipal Roundtable Discussion on Developing Safe Markets for Nutritious Food in Hawassa. A USAID program report.

Acknowledgements: This report was written by Smret Hagos and Genet Gebremedhin, with support from Gelila Kebede and Haley Swartz.

Agreement Type

Cooperative Assistance

Agreement Number

7200AA19CA00010/Project Year 3 output

Period of Performance

June 31, 2019 – July 30, 2024

Geographic Scope

Global Food Security Strategy Countries

USAID Technical Office

Bureau for Food Security (BFS)/Office of Market and Partnership Innovations (MPI)

Agreement Officer Representative

Lourdes Martinez Romero

For additional information, please contact:

- Richard Pluke, EatSafe Chief of Party, rpluke@gainhealth.org
- Caroline Smith DeWaal, EatSafe Deputy Chief of Party, cdewaal@gainhealth.org

Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition
1201 Connecticut Ave NW, Suite 700B-2
Washington, DC 20036

This document was made possible through support provided by Feed The Future through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), under the terms of Agreement #7200AA19CA00010. The opinions expressed herein are those of the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES	1
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
1. INTRODUCTION	3
1.1. OBJECTIVES	3
2. SESSION SUMMARIES	4
2.1. OPENING REMARKS AND INTRODUCTION OF EATSAFE PROGRAM	4
2.2. OBJECTIVES AND Q&A	4
2.3. GROUP DISCUSSIONS	5
3. CONCLUSION	10
4. APPENDICES	11
4.1. APPENDIX 1: AGENDA	11

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 1. Photographs of Group Discussions.....	10
Table 1. Questions and Answers about EatSafe	4
Table 2. Summary of Group Discussions	6

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Below is a list of the acronyms and abbreviations included in this report.

ECAE	Ethiopia Conformity Assessment Enterprise
FBD	Foodborne Disease
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
GAIN	Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition
ILRI	International Livestock Research Institute
KAP	Knowledge Attitude and Practice
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a consortium led by the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), Feed the Future's EatSafe program aims to improve the safety of nutritious foods in traditional markets. EatSafe in Ethiopia will operate in the Aroge Gebeya market, located in Hawassa.

As part of Phase I (Formative Research) activities, EatSafe in Ethiopia held a municipal roundtable discussion in Hawassa on April 5, 2022. The discussion brought together 49 participants representing regional and local governments, private sector, academia, research institutes, as well as market actors, including vendors and consumers. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Introduce and brief stakeholders on EatSafe program activities
- Receive input and suggestions from stakeholders on potential interventions that will make the markets safer for nutritious food in Hawassa.
- Receive recommendations from participants on key stakeholders for food safety in traditional markets
- Build collaboration towards ensuring safer markets for nutritious food.

The program was opened by Deputy Head of Industry and Trade Bureau. GAIN's Senior Country Program Manager introduced the EatSafe program and answered stakeholders' questions. This was followed by three group discussion sessions. Participants highlighted the importance of food safety in traditional markets, recommending integration of infrastructure, guidelines, awareness creation, and participation of all stakeholders for the success of EatSafe implementation in Ethiopia.

EatSafe collected contact information for all event participants, ensuring continued collaboration and communication through the life of the EatSafe program in Ethiopia.

I. INTRODUCTION

EatSafe (Evidence and Action Towards Safe, Nutritious Food) is a Feed the Future, USAID-funded program that aims to improve the safety of foods sold in traditional markets by focusing on consumer demand for food safety. EatSafe in Ethiopia will develop and test consumer-focused food safety interventions in traditional food markets. It is currently conducting formative research in traditional markets in Aroge Gebeya market, located in Hawassa, Ethiopia.

As in many countries, food safety in Ethiopia is a serious challenge requiring collaboration with development organizations, governments, and local stakeholders. As part of its introductory activities, EatSafe in Ethiopia held a roundtable discussion on April 5, 2022 to introduce EatSafe to stakeholders and receive feedback for the design and implementation of the program. This report provides a summary of discussions and ideas for future work (see agenda in [Appendix 1](#)). It was attended by 49 participants, representing the following organizations:

- Sidama Trade and Industry, Health, and Agriculture Bureaus;
- Ethiopian Food and Drug Authority (EFDA);
- Ethiopian Conformity Assessment Enterprise (ECAE);
- Sidama Public Health institute;
- Hawassa University;
- Food venders and consumers from Aroge Gebeya market; and
- Women and private sector associations.

I.1. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Introduce and brief stakeholders on EatSafe program activities to date;
- Receive input from stakeholders on conditions in traditional markets in Hawassa and suggestions on potential interventions that will make the markets safer for nutritious food in Hawassa;
- Generate ideas on who EatSafe should engage as key stakeholders for food safety in traditional markets; and
- Build collaboration towards ensuring safer markets for nutritious food.

