



Food control in Zimbabwe: A situational analysis



Felicitas Pswarayi^{a, *}, Anthony N. Mutukumira^b, Batsirai Chipurura^a, Benson Gabi^c, David J. Jukes^d

^a Institute of Food, Nutrition and Family Sciences, Faculty of Science, University of Zimbabwe, PO Box MP167, Mount Pleasant, Harare, Zimbabwe

^b Institute of Food, Nutrition and Human Health, Massey University, Private Bag 102 904, Auckland 0745, New Zealand

^c Quality Assurance Department, Zimbabwe Open University, PO Box MP1119, Mount Pleasant, Harare, Zimbabwe

^d Department of Food and Nutritional Sciences, The University of Reading, Whiteknights, PO Box 226, Reading RG6 6AP, United Kingdom

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 9 December 2013

Received in revised form

30 April 2014

Accepted 6 May 2014

Available online 20 May 2014

Keywords:

Food control system

Food safety

Food Standards Advisory Board (FSAB)

Food Control Authority (FCA)

ABSTRACT

The food control and regulatory system in Zimbabwe is beset by many challenges. The system is fragmented and consists of many entities in the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture and in local authorities. There are no clear mechanisms to coordinate the activities of these different entities and, in practice, they act independently except in times of a national food safety challenge. This, therefore, makes it difficult to ensure food safety throughout the food chain. Lack of the requisite resources is a major contributory factor to weaknesses in the food control system. In view of the food safety challenges in Zimbabwe, the food control system in the country is currently being reviewed. This paper describes and compares the current system with the proposed food control system as outlined in the draft Food Control Bill 2011. Particular attention is given to the establishment and functions of a Food Control Authority of Zimbabwe which will replace the existing State authorities in the control and regulation of food. The proposed Food Control Bill 2011 has provisions for a coordinated approach to food safety which would strengthen and improve food regulation in Zimbabwe. It includes proposals to bring together all inspection and analytical services under the supervision of one organisation. However the priority given to enhancing the overall supply of food and the lack of resources to develop a modern food control system is leading to continuing delays in implementing an enhanced food control system for food safety and quality.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Due to the globalization of food trade, development of new food production and processing technologies and emergence of new food related diseases; food safety has become a public health problem of concern worldwide. WHO (2007) estimated that in 2005 alone 1.8 million people world wide died from diarrhoeal diseases, and that most of these cases could be attributed to contaminated food and drinking water. WHO (2007) also stated that diarrhoea is a major cause of malnutrition in infants and young children. According to FAO/WHO (2002) many countries are still battling with transformation of existing regulatory control systems to meet these new challenges.

The World Food Summit of 1996 defined food security as “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life” (FAO, 1996). FAO (2005) contends that improving food safety reduces food losses, increases food availability and enhances the competitiveness in international food trade.

In this paper we focus on the situation in Zimbabwe where the challenges of creating a modern and effective food control system have been amplified by an economic and political crisis. As elsewhere in the world, food safety is an increasingly significant public health concern in Zimbabwe. Diarrhoeal diseases are a major public health problem in Zimbabwe (Harvey, 2012; Mason, 2009). Over the past decade there has been increased food and nutrition insecurity at the household and national levels, emanating from a decrease in agricultural production (UN, 2013; WFP, 2012).

Food safety among many consumers in Zimbabwe is often compromised in the desperate struggle to put food on the table, and is largely determined by the prevailing economic situation (FAO/WHO, 2005c; Malayang, 2002). This was clearly

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +263 4 303211x15067, +263 774354399 (mobile).
E-mail addresses: fpswarayi@science.uz.ac.zw, fpswarayi@gmail.com
(F. Pswarayi).

demonstrated in 2008, during widespread food shortages in Zimbabwe when consumers were concerned about obtaining food; it is reasonable to mention that food safety was given a low priority. According to the [World Bank \(2012\)](#), since 2009, Zimbabwe's economy has started to recover from a decade-long crisis from 1999 to 2008 that saw a cumulative economic output decline of more than 45%. Food insecurity in Zimbabwe is the result of complex interlinked political and economic factors as well as extreme vulnerability to erratic rainfall patterns, recurrent droughts and natural disasters which affect the overall agricultural production of the country ([EEAS, n.d.](#); [WFP, 2012](#)).

The food control system in Zimbabwe as in many developing countries is not well developed and organised ([Bagumire, Todd, Muyanja, & Nasinyama, 2009](#); [FAO, n.d.](#); [Majdi, 2002](#); [Malayang, 2002](#)). Problems occur as a result of poor post-harvest handling, processing and storage of food and also due to inadequate facilities and infrastructure such as the absence or shortage of safe water supply, electricity, storage facilities including cold stores, and transport facilities and networks, etc. ([FAO, 2003](#)). Consumers in Zimbabwe are therefore exposed to a wide range of potential food quality and safety risks ([FAO, n. d.](#); [Gran, Mutukumira, Wetlesen, & Narvhus 2002](#); [Nyatoti, Mtero, & Rukure, 1997](#)).

