

EatSafe: Evidence and Action Towards Safe, Nutritious Food

FOOD SAFETY POLICY IN NIGERIA

April 2022

KEY MESSAGES

- Recent regulatory efforts sought to prioritize food safety in Nigeria, revising outdated policies and clarifying roles and responsibilities between over a dozen Ministries, Departments, and Agencies at the federal level.
- Traditional markets, where many Nigerians buy and sell food, are overseen by Local Government Area Councils (LGACs), who have little expertise in food safety systems. Without federal regulations on vendor training and licensing, traditional markets pose increased food safety risks for consumers.
- Drafted to harmonize federal food safety regulation efforts, the **National Food Safety and Quality Bill** has yet to be enacted into law – though it currently awaits a final reading by Nigeria's 9th National Assembly.

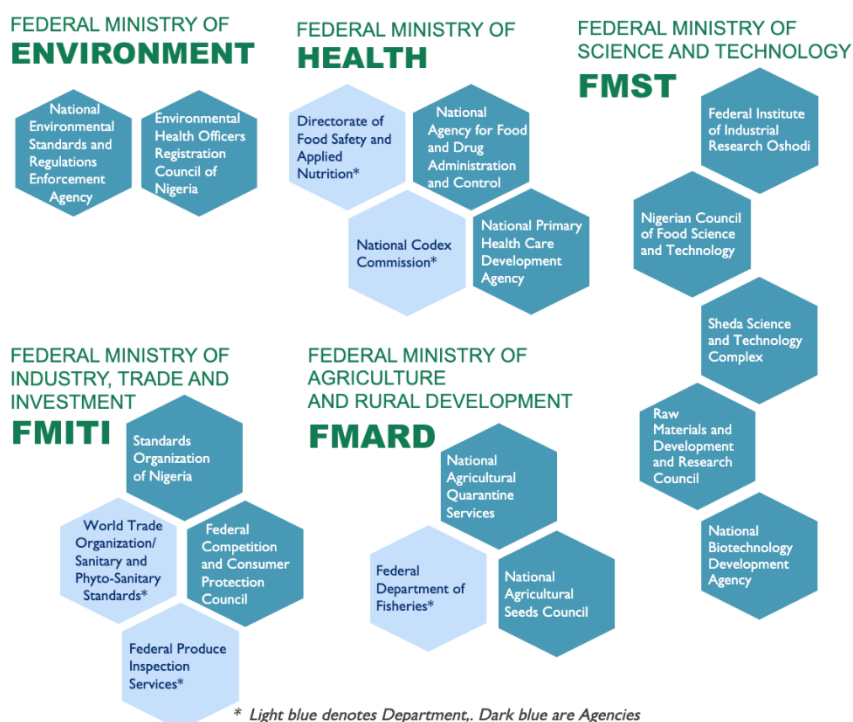
IN NIGERIA, MOMENTUM FOR A FEDERAL UNIFIED FOOD SAFETY SYSTEM CONTINUES

An effective food safety system is vital to protect the public from foodborne diseases. In Nigeria, responsibility for food safety regulations is spread across the three tiers of Government – Federal, States, and Local Government Area Council (LGACs). Therefore, implementation effectiveness depends on the competence and efficiency of the agencies responsible at each level.¹

At the federal level, over a dozen Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs); (**Figure 1**) oversee food safety policy. Regulations that confer authority to MDAs often use vague or different definitions for the same terms, simultaneously resulting in overlapping authorities and coverage gaps.¹ Of the 16 existing federal policies related to food safety, 14 were enacted 10 to 100 years ago – reflecting opportunities to revise regulations according to innovations in food safety best practices.²

To clarify responsibilities related to food safety regulation between MDAs, the Federal Ministry of Health developed the National Policy on Food Safety and its Implementation Strategy in 2014.³ This effort resulted in the 2019 National Food Safety and Quality Bill (HB.19.01.1598), though it has yet to be passed into law by Nigeria's National Assembly.⁴

Figure 1. Federal MDAs Responsible for Food Safety in Nigeria



FOODS EXCHANGED IN TRADITIONAL MARKETS ARE UNREGULATED

As in other countries, 90% of domestic food exchange in Nigeria occurs in traditional (i.e., informal or wet) markets.⁵ These markets generally have lower prices than formal markets, are closer to consumers' homes, and are important livelihood sources for Nigerian food vendors. Traditional markets usually fall under the authority of State and LGACs, bodies that may take regulatory action through cessation or suppression. In the absence of consistent, nationwide food safety standards and compliance requirements, traditional markets elude formal inspection by any of the federal MDAs described above. Vendors and other food value chain actors in traditional market contexts (e.g., suppliers, wholesalers, etc.) often lack knowledge and training on effective food safety risk management practices in these settings. Furthermore, they often operate without permits or licenses and in unapproved places that pose significant hygienic and environmental and/or food contamination risks.

POLICY OPTIONS: HARMONIZE AUTHORITIES AND PROVIDE RESOURCES



Enact the **Food Safety and Quality Bill into law** (HB.19.01.1598) during Nigeria's 9th National Assembly.

Provide LGACs with resources, training, facilities, and dedicated personnel to develop, implement, and monitor vendor compliance to food safety guidelines for traditional markets



Encourage LGACs to formulate simple messages on food safety and hygiene, translated into local languages and using visual graphics that are easily understood by the vendors and consumers at the community level.

CALL TO ACTION: STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC HEARING SESSIONS

The 9th National Assembly should enact into law (Act) the Food Safety and Quality Bill before their tenure ends on **May 28, 2023**. Without enacting the Bill, the Food Safety Policy itself is a lone document without legal backing for its implementation. The Bill would give legal, budget and enforcement authority to the policy when passed into law. Stakeholders will have an opportunity to make observations and advocate for the passage of the Bill during Public Hearings.



EatSafe, 2022 | Photo Credit: Yaayi Photography

REFERENCES AND NOTES

- ¹ Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, 2020. [Nigeria Policy, Monitoring Systems Analysis and Stakeholder Mapping Report](#). EatSafe Project Report.
- ² Okoruwa, A., and Onuigbo-Chatta, N. (2021). Review of Food Safety Policy in Nigeria. [Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization](#), Vol. 110.
- ³ See Federal Ministry of Health, Nigeria, 2014. [National Policy on Food Safety and its Implementation Strategy](#).
- ⁴ See Nigeria, 2019. [Food Safety and Quality Bill HB1598](#)
- ⁵ Osunde C. 2016. Strategies for Economic Growth: Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Rural Areas of Nigeria. *Bus and Econ Journal*. 7:4. Pp. 1-4

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

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