

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

## Post-training feedback on online training of regulators in Ethiopia in food safety and risk assessment

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# Abbreviations and acronyms

EFDA	Ethiopian Food and Drug Authority
EPHI	Ethiopian Public Health Institute
ILRI	International Livestock Research Institute
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
WUR	Wageningen University and Research

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## Executive summary

The ‘Urban food markets in Africa: Incentivizing food safety using a pull-push approach’ or Pull-push project works to improve food safety in urban informal markets in Ethiopia and Burkina Faso. The project is assessing if an improved consumer demand for safer food will drive improvements in food safety along the food value chain. The project also works to build the capacity of officials/regulators working in government organizations. As part of this activity, an online course in food safety and risk assessment has been designed for Ethiopian government professionals working in food safety from the Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI), the Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and the Ethiopian Food and Drug Authority (EFDA).

Following the completion of the online course, a workshop with Ethiopian participants was held on 31 August at the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Ethiopia campus to get feedback on the course including its design and content, course materials and communication during the training; uses of the training, and opportunities and barriers in using skills gained from the training.

A world café approach was used for the meeting where three rounds of conversations were held and a plenary discussion at the end of the conversations to harvest the ideas. The workshop participants were from EPHI, MoA and EFDA. Also, participants from Wageningen University and Research (WUR) and ILRI joined the meeting virtually. Project staff from ILRI (Getachew Dinede, Kebede Amenu, Gezahegn Alemayehu and Lina Gazu) organized and facilitated the meeting.

Overall, the participants said that the course was well organized including its web-platform, design, content and materials. They also praised the communication and interaction during the training. But they suggested areas of improvement such as making the course materials (reading, videos, webinars) downloadable, including food safety examples for cereals (e.g. pesticides contamination of crops) and adulteration of food as well as strengthening follow-up during the training. Other suggested areas of improvement were providing individual-level feedback for the assignments, making the assignments practical in selected food value chains, having in-person meeting with the participants in the middle of the training and using robust selection techniques to minimize participant dropout rates.

# 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' (pull-push project). The project 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 (tomatoes) and poultry value chains. As well as 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 also builds the capacity of market-level value chain actors to respond to demand (e.g. by improving practices or adapting technologies) and of regulators to provide an enabling environment ('push'). Building the capacity of regulators in food safety is one of the activities in work package 5 of the Pull-push project. As part of this activity, working with the Royal Veterinary College, London, an online course in food safety and risk assessment has been produced and run for Ethiopian government professionals working in food safety in Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI), the Ethiopian Food and Drug Authority (EFDA), the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and ILRI postgraduate fellows.

We organized a workshop on 31 August 2022 at the ILRI campus in Ethiopia to understand the Ethiopian participants' experiences of the course including its design and content, materials and communication during the training; uses of the training, and opportunities and barriers in using skills gained from the training.

# Workshop proceedings

## Objectives

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Discuss the web-platform, course design, course content and materials, and communication and interaction during the training.
- Discuss the uses of the training at individual and organizational levels.
- Discuss the potential opportunities and barriers in using the skills gained from the training at the participating organizations.



## Methods

The participants were welcomed at the start of the workshop after which a description of the workshop objectives, agenda and methods were given followed by participants' self-introduction. We organized the meeting using a world café approach. The meeting room was arranged as an actual café with three tables in the room. Flip chart papers, markers (different colours), pens and a variety of sizes of Post-it notes were distributed on each table to allow the participants make notes, draw and doodle. Three questions were designed for the café conversations with one question on each table, allocating 20 minutes for answering each question. Participants were divided into two groups (4 participants in group A and 5 participants in group B), with each group discussing a specific question in 20 minutes. After 20 minutes, the groups moved to the other table leaving their table hosts at the table. After the two groups made the three rounds of conversations, a plenary discussion was held to harvest the ideas with the main points posted on pin boards in front of the room using Post-its.

## Workshop content

In this workshop, we discussed course-related (web-platform, course design, content and materials, and communication and interaction) activities, uses of the skills gained from the training and opportunities and barriers in using the skills from the training at the participating organizations (Annex I).

# Participants

The workshop participants were from the EPHI, the EFDA and the MoA. Also, a participant from Wageningen University and Research joined the meeting virtually. Staff from ILRI organized and facilitated the meeting (Annex 2).

# Points of discussion

## About the course

Overall, the participants mentioned that the course was well organized including its web-platform, design, content and materials. They also praised the communication and interaction during the training.

