

# Urban food markets in Africa: Incentivizing food safety using a pull-push approach

## Stakeholder workshop on consumers' communication campaign in Dire Dawa, Ethiopia

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## Executive summary

Foodborne diseases are public health threats, causing considerable morbidity and mortality and substantial socio-economic impacts. To address a range of food safety challenges in Ethiopia and elsewhere in Africa, the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) in collaboration with national and international partners is implementing a food safety project named 'Urban food markets in Africa – incentivizing food safety using a Pull-Push approach (Pull-Push project).' This 'Pull-Push' project aims to improve food safety in urban informal markets in Burkina Faso and Ethiopia, specifically in vegetable and poultry value chains. In addition to building the capacity of market-level value chain actors and regulators in food safety, Pull-Push project is investigating if greater consumer-demand for safer food can be generated and, through that, drive improvements in the hygiene and safety of the foods being sold. The project aims to achieve this through a consumer communications campaign to increase consumers awareness of specific food safety risks.

A communication plan has been developed based on findings of the project study in the project sites in Ethiopia–Harar and Dire Dawa – to guide the consumer communication campaign strategy. A consumer communication campaign implementation proposal has been developed based on the communication plan. A consultative workshop was organized on 27 January 2022 in Dire Dawa to validate the consumer communication campaign implementation proposal that has been developed by the implementing communication agency (Cactus).

# Introduction

The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) in collaboration with national and international partners is implementing the 'Urban food markets in Africa – incentivizing food safety using a Pull-Push approach', which is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) of the UK Government.

The project aims to improve food safety in urban informal markets in Ethiopia and Burkina Faso, specifically in vegetable and poultry value chains. While previous efforts have often focused on training producers or regulators with little attention to incentives for behaviour change, the project is investigating if consumer demand can provide the same incentive ('pull') for food safety in low and middle-income countries as it has in high-income countries. The project is also building the capacity of market-level value chain actors to respond to demand (for example, by improving practices or adapting technologies) and of regulators to provide an enabling environment ('push').

Consumer pressure and demand for food safety is an unexploited lever in Africa including Ethiopia to incentivize regulators and value chain actors to change their behaviour. Consumers play an important role in improving food safety by making the right choices when buying food and preparing it at home. The aim of the Pull-Push project is to generate consumer demand for safer food through a consumer communications campaign to increase consumers awareness of specific food safety risks.

A communication campaign plan – that guides the design and implementation of the consumer communication campaign – has been developed based on the findings of food safety value chain assessments in Harar and Dire Dawa. The assessment was conducted to understand consumer and supplier attitudes and practices towards food safety. This communication plan describes the objectives of the future communication campaigns to improve consumers' food buying and preparation practices.

This consumer communication plan was validated on 5 March 2021 through a consultative workshop held with national government stakeholders (Ethiopian Public Health Institute, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Health) and later, on 24 March 2021, with local-level participants from East Hararghe zone (health and livestock resource development offices), Harari (health and agricultural offices), Dire Dawa (health office, public health laboratory and agricultural, water and mineral office) and Haramaya University (HU).

After validating the plan in the above workshops, Cactus, a communication agency in Ethiopia, was hired to implement the consumer communication campaign in collaboration with ILRI in Dire Dawa and Harar, the project sites. Based on the communication plan, a consumer communication campaign implementation proposal has been developed by Cactus, which describes target consumers, key messages, key strategies, and approaches to effectively deliver the public messages. We conducted a consultative stakeholder workshop in Dire Dawa on 27 January 2022 to validate this proposal. This report summarizes the findings of this workshop.

# Workshop proceedings

## Objectives

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Discuss target groups of the communication campaign.
- Talk about key messages of the communication campaign.
- Discuss media choices for the communication campaign.
- Discuss field work (door-to-door) of the communication campaign.
- Talk about aligning the communication campaign strategies with local cultures.
- Discuss potential challenges during the communication campaign.

## Approaches

A brief presentation was provided of the summary, activities and results so far, and future activities of the Pull-Push project. Then, the overall activities of the Pull-Push project consumer communication campaign was presented by Wageningen University and Research. Cactus provided a presentation on the entire contents of the consumer communication campaign implementation proposal. We created a very relaxed environment, for example, using local languages during discussion to welcome ideas from all participants. Questions and comments from participants were answered and discussed at the end of each presentation.

## Participants

The 19 workshop participants came from Harari People's Regional State (health office, agriculture office, trade promotion office), Dire Dawa city administration (health office, agricultural, water and mineral office, communication bureau), East Hararge zone (health office, agriculture office) and Haramaya University. In addition, participants from Wageningen University & Research joined the meeting virtually (Appendix B).

## Workshop content

In this workshop, we discussed a summary, activities and results so far, and future activities of the Pull-Push project, overall activities related to the consumer communication campaign, and its implementation proposal (Appendix A) and related issues.

