



Food Safety in the New Post-COVID-19 Order

by

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Outline

- **The Old Order - Where are we coming from?**
- **What is Food Safety? Its implications?**
- **Who are the Key Food Safety Actors (FSAs) ?**
- **What should be the Responses of FSAs?**
- **What are the expected impacts or changes due to COVID-19?**
- **What are the expected mitigations in the New Order?**

Where are we coming from - 1 ?

- **We are in a global state of unpreparedness for the current COVID-19 outbreak. It is clear that it is a pandemic we have not seen before:**
 - **businesses shut and/or threatened,**
 - **citizens quarantined,**
 - **no access to raw materials**
 - **new planting season not commenced**
 - **airplanes grounded,**
 - **borders closed, even inter-state;**
 - **politics and governance at a stand still**
 - **new 'dress code' globally (wear face masks everywhere!)**
 - **citizens in a quagmire – whether to die of COVID-19 or Hunger?**



Where are we coming from - 2 ?



- **Many companies, especially SMEs already shut down**
- **Science of COVID-19 is not very clear; still unfolding every day**
- **Oil Prices have tumbled; food and agriculture is the new hope**
- **Potable water supply is a major challenge despite its increased need**
- **Inherent poor social distancing culture & compliance all over**
- **Open air markets have always been the norm**
- **Access to clean fresh foods still a major challenge**
- **Fear of coronavirus resurgence, re-infection and more lockdowns!**

Can COVID-19 be Transmitted Through Food?

- The virus is commonly passed on either directly through contact with an infected person's body fluids (for example, droplets from coughing or sneezing, or indirectly, through contact with surfaces that an infected person has coughed or sneezed on.
- Although the science of the virus is still unfolding, current evidence on other coronavirus strains shows that they are stable at low and freezing temperatures for a certain period. Good food safety and hygiene practices generally can prevent their transmission through food.
- But while the virus generally cannot grow in food, it is known to survive on food surfaces for up to 6-8 hours. Hence post-processing handling is crucial and important to avoid direct contact of an infected person or through a contaminated contact surface to avoid being infected with the virus.
- One critical point of note is that although it is much less common, infected people can transmit the Covid-19 virus before they begin to show symptoms of the disease due to the long incubation period.
- This is the main reasoning behind the recommendations for social distancing and reduction in gathering of large groups of people. The implication is that this may become the “normal” in the new order.
- In our own environment, we need to follow the standard WHO recommendations on Good Safety and Hygiene Practices for reducing exposure to and transmission of a large range of illnesses.
- As Food Scientists, we cannot over-emphasize the need to also avoid cross-contamination between raw or undercooked foods and cooked/ready-to-eat foods whether in the kitchen or on the streets!

Food Safety & Its Implications?

- **Food Safety is the assurance that food will not cause harm to the consumer when it is prepared, manufactured and/or eaten according to its intended use.**
- **Is the Food Product “suitable” or acceptable for human consumption according to its intended use?**
- **The question is, whether the food being sold conforms to the nature, substance and quality demanded by the consumer.**
- **According to World Health Organization (WHO), about 2 million die from food and water-borne diarrheal diseases annually.**
- **Yet our local contribution to this figure may be under-stated because of lack of credible data! Manufacturers therefore need to adhere to all food safety policies to reduce such incidence in the new order.**
- **There are serious health implications not only for factory staff, but also for distributing contaminated, unsafe food products in our market channels on our pre-existing poor nutritional indices.**

