

EatSafe: Evidence and Action Towards Safe, Nutritious Food



FOOD SAFETY POLICY AND REGULATION IN ETHIOPIA

April 2022

This brief first summarizes an [EatSafe policy analysis](#), then covers recent developments following the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS). It ends with Call to Action for food safety advocacy in Ethiopia.

KEY MESSAGES

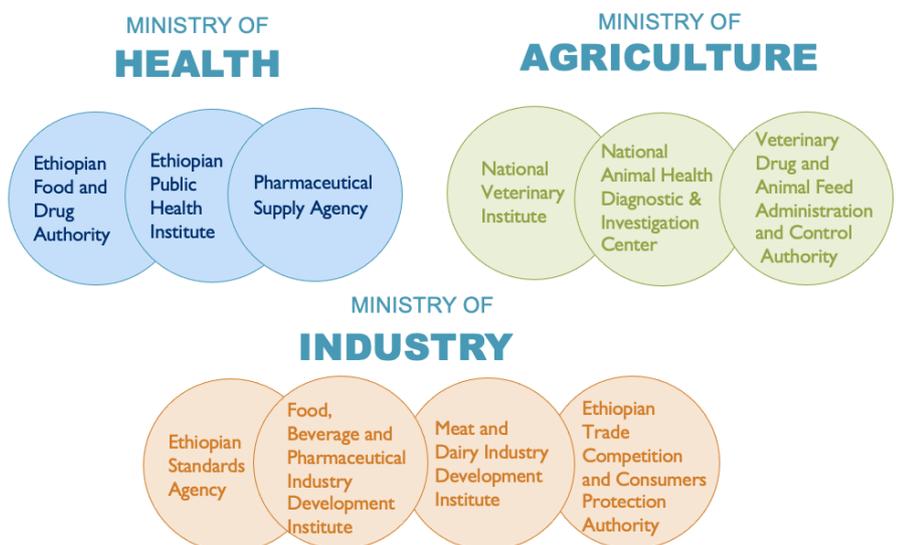
- Ethiopia's 2018 Food and Nutrition Policy cited **food safety** as critical to improving nutrition and public health. A dozen federal governing bodies have responsibility for implementing the policy.
- Food safety regulations omit **traditional markets** where many Ethiopians buy and sell food. Without compliance rules, some vendors are untrained and lack licenses to operate – increasing food safety risks.
- Policy options include customizing federal regulations to address food safety in traditional markets, as well as providing resources and clear enforcement authorities between governing bodies.

IN ETHIOPIA, AN ENABLING POLICY ENVIRONMENT COULD IMPROVE FOOD SAFETY

An effective food safety system is vital to safeguard the public from unsafe food and its associated detrimental health consequences, including foodborne disease. With the 2018 Food and Nutrition Policy (FNP), Ethiopia identified food safety and nutrition as a governmental responsibility at the federal level. One of the FNP's seven objectives is "to improve the safety and quality of food throughout the value chain" – a goal that creates an enabling policy framework for strategies, laws, and regulations related to the safety of food across the country's food system.¹

Ethiopia's National Food and Nutrition Council, led by the Prime Minister, coordinates the FNP. Despite an enabling policy framework, federal food safety regulation, enforcement, and compliance is spread across three Ministries (Ministries of Health, Agriculture, and Trade) and 11 independent executive bodies within them (**Figure 1**).² The regulations that enable enforcement of food safety controls, leave many gaps unfilled and are also at times outdated^{3,4} – providing an opportunity to implement revised strategies.

Figure 1. Food and Nutrition Policy Governance Structures in Ethiopia

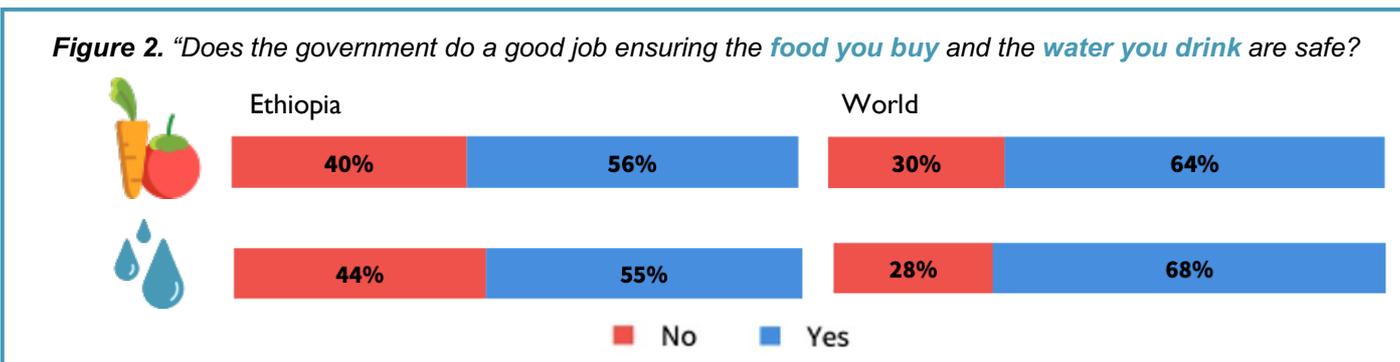


As in other countries, most domestic foods are exchanged in traditional (i.e., informal, or wet) markets. These markets generally have lower prices than formal markets, are closer to consumers' homes, and are an important livelihood source for many Ethiopian vendors.⁵ Consumers often prefer shopping at traditional markets because local food varieties are sold by vendors they know and trust.