Their feedback included the following views:

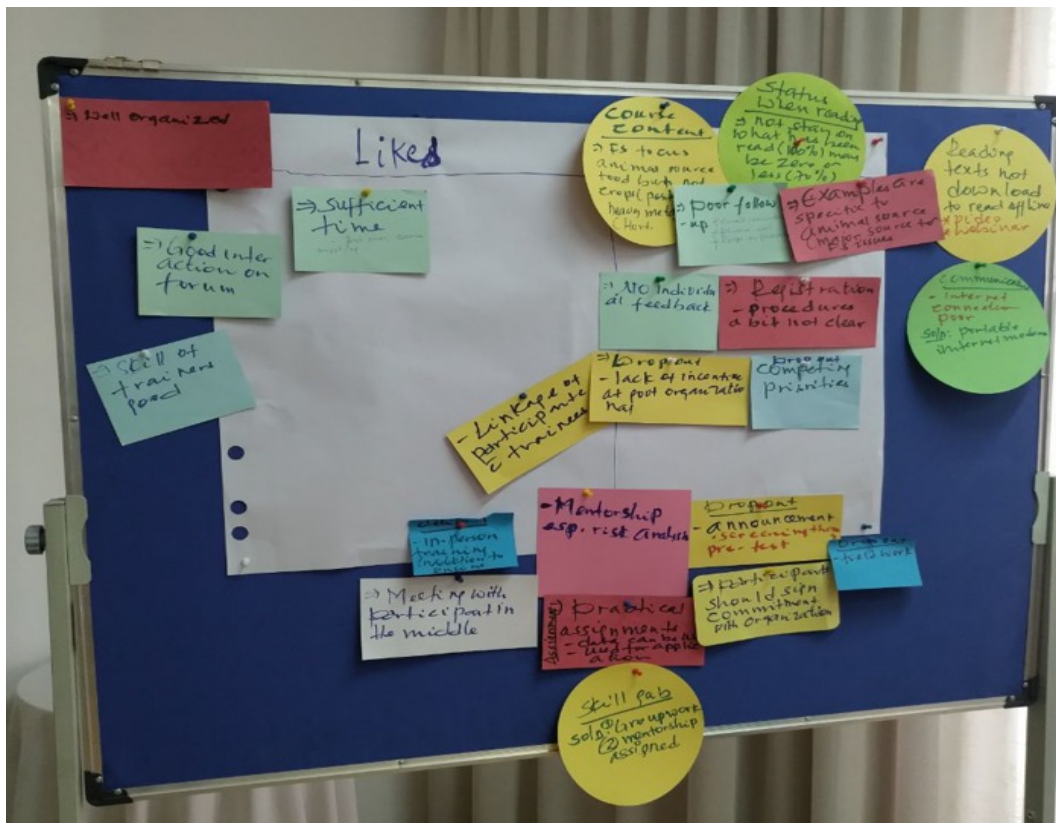
- The time allocated for assignments was sufficient.
- The instructors were experts in the course: they understood and answered the participants questions and participants were satisfied with the answers and responses provided.
- Participants found the discussion forum very useful to get answers for their questions and to get further understanding on what their peers asked. However, the course organizers found the discussion forum was underutilized, with participants rarely asking questions or seeking advice from the experts that was available via this medium – maybe this is a medium they were not comfortable with, or perhaps it took more effort.

The participants also suggested areas of the training that need improvement including the following:

- Reading texts, videos and webinars should be made downloadable for offline reading.
- Providing portable internet modem could help participants who do not have access to the internet or those in the field to attend the course.
- The web platform needs to be configured to show accurate information on reading progress of required reading materials (online text). In many cases, it showed no progress for participants who had read all the required material.
- Almost all examples provided in the assignment focused on animal-source foods, but such examples may be difficult to understand for participants from disciplines outside of animal or public health. Participant working in horticulture suggested adding food safety examples related to cereals and vegetables such as contamination of crops with pesticides, heavy metals, etc.
- Participants also pointed out that food adulteration and food fraud (e.g. in milk, honey, etc) are becoming major problems suggesting the inclusion of these concepts in the course.
- They mentioned individual follow-up during the training was inadequate. Because of competing priorities, participants may get caught up with other activities and if they see that they are left behind in the program, they may become desperate and drop out of the course. They recommended email reminders or phone calls if the participant is not submitting assignments; and frequent reminders regarding their progress in the course to ensure commitment and course completion. Participants suggested programming the platform to frequently remind (at intervals) users of progress made to keep them motivated.
- Feedback on assignments is given as a summary for all participants but they suggested sending the feedback for each participant. This would help them clearly understand their weaknesses and strengths in the assignment.

- The registration steps were challenging to follow especially for those without experience in taking online courses.
- Some parts of the course such as risk analysis requires skills which participants may not have. They suggested exploring in-person training in such cases to help the participants understand well the calculations and related issues compared with learning virtually. They also suggested arranging group work (e.g. for the assignments) for participants who have major skill gaps in some parts of the course. This may be addressed if the participants know who is participating in the course from their organization as they may work together on the assignments. They also suggested assigning mentors to work with in person to address training gaps.
- Since assignments or activities of the course cover different food value chains, it is useful to understand food safety in different commodities and food value chains in informal markets. Participants suggested doing these assignments practically in selected food value chains than using scenarios or examples from literature. The results of such real-world exercises can help guide food safety policy development or interventions.
- In addition to meeting for post-course review, participants recommended meeting in-person in the middle of the course. They said such meeting would motivate the participants and significantly minimize dropouts during the course.
- They proposed creating a platform to link participants with their instructors, peers and course coordinators to make the network sustainable even after the end of the course.
- Participants said that dropouts are associated with many factors including competing priorities and their responsibilities at work (e.g. fieldwork), lack of incentives beyond the certificates of participation which do not improve pay since they are not recognized by government as part of continuous professional development. Personal attitudes could also contribute to the dropout rate. They suggested using robust selection procedures to recruit interested and motivated individuals. Selected candidates for the training should sign agreements with their organizations to ensure their commitment to complete the course. Pre-tests could be used for selection.