## Points of discussion

The target groups of the communication campaign: Women of low- and middle-income households with children below 10 years of age are primary targets of the campaign. Participants asked why children below 10 years of age are specifically considered. Pull-push project experts said this is because previous research shows that children below 10 years of age play key roles in assisting mothers in purchasing vegetables such as tomatoes from markets and in preparing foods in homes making them the right target groups for this campaign. More importantly, children are highly vulnerable to foodborne diseases and infection in their early life, which in addition to causing acute illness can cause chronic health problems throughout life.

Participants also recommended considering school-environment (students) as target groups because they can reach many in their homes. The Cactus team said that, initially, a roadside show was considered to reach most of the population but due to high costs, the show was removed from the plan. Students would be reached through the use of posters in schools. In addition, use of audio communication materials that the mini-media workers of the school could play for the students would be considered. But participants reflected their concern that these mini media workers may not play the audios on regular basis to disseminate the information. This is due to their own priorities for information to disseminate to students and communities.

Participants also suggested considering youth centres as a campaign target. Cactus said it would make effort to make the campaign reach the wider community within budget. In this regard, it agreed to distribute brochures containing the campaign messages to the youth centres. Participants noted that wholesalers and retailers should also be considered target groups for the campaign. Pull-Push project experts explained that the project has work packages that target building capacity of market-level value chain actors but this communication campaign specifically focuses on consumers, which are the 'pull approach' target of the project. However, this communication campaign will reach the wider population, though, women and children under 10 years of age who are the primary target group.

Cactus team also explained the approach of the communication campaign. Specifically, they mentioned that it will use clear and easily understandable messages in a fun, playful and entertaining way. The word 'abo' is an icebreaker in the city of Harar and Dire Dawa, and it will be used in this campaign. But participants asked to know if the word 'abo' would work for females as it does for males. The participants mentioned that abo normally refers to males and the female version of it is 'intal'. Others noted that nowadays abo is commonly used without male/female gender differentiation and 'intal' is increasingly considered offensive. After a discussion, the consensus was that considering the local culture, 'abo' works for females as well and its use will be suitable for the campaign.

The campaign will use a short humorous music clip and famous comedians to deliver messages. The music clip includes simple and easy beats that can be danced to. But participants suggested the use of poems rather than music clips. The Cactus team explained that poems in campaigns have the tendency to be easily forgotten unlike music clips especially when repeatedly listened to and that is why they are preferred.

Participants suggested adding messages on the importance of eating intact tomatoes and leaving out the spoiled tomatoes just at the end of the campaign messages. Cactus agreed to add the messages on the importance of eating healthy tomatoes at the end of the campaign message. The campaign will use simple, straightforward and

demonstrative visuals that communicate what to do with intact and spoiled tomatoes. Participants commented that there should be a lot of tomatoes being displayed while transmitting the campaign messages to attract attention towards tomatoes. The Cactus team appreciated the comment and agreed to do accordingly.

Participants commented that campaign messages through television (TV) might not reach all sections of the population because the primary targets of the campaign- low-income households- may not have TV to watch the messages. Cactus said they would use all existing forms of local media including local radio to address this limitation. Participants also remarked that the press has not been indicated in the means of public message transmission for the campaign. Cactus agreed to use local press such as newspapers for the campaign. Furthermore, participants suggested including government media in the campaign press conferences.

Cactus has planned door-to-door campaigns on three days within a week in March: Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Participants raised their concerns on the availability of the households at specific times on Fridays and Sundays with suggestions that Muslims might be unavailable at home on Friday mornings and visiting households in the afternoons is preferable on that day. Likewise, Christians may be out for worship on Sunday mornings and visiting households in the afternoon is preferable on this day. But it is possible to get Muslims and Christians at home on Saturdays.

Participants commented that March is the best month for the campaign in Harar and Dire Dawa. This is because March is a fasting season for both Christians (Ethiopian Easter) and Muslims (Ramadan), and during fasting season there is a sharp increase in consumption of tomatoes, which can attract the attention of the community towards the campaign messages.

Participants stressed the need for adhering to local cultures while transmitting the messages of the campaign. For example, they advised taking films or photos- that will be used for the campaign- in Harar and Dire Dawa -the project sites- to create real-world messages. Also, they suggested considering social compositions in the work, including using both Christians and Muslims as key informants in the campaign.

The Cactus team expressed their commitment to respecting local cultures. They would recruit local people in Harar and Dire Dawa for the door-to-door household campaign. Participants noted the need to consider multilingual persons during recruitment as it is common for people in the area to speak three languages: Afan Oromo, Amharic and Harari in Harar; and Afan Oromo, Amharic and Somali in Dire Dawa. Participants suggested that such persons can easily switch between languages depending on the household visited and would have a better understanding of the various cultures.