Despite their many benefits, current regulatory definitions of "food trade" neglect traditional markets – resulting in inadequate public investment in the infrastructure of these markets, as well as weak foodborne disease surveillance. With limited health and safety standards, associated enforcement measures, including licensure of vendors and rules related to food handling, are lacking.

Similarly, across Ethiopia's domestic food value chains, implementation of food safety risk management strategies (e.g., Good Hygienic Practices or Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) systems) is limited. Most food value chain actors in traditional market contexts lack knowledge and training on these effective food risk management systems.

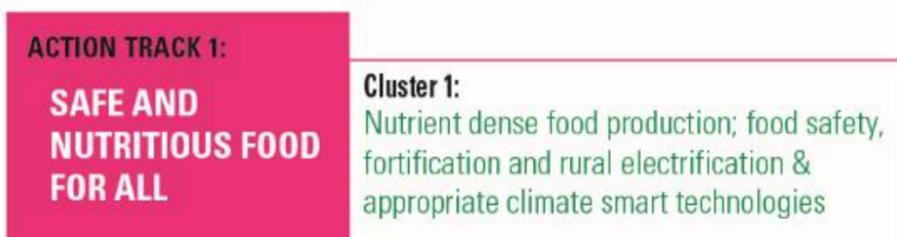
Consumer perspectives seem to support greater government oversight of food safety. Data from the 2020 World Risk Poll (**Figure 2**) indicates that compared to global averages, surveyed Ethiopians expressed less satisfaction in government activities ensuring food safety.⁷



AT THE UN FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT (UNFSS), ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS PRIORITIZED FOOD SAFETY

In line with Ethiopia's 2018 Food and Nutrition Policy, food safety also emerged as a priority area for Ethiopia during the 2021 UNFSS (**Figure 3**). Government stakeholders determined that the Ethiopian Standards Agency (ESA), within the Ministry of Industry, and the Ethiopian Food and Drug Administration (EFDA), within the Ministry of Health, require additional support to continue improving food safety standards throughout the country.⁶ This support is, amongst other things, crucial to monitor and enforce food safety standards. At the Summit, stakeholders proposed strengthening the national food safety management and regulation in Ethiopia, including assessing and upgrading the systems in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. Future activities aim to leverage and support further development of ESA to continue developing food safety related standards and EFDA to strengthen the enforcement of regulation on mandatory standards for domestic and imported foods.⁶

Figure 3. UNFSS Action Track 1, Cluster 1



Suggested policy changes include amending Ethiopian laws, proclamation, and regulations to:



Reclassify transactions in traditional markets as an official form of food trade, providing specific governing bodies the authority to develop appropriate regulations and compliance measures for traditional markets.

Provide resources, training, facilities, and dedicated personnel to develop, implement, and monitor vendor compliance to food safety guidelines for traditional markets and across Ethiopia's domestic food value chains.



Clarify enforcement boundaries for each governing body to synergize, rather than duplicate efforts across food value chains, based on the authorities and expertise of each body.

CALL TO ACTION

It is encouraging to see that Ethiopian actors, including those in the government, do not look at food safety in isolation. Rather, by including it as a crucial element in the Food and Nutrition Policy 2018 and as a priority action coming out of the UNFSS, it is demonstrated that food safety is embedded in a food systems approach.

If Ethiopia takes further action to recognize the important role of traditional markets in food safety regulations, capacitates relevant institutes and synergizes efforts to improve enforcement of regulations, there is significant potential for the government to contribute to improved food safety for Ethiopian consumers.



EatSafe, 2022

REFERENCES AND NOTES

- ¹ Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Food and Nutrition Policy. November 2018. [Available online.](#)
- ² Definition of Powers & Duties of the Executive Organs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Proclamation No.1097/2018.
- ³ E.g., Ethiopia's meat inspection regulation is from 1976. See Meat Inspection Amendment. Proclamation No.81/1976.
- ⁴ Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition. 2022. [Review of Food Safety Policy in Ethiopia. An EatSafe Report.](#)
- ⁵ Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition. 2020. [Informal Food Retail in Urban Areas | Factsheet](#)
- ⁶ Vision 2030: Transforming Ethiopian Food Systems. July 2021. [A Synthesis Report: Game Changing Solutions to Transform Ethiopia's Food System](#)
- ⁷ The Lloyd Register's Foundation, 2020. World Risk Poll. [Ethiopia Country Profile](#)

For more details on EatSafe program activities, visit gainhealth.org/eatsafe or contact EatSafe@gainhealth.org.

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.