2. SESSION SUMMARIES

2.1. OPENING REMARKS AND INTRODUCTION OF EATSAFE PROGRAM

EatSafe Country Senior Program Manager, Genet Gebremedhin, welcomed the participants and invited stakeholders to actively participate in the session, providing input and suggestions to improve food safety in local markets.

Deputy Head of Trade and Industry Bureau of Sidama, Mr. Batiso Metiso, opened the program. He explained that GAIN will implement EatSafe program in Hawassa town, noting that the Bureau shares the aim of EatSafe and they have initiated the work through a signed agreement with EatSafe and GAIN. He encouraged other governmental stakeholders to collaborate in support of EatSafe.

Genet Gebrmedhin then provided a brief explanation about GAIN, the EatSafe program in general, and the objectives of the discussion. She highlighted GAIN's nutrition work in Ethiopia, as well introducing the EatSafe program that focuses on food safety in traditional market. She explained that EatSafe operates as a consortium with multiple implementing partners. She also noted the importance of improving food safety in Ethiopia, with an emphasis on how EatSafe can contribute to the safety of food in Hawassa's Aroge Gebeya market. Each attendee then introduced themselves and their organization and described how they plan to engage in the program.

2.2. OBJECTIVES AND Q&A

EatSafe Research Associate, Smret Hagos described the objectives of the workshop and asked participants to share their reflections. Most participants mentioned that they are highly interested and were happy to have the chance to be involved in the program. Some questions raised by participants, and the answers provided by Gebremedhin, are in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Questions and Answers about EatSafe

QUESTION	ANSWER
What is the scope of the program? Why does the program focus only on the consumer?	EatSafe aims to enable lasting improvements in the safety of nutritious foods in informal market settings by focusing on consumers and vendors. The program focuses only on the behavioral aspect of food safety improvements, as research shows that consumers' behavior can have high impact on food safety outcomes.
Why does EatSafe focus only on the market, given that there are food safety	Because food safety is a broad challenge pervasive throughout food systems, EatSafe chose to focus its research on the traditional market as the primary node on the value

issues on the production and on the value chain of the selected commodities?

chain. This was done to evaluate whether the interventions could provide measurable and meaningful changes in food safety behaviors among consumers and vendors in the market. As a USAID-funded research activity, EatSafe picked one area for its focus.

She informed participants that the program has already identified three Key Commodities: kale, lettuce, and tomatoes. She noted that first phase of the program aims to assess knowledge, attitudes, and practices of both consumers and vendors. In Phase II, EatSafe will develop and implement interventions that focus on consumers. She also highlighted that consumers behavior should be taken as key contribution on the improvement of food safety.

2.3. GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Following this introduction, the participants were organized in three groups, with one facilitator and one reporter. Each group was provided with six discussion questions.¹

Table 1 contains the summary of discussion points, which were presented to the larger group after the lunch session.

¹ Group three was encouraged to focus on questions #1 and #6 as they were anticipated to have more direct experience on those topics.

Table 2. Summary of Group Discussions

G1: Representatives from Hawassa University; Sidama Public Health Institute; Sidama Health Bureau	G2: Representatives from Trade and Industry Bureau; Food and Drug Authority (FDA); Ethiopian Conformity Assessment Enterprise (ECAE)	G3: Vendors, consumers, market administration, members of the EatSafe consortium
CURRENT STATUS OF FOOD SAFETY IN THE MARKET		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food safety risks and possibly contaminated food • Poor handling practices (unhygienic storage, transportation, loading and unloading) • Overcrowded market environment • Lack of appropriate market infrastructure and poor drainage systems • Poor knowledge, attitude and perception towards food safety and its risk • Lack of legal management and control system • Lack of waste disposal management system • Lack of water access • Low individual and/or household socioeconomic status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate cleanliness of market areas • Inadequate standardization of stall construction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement of commodities on stall floors with no plastic or canvas underneath, exposing food to dirt and mud • Poor handling practices of raw kale, lettuce, and carrot • Poor management • Unsafe commodity transportation: for sun protection, anti-malaria chemical sprayed bed nets cover food • Placement of spoiled and fresh vegetables together • Consumer handling of foods to check quality (regardless of whether they buy it) • Became common for vendors to wash vegetables with detergents before use during COVID-19; not the case now • River water and/or drainage water to wash or spray commodities (e.g., lettuce, tomato) • Presence of animals (not in separate areas), resulting in animal feces around the market and in the stalls. • Inadequate vendor knowledge on food safety best practices

EXISTING MARKET POLICIES, GUIDELINES, DIRECTIVES, AND PROCEDURES RELATED TO FOOD SAFETY

There are no specific food safety guidelines in Hawassa markets. The existing control systems primarily focus on resolving legal and license issues.

While relevant guidelines may exist, implementation is limited.