Participants also highlighted factors that could affect the campaign in different aspects. They said that the current market inflation in association with poverty could negatively affect the demand for safer food. As a result, people may buy what they afford rather than choose healthy foods (e.g., tomatoes). However, consuming spoiled food could expose the households to illnesses, some of which could be chronic leading to poor health and financial losses. Participants also asked if not buying damaged tomatoes and other food items would negatively affect the market and reduce income for food retailers. They mentioned that retailers do not choose the tomatoes they receive from the wholesalers. Pull-Push project persons explained that this influence is expected and that it is the pull approach: the demand generated for healthy tomatoes among consumers influences the tomato value chain actors to supply healthy tomatoes as well. Participants also commented that the shortage of tomato supply in Dire Dawa and Harar could negatively affect generating demand for healthy tomatoes through choices at buying. They recommended considering regulations alongside generating consumers' demand for healthy vegetables through their buying choices.

## Reflections

Participants from government organizations appreciated being invited to the workshop saying that their participation at different stages of the project implementation would improve their understanding on the overall activities of the project. They also added that their understanding of the project' activities and its potential benefits for improving food safety in Ethiopia would help in the successful uptake of the project food safety activities and outputs by the government. Engagement of stakeholders at different stages of the project would also improve their involvement in, and support for, the project's activities.

# Recommendations

The following recommendations were forwarded to the project team by participants at the end of the meeting:

- Targeting students and youth centres for the campaign;
- using different local medias in the campaign;
- considering government medias for the campaign press conference;
- aligning the campaign with local cultures through involving representatives from different social structures such as Muslims and Christians;
- recruiting local people who are multi-lingual in the local languages for the door-to-door campaign; and
- including campaign messages that shows preferences of buying tomatoes from clean containers such as plastic crates to facilitate plastic crates uptake in the tomato market value chains.

# Appendices

Appendix I: Program for stakeholder workshop on consumers' communication campaign,

27 January 2022, MM Hotel, Dire Dawa, Ethiopia

Time	Topic	Owner
0900-0930	Quick refreshments on arrival (tea, coffee)	Hotel
0930-0940	Participants self-introduction	Participants
0940-0945	Welcoming remarks and brief points about Pull-Push project	Kebede Amenu, College of Veterinary Medicine and Agriculture ( CVMA) of Addis Ababa University (AAU)
0945-1000	Work package 6: Communication campaign (including the aim)	Gemma Tacken, Wageningen University & Research (WUR)
1000-1020	Consumers' communication campaign: contents, strategies, key messages etc.	Samson Tefera, Michael Mekonnen, Cactus team
1020-1040	Consumers' communication campaign: key message, communication tools strategies, key visuals that will be used	Samson Tefera, Michael Mekonnen, (Cactus team)
1040-1100	Consumers' communication campaign: fieldwork execution, project plan and communication/ information sharing methods	Samson Tefera, Michael Mekonnen, (Cactus team)
1100-1220	Discussions	Participants
1220-1230	Workshop summary and closing remarks	Kebede Amenu, CVMA and Gemma Tacken, WUR
1230-1330	Lunch	Hotel

## Appendix 2: List of participants of the stakeholder workshop on consumers' communication campaign

27 January 2022, MM Hotel, Dire Dawa, Ethiopia

No.	Name	Designation	Organization
1	Kebede Amenu	ILRI consultant	College of Veterinary Medicine and Agriculture ( CVMA) of Addis Ababa University (AAU)
2	Biruk Alemu	Research fellow	ILRI
3	Getachew Dinede	Research officer	ILRI
4	Solomon Tefera	Creative head of strategy	Cactus
5	Michael Mekonnen	BTL project manager	Cactus
6	Sisay Girma	Project field coordinator	HU
7	Abdulmuen Mohammed	Project field coordinator	HU
8	Abdi Mahamed	Food safety expert	HU
9	Mohammed Tute	Sanitation and hygiene regulatory expert	Dire Dawa city administration health office
10	Bille Yehualashet	Urban agriculture extension expert	Dire Dawa city administration agricultural, water and mineral office
11	Elias Delelegne	Media expert	Dire Dawa city administration a communication bureau
12	Tadesse Assefa	Agronomist	East Hararghe zone agricultural office
13	Abdi Mohammed	Food and health facility regulator expert	East Hararghe zone health office
14	Eleni Kelemwork	Sanitation and hygiene expert	The Harari people region health office
15	Selamawit Alemu	Food security and nutrition expert	The Harari people region agriculture office
16	Million Tsige	Trade expert	The Harari people region trade office promotion
17	Gemma Tacken	Lead, consumer communication campaign of Pull-Push project	Wageningen University & Research
18	Harriette Snoek	Researcher consumer behaviour	Wageningen University & Research
19	Patricia Jaspers	Research assistant	Wageningen University & Research