Photo 1. Findings of the conversations during the review workshop on course design, contents, materials and communications (photo credit: ILRI/ Lina Gazu).



## Uses of the training

Participants mentioned the following uses of the training:

- Participants can use the skills gained from the course in developing food safety guidelines.
- Some elements of the course can be included in the capacity building (training) plans of participating organizations.
- The skills gained from the course and its materials can be used to generate evidence-based information to guide food safety decisions.
- The skill gained from the course is one of the competencies required for the International Health Regulations (IHR) certification.
- This training contributes to strengthening the national food safety system as it improves staff knowledge in food safety.
- Increased individual confidence to apply food safety skills.
- Enables the participants to conduct science-based food safety analysis.
- Contributes to knowledge in developing research proposals in food safety and risk analysis.
- Contributes to individual career development.
- Equips participants with skills that enable them work with other stakeholders in food safety risk analysis.
- Helps participants exchange skills and knowledge with their peers.
- Enables the participants to understand food safety issues along food value chains.
- Gives participants insights on food safety at the global level including global food safety regulations.
- Equips the participants with deep understanding of informal food markets.

## Opportunities and barriers in using the skills from the training

### Opportunities

During this workshop, the participants identified potential opportunities that would enable them to apply the skills gained from the course at their workplaces as listed below:

- Availability of food safety-related regulations that can support application of the skills gained from the course in food safety interventions.
- Food safety activities are priorities in the participating organizations (MOA, EPHI, EFDA). This alignment helps support the application of the skills gained from the course at their workplaces.
- The participating organizations have training plans aiming to build the capacity of the regional staff in their structure. This allows incorporating some aspects of the skill gained from the training into the plan, which in turn, aids skill transfer.

- At least four persons joined this training from each participating organization and 20 participants (even if all have not completed the course) from Ethiopia. This creates an opportunity for the participants to work together to apply the skills gained, which is especially useful for those working in the same organization.

## Barriers

The participants also identified potential barriers that can hinder application of the skills gained from the course at their workplaces as listed below:

- Inadequate enforcement of food safety regulations.
- Limited financial resources.
- Organizational re-structuring and staff turnover.
- Lack of individual commitment.
- Inadequate coordination of food safety activities among the organizations.

## Sustainability of the initiative

The participants suggested the following points to sustain the lessons learned from training:

- Advocacy of the benefits of the training within participating organizations and their partners.
- Incorporating the training competences into the participating organizations' capacity building (training) plans.
- Using the skills gained from the course in food safety activities such as document development by the participating organizations.
- Cascading the information gained from the course to the staff working at different levels in the participating organizations.
- Individual commitment to apply the skills gained from the course.

Photo 2: Conversation during the review workshop at the ILRI Addis campus, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (photo credit: ILRI/Lina Gazu).



Photo 3: Plenary discussions at the end of the three rounds of conversations to harvest the ideas during the review workshop at ILRI Addis campus, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (photo credit: ILRI/Lina Gazu).





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## 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 of 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.

## Annexes

### Annex I: Program for the workshop on post-training feedback on online training of regulators in Ethiopia in food safety and risk assessment

Time	Topic	Owners/facilitators
0830-0930	Registration of participants	Lina Gazu (ILRI)
	Online connection	Elshaday Mengistu (ILRI)
	Quick refreshments on arrival	Catering services
0930-0950	Welcoming remarks and brief points about the course	Kebede Amenu (ILRI)
0950-1000	Participants self-introduction	Kebede Amenu (ILRI)
1000-1200	Round 1: what went well and what not?	Gezahegn Alemayehu (ILRI), Kebede Amenu (ILRI), Lina Gazu (ILRI), Getachew Dinede (ILRI)
	Round 2: Uses of the training	
	Round 3: Opportunities and barriers to apply the skills gained from the course	
1200-1230	Plenary discussion (Overall harvest)	Kebede Amenu (ILRI), Gezahegn Alemayehu (ILRI), Getachew Dinede (ILRI)
1230-1235	End of the workshop and thank you message	Getachew Dinede (ILRI)
1235-1335	Lunch	Catering services

## Annex 2: List of participants of the the workshop on post-training feedback on online training of regulators in Ethiopia in food safety and risk assessment.

Name	Institution
Kebede Amenu	ILRI
Getachew Dinede	ILRI
Gezahegn Alemayehu	ILRI
Lina Gazu	ILRI
Theo Knight-Jones	ILRI
Donya Madjdian	WUR
Geremew Tassew	TechnoServe
Yimer Mulugeta	EPHI
Amare Alemu	EPHI
Tihitina Kibret	EFDA
Gutu Mijena	MoA
Mekonnen Belay	MoA
Wondwossen Bekele	MoA
Ashenafi G/Maryam	MoA