

## 141 Launch a Food Safety System Innovation Facility to co-finance low-cost solutions for improving food safety risk management and consumer engagement

**The Solution:** The Food Safety System Innovation Facility (FSSIF) would co-finance and assess a portfolio of low-cost solutions for improving food safety risk management and consumer engagement. Technical guidance, rigorous impact assessment, and experience-sharing functions will enable the Facility to serve as an incubator for effective solutions that can be applied by LMICs globally.

**Source(s) of the Solution:** The idea came from the AT1 Food Safety Working Group. A competitive 'challenge' fund with knowledge management functions is a well-established concept, particularly in the context of addressing complex food system issues.

**Problem addressed within food systems:** There is growing recognition of the significant public health and economic burdens imposed on LMICs by unsafe food and of the need to strengthen the incentives and capacities to manage foodborne risks. Yet, there exists a relatively thin roster of well-tested, fit-for-context solutions. To date, most efforts to enhance food safety systems in LMICs have been informed by the experiences and institutional landscapes of today's high-income countries, which do not fit well with LMIC contexts, including their available resources, underdeveloped infrastructure, and often fragmented institutions. There is a need to identify, incubate, and validate a variety of alternative solutions that are more cost-efficient and effective in the market and institutional settings of LMICs.

There are no quick technological fixes or proven shortcuts that LMICs can take to develop well-functioning and trusted systems for food safety management. For most LMICs, the institutional ecosystem for food safety is underdeveloped across government, the private sector, and civil society, both at central and sub-national levels. Further, food safety challenges are becoming more complex as those countries experience major demographic, economic, and dietary shifts. Identifying cost-effective and fit-for-context solutions to manage food safety risks and engage consumers in this process will help LMICs prevent food contamination and reduce the incidence of foodborne illness.

**How this solution will address that problem:** The FSSIF would identify and act as an incubator for lower-cost institutional, social, and technical innovations that bring considerable improvements in how food safety risks are managed in the formal and informal segments of LMIC domestic markets. The Facility would support interventions that have clear demonstration and learning benefits. It could support the application of different approaches across a broad set of institutional actors, for example:

- *Innovations within public-sector regulatory systems*, such as risk-profiling of businesses, value chains, and food imports, incentive-based enforcement for the regulated/the regulators, food vendor, restaurant and other site grading schemes, use of quick detection technologies, etc.
- *Enhancing consumer demand for and contribution to improved food safety* via consumer organisations, parent/teacher alliances for food safety in schools, consumer reporting systems, applying easy-to-understand labels, and using various techniques and modalities for increasing consumer food safety awareness and changing consumer behaviour.
- *Collective action by private actors* at different points in the food system, include third-party certification schemes, peer-based food safety benchmarking, producer/vendor codes of practice, etc.
- *Innovative public-private co-management arrangements*, including joint traceability/recall systems, regulatory tiering on the basis of compliance with private standards, collaborative programmes supporting adoption of best practices targeting SMEs, street/market vendors, or others.

The FSSIF would act specifically to:

- Identify and develop innovations useful for LMICs.

- (Co-)finance the development and validation of locally driven, low-cost, and appropriate innovations for enhancing incentives and/or capabilities for food safety risk management, perhaps working through regional centres.
- Support the design and testing of these innovations by government (at the national, regional and/or municipal level), private sector, and/or civil society organisations.
- Validation: Assess the impact and sustainability of those innovations in terms of the safety of food and the practices/performance of food operators and focal institutions involved with food safety governance in LMICs.
- Engage with LMICs for the transfer of knowledge as a global public good.

The **theory of change** behind the proposed FSSIF is as follows:

- **Inputs:** Financial and technical support to a diverse set of entities to co-create and implement low-cost solutions to address food safety risk management in LMICs; Tools and assistance to assess the effectiveness and impacts of the funded interventions.
- **Processes:** Calls for proposals; design and implementation of a range of interventions; close monitoring and rigorous assessment of results; documentation and knowledge sharing (via a portal, events, etc); and support to mainstream the validated approaches/solutions.
- **