Participants noted that though guidelines and directives at the market level exist, they are not being utilized properly to prevent food safety issues.

MAIN CHALLENGES OF ENSURING FOOD SAFETY

- Lack of guidelines, and lack of enforcement of existing guidelines
- Mandate gap on safety issues and lack of responsible bodies
- Lack of standardized handling system
- No well-established monitoring and evaluation systems
- Lack of waste management system
- Poor access to safe water
- Gaps in understanding vendor and consumers' knowledge, attitude, and perception towards food safety
- Low individual and/or household socioeconomic status
- Lack of consumer commitment to prioritize food safety

- Lack of implementation directives
- Lack of market infrastructure
- Little or no focus on food safety
- Consumers may not prioritize food safety in purchasing decisions

- Low socioeconomic status of consumers, who are unable to buy from vendors with the "safer" and more expensive food
- Lack of awareness with both the vendors and consumers
- Lack of infrastructure in the market
- Lack of accessibility of water and drainage system

CONSUMER ASSOCIATIONS WORKING ON FOOD SAFETY

- *Hawassa*: There is no consumer association working on food safety issues.
- *Sidama*: Some consumer associations are working on food safety in Sidama region, but they are not sufficiently coordinated to impact food safety outcomes in the markets.

KEY FOOD SAFETY PLAYERS AND SYNERGIES BETWEEN FOOD SAFETY STAKEHOLDERS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education sector • Health bureau • Trade counsel • Trade and Industry Bureau • Industry Sectors • Culture and Tourism • Women Association • Communication sectors • Development partner • Water sector <p>Other ideas for collaboration included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the Chamber of Market Commerce to introduce food safety issues (though they do not currently work on food safety) • Forming technical committees • Encouraging the regional president office to be the lead driver of coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food and Drug Authority • Trade and Industry Bureau • Educational institutes • Woman, Children and Youth Association Bureau 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vendors • Consumers • Health sector • Trade sector • Industry sector • Security sector
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CONSUMERS AND VENDORS CONTRIBUTION IN IMPROVING FOOD SAFETY IN THE MARKETS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers and vendors can promote food safety through education to enhance knowledge, change attitudes, and alter beliefs on food safety and its consequences, using different communication channels (e.g., media). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers can establish an association to advocate for their rights at the market. • Consumers should report to government or market authorities whenever they witness any mishandling of commodities in the market with respect to safety. • Consumers should not feel shame to ask about the safety of the commodities they want to buy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness creation is necessary for both vendors and consumers. • There should be a strong integration between health extension works and other health structure for education of both vendors and consumers. • There should be collaboration with organizations like <i>Edir</i> (indigenous community association established based on mutual agreement and to support each other whenever an adverse
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vendors should be honest with consumers. • Vendors should buy safe foods from wholesalers. 	<p>situation occurs in any member of the family) and association representing women or youth for awareness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Regional Water Resource Bureau should be integrated to provide water in the market. • Vendors should be educated by governmental bodies on the risk of their actions on health • Vendors should be able to access information through vendors association • Consumers may be aware of vendors' food safety practices, but do not prioritize it when making purchases at the market. <p>Vendors should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep their stall clean • Wash commodities with clean water • Wash their hands with soap and water as much as possible • Be aware that they only succeed if they maintain practices that keep their customers (consumers) well.
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Figure 1. Photographs of Group Discussions



3. CONCLUSION

Gebremedhin thanked all the participants for the constructive suggestions and input they provided and for the support they promised to provide throughout the program implementation. She invited participants to the program launch event on May 12, 2022, so that they could provide additional valuable inputs. She then closed the workshop at 3:30 PM.

4. APPENDICES

4.1. APPENDIX I: AGENDA

TIME	ACTIVITY	FACILITATOR
8:30 - 9:00 AM	Arrival and registration	Gelila Kebede, <i>EatSafe Senior Program Assistant</i>
9:00 - 9:05 AM	Welcome address	Genet Gebremedhin, <i>EatSafe Country Senior Programme Manager</i>
9:06 - 9:14 AM	Keynote speech	Ato Batisu Wedius, <i>Deputy Head of Trade and Industry Bureau</i>
9:16 - 10:00 AM	Brief on GAIN and EatSafe	Gebremedhin
10:00 - 10:30 AM	Tea/Coffee break	
10:31 - 10:36 AM	Objectives and modality of the group discussion sessions	Smret, Hagos, <i>EatSafe Research Associate</i>
10:36 - 10:50 AM	Question and answer	All
10:50 AM - 12:30 PM	Group discussion sessions	All
12:30 - 1:30 PM	Lunch break	
1:30 - 2:50 PM	Presentation of harmonized group discussion outcomes	Group leaders
2:51 - 3:00 PM	Closing remarks	Gebremedhin
3:00 PM	End of program	