Improving the safety of smoked fish in Mali

This project aims to improve the safety and quality of smoked and dried products in Mali through the application of Codex Alimentarius standards and codes of practice. This will make it possible to improve the industries, which will have a favourable impact on the health of consumers and access to international markets.

The specific objectives of the project are to: (i) translate the results of a risk assessment into specific risk management actions; (ii) raise awareness among stakeholders; and (iii) build capacity on good manufacturing practices (GMP) and good hygiene practices (GHP).

STDF/PG/611

Status
On-going

Start Date
12/01/2021

Project Value (US$)
$855,825

STDF Contribution (US$)
$765,825

Beneficiaries
Mali

Implementing Entities
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Background

A previous project, entitled the Total Diet Study (TDS) was implemented in Benin, Cameroon, Mali and Nigeria (MTF/RAF/487/STF) by the FAO in collaboration with WHO and the Centre Pasteur (2014-2018), and was financed by the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF). The aim of this project was to identify the risks associated with the presence of chemical substances in food consumed by the populations of the four countries. The salient results of the study showed that, in Mali, the smoked fish analysed in Bamako and Sikasso contained high levels of pesticides (particularly chlorpyrifos).

These results represent a major public health concern for consumers and for trade. Moreover, the same smoked fish also contained high levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), meaning that the populations studied are significantly exposed to carcinogenic substances. This is all the more critical as it has been proven that edible oils (including palm oil, cotton oil and shea butter) also contribute significantly to household exposure to PAHs.

Results

Implementation of analytical capacity building and performance of a situation analysis

One of the pillars of the solution to the SPS issue, to which the project aims to contribute, is Mali's capacity to conduct local and structural monitoring of chemical contamination levels (pesticides and PAHs) in food. To achieve this, technical support will be provided to laboratories that are already equipped with analytical equipment, to ensure their analytical competence. By leveraging their strengthened or acquired analytical capacity, the laboratories will produce data that will supplement the risk assessment, in order to pinpoint and
understand the extent of the SPS issue, namely the distribution of the contamination. These data are of vital importance for the identification of appropriate risk management levers.

**Development of national strategies for the management of risks posed by pesticides and PAHs**

Resolving the SPS issue in question requires a multisectoral approach, and ownership by the national competent authorities. Based on the situation analysis mentioned above, national stakeholders will meet to decide together how to resolve the issue of contamination of smoked fish by PAHs and pesticides. The documents resulting from these national consultations which will be validated by the supervisory authorities will make it possible to determine the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders. This approach will allow for the justification of the actions implemented within the framework of the project, and those carried out by other technical and financial partners, on the basis of a strategic document adopted by policy makers in Mali.

**Development of training modules**

The training modules will be developed on the basis of a pilot experience based on the qualification and validation of smoking tools and the use of these tools to obtain products that fulfil the Codex and market criteria. The analytical tool strengthened during the first phase of the project will make it possible to ensure the suitability of smoking ovens to provide a sustainable solution to the issue of post-capture conservation, while complying with the levels of chemical contamination permitted with respect to health and trade.

**Provision of community training in the use of improved smoking units**

The project aims to provide material for and training on the use of locally-produced improved ovens for ten fishing communities. The project will focus particularly, where possible, on women and young stakeholders in the industry. Furthermore, the experience acquired will make it possible to improve training documents.

**Promotion of products produced in accordance with Codex standards and codes of practice**

In order to have a sustainable impact on food safety and access to the international market in Mali, the project needs to capitalize on the achievements made. To this end, the products improved will be promoted in a positive manner to consumers through fairs and audio-visual media, an analysis of market opportunities, and a document on the approach taken and the lessons learned with a view to scaling up and potentially replicating such actions in other contexts.