This paper discusses the current food control and regulatory system in Zimbabwe, highlighting its challenges, strengths and weaknesses. The paper also compares the functions of the current Food Standards Advisory Board with the proposed Food Control Authority of Zimbabwe as described in the draft Food Control Bill 2011.

2. Background to food control in Zimbabwe

Currently, the responsibility for food control in Zimbabwe is spread across several government departments in various government ministries and local authorities ([FAO/WHO, 2002](#)). There are many legal instruments which deal with food safety issues leading to overlaps and gaps in some areas.

There are numerous Acts which impact on food safety control (see [Table 1](#)). The two principle measures are the Food and Food Standards Act and the Public Health Act Both of these Acts have their origins in early legislation. The Food and Food Standards Act was originally passed in 1971 but has been updated at various times. The Public Health Act dates back to 1925 but has also been subject to numerous amendments.

The Ministry of Health and Child Care is the overall regulatory agency through the environmental health officers nationwide and through the delegation of powers to local authorities. The major food safety regulatory services are located in the Environmental Health Unit (Ministry of Health and Child Care), Veterinary Services and Agricultural Research and Extension Services departments, (Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development), local authorities (Ministry of Local Government Rural and Urban Development), National Biotechnology Authority (Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development) and the Export and Import Department (Ministry of Industry and Commerce) ([FAO/WHO, 2005b](#)).

Following an amendment to the Food and Food Standards Act in 1994, the Food Standards Advisory Board (FSAB) was formed in 1996 and is required "... to advise the Minister on all matters relating to food and food standards." The FSAB is composed of representatives from the Ministry of Health and Child Care, the Government Analyst, the Environmental Health Department and the Nutrition Department, Local Authorities (Ministry of Local Government Rural and Urban Development); the Veterinary Services Department and the Agricultural Research and Extension Services (AREX) (Ministry of Agriculture Mechanisation and

Irrigation Development); Import and Export Department (Ministry of Industry and Commerce), National Biotechnology Authority (Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development), Law Society of Zimbabwe (Chair), Standards Association of Zimbabwe (SAZ), the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe (CCZ), the food manufacturing industry (Food Manufacturers Association), the food retailing business (Retailers Association of Zimbabwe) and the Zimbabwe Commercial Farmers' Union (ZCFU).

The Government Analyst serves as the Secretariat for the FSAB as well as the National Codex Contact Point. The Government Analyst Laboratory under the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MoHCC) is the main facility for testing food for regulatory purposes. The FSAB has been undertaking a product registration exercise since 2009. Prior to this, because of food shortages, food safety and quality was not a priority with consumers. Zimbabwe does not have adequate food security, resulting in a situation where at least 60% of the food supply is imported from South Africa to supplement local production ([SADC/FANR, 2009](#); [WFP, 2012](#)).

Zimbabwe does not have a formal food safety policy ([FAO/WHO, 2005c](#)). According to [FAO \(2003\)](#) a lack of overall strategic direction means that limited resources are not properly utilized.

Outside of government, the Standards Association of Zimbabwe (SAZ) is the national standards body for Zimbabwe and is a member of the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO). SAZ is a non-governmental and a non-profit organization which operates third party certification and registration schemes for Zimbabwe standards. SAZ facilitates the development and use of standards. The status of SAZ standards is that they are voluntary upon publication, but are mandatory when referenced in legislation. The association also provides technical services for the testing of manufactured foods and raw materials.

In view of the food safety challenges in Zimbabwe, the current food control system is being reviewed. To address the challenges of food control and regulation in Zimbabwe, a Food Control Bill was originally proposed in 2000 by key stakeholders with the help of a technical cooperation project funded by the Food and Agriculture Organisation ([FAO/WHO, 2002](#)). The Bill would have established a Food Control Authority (FCA) which would integrate and coordinate food safety control and regulatory activities under the Ministry of Health and Child Care.

3. Food safety challenges and weaknesses

The food safety systems in most countries in Africa are generally weak, fragmented and poorly coordinated; and thus are not effective to adequately protect the health of consumers ([FAO, 2005](#); [FAO/WHO, 2005b](#); [Majdi, 2002](#); [Nguz, 2007](#)). The [FAO \(2005\)](#) however, recognizes that improving food safety systems has many short- and long-term costs which can be challenging for many countries to undertake. The food control infrastructure in Zimbabwe, like in many developing countries, suffers from limited resources ([FAO, 2003](#)). The main causes of weakness in the food control and regulatory system in Zimbabwe are the lack of the requisite resources in terms of funding, infrastructure, equipment and skills. According to [FAO/WHO \(2002\)](#) resources for food control work are limited due to competition with programs such as HIV/AIDS and poverty alleviation. Although many developing countries have experienced faltering economic development due to recurrent droughts, unsuccessful economic structural adjustment programmes, political instability and unfavourable world trade ([Gadaga, Samende, Musuna, & Chibanda, 2008](#)); the situation has been particularly severe in Zimbabwe. Human resources development is a major component for the successful implementation of the new food control system. All the government departments and agencies involved in food safety control are under-staffed and have a high

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6391190>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6391190>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)