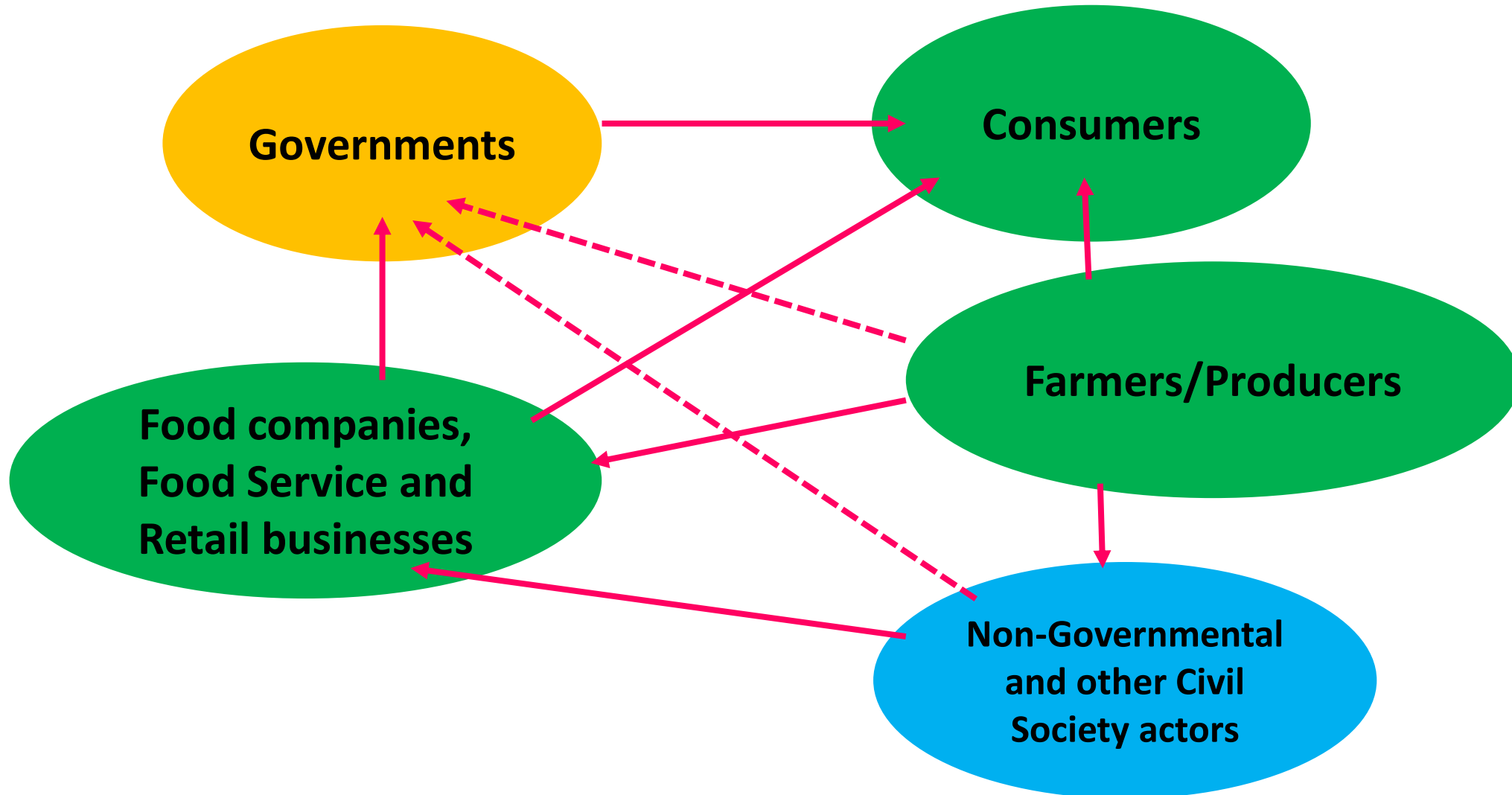
Food Safety Risks for MSMEs?

- **The risks to food safety that SMEs will need to pay special attention to if they are to cope with the new post COVID-19 order include GMP Issues such as**
 - a. Hygiene in Production and Handling;**
 - b. Suitable Facilities (Hygiene Design) and Utilities;**
 - c. Traceability - Complaints and Recall issues;**
 - d. Environmental Management and Pest Control;**
 - e. Sanitation, Cleaning and Disinfection;**
 - f. Preventive Maintenance issues.**
- **Food Hazards** – Biological, Chemical and Physical Hazards. Specifically, the issues of **Food, Acidity, Time, Temperature Oxygen and Moisture** are critical.
- **Food Allergens**, in the absence of local capacity for testing, that can cause health issues such as gluten-intolerance, lactose-intolerance, DOA from nuts, etc
- **Fortificants** which can lose their potency because of long storage under improper conditions, especially when planned production levels are not being achieved.
- **Presence of Pesticide residues, Mycotoxins and Heavy (Toxic) metals than allowed** in products for sale or export.
- **Odour taints** transferred during transportation e.g. Unwashed Trailers

Compelling factors for a new order?

- **Like many African countries, we seem to be suppressing the COVID-19 curve so far but there are growing concerns on community transmission due for cultural reasons.**
- The possibility of re-occurrence of the virus, and likelihood of reinfection of survivors means further disruptions and more lockdowns so businesses must plan.
- Our pre-existing dependence on China's supply chain and imports will need to be reviewed because of likely emotional and economic COVID-19 backlash, e.g Japan
- In this crisis, there will be winners and there will be losers. **Those who re-orient their strategies for GFSH and other practices in the new order will be the winners.**
- For us as individuals, health and safety will have to become No.1 priority. There will be more spending on this area and reduction in other discretionary spends, with emphasis on price especially of our staple foods.
- Extreme acceleration in digital economy. I.e. e-learning, home education & entertainment, home fitness, farmer-to-farmer connect, etc
- People will be less loyal towards particular brands with less to spend. People may switch brands faster due for various concerns like safety, etc.
- **There will be increased trust deficit amongst stakeholders – vendors, customers, marketers, suppliers with likely increase in unethical practices**

Critical Actors in the Food Supply System





In the New Order.....



- Screening of every employee as standard practice before entering the production area.
- Compulsory wearing of PPEs
- Continuous cleaning and sanitizing of food contact surfaces
- Enforcement of GHP protocols as specified in the SSOPs
- Explore the opportunities in the local production of PPEs
- We must ensure Job security for infected victims to encourage openness for self-isolation or medical treatment.
- Timely actions to isolate infected victims by expansion of existing medical/testing facilities
- Prophylactic measures at individual and household levels to ensure good immune status.
- Training of street food vendors on food hygiene and microbiological safety
- Increased access of food handlers to potable water both in rural and urban centres
- Controlled handling and disinfection of recycled packaging materials.
- Access to random testing of staff- Food Handlers Examination
- Enforcement of GHP protocols, including compulsory wearing of PPEs
- Frequent Cleaning and Sanitizing of all food contact surfaces
- Public Enlightenment and Awareness of fortified foods and their benefits
- Active steps to change pre-existing practices such as common use of human faeces as manure for growing fruits and vegetables without any treatment!



In the New Order.....



- SMEs need to pay attention to microbiological safety to reduce food-borne illnesses
- Avoid cross-contamination between raw materials and finished goods
- Avoid post-processing contamination via contact surfaces
- Avoid person-to-person contact via social distancing especially in the factories.
- Training support to encourage self-regulation and voluntary compliance to regulations for fortified and unfortified foods.
- Improved packaging of SME products for nutrient protection e.g. mandatorily fortified foods
- Laboratory analysis and nutrient labelling.
- **Collaboration between NIFST, CAFSANI and similar organizations with the regulatory agencies especially NAFDAC, for training and monitoring of compliance.**
- **Mandatory development of SSOPs in the workplace as part of the QMS**
- **Anticipatory management and consistent compliance with protocols**
- **Mandatory QHSE Personnel or Outsourced support in SMEs for self-regulation**
- **Training of Personnel in Basic Food Safety and Nutrition**
- **Mandatory development of SSOPs in the workplace as part of the QMS**
- **Anticipatory management and consistent compliance with ALL protocols**
- **Mandatory QHSE Personnel or Outsourced support in SMEs for self-regulation**
- **Development of effective communications strategy for sustaining improved food safety requirements**

In the New Order - Critical Responses by the Actors?



Water



Education



Food



Environment



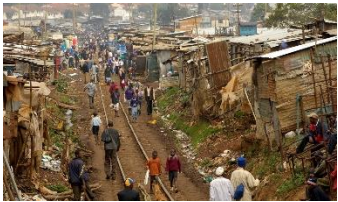
Data



Terrorism & War



Population



Poverty



Energy



Culture & Religion



Disease



Democracy



THANK YOU FOR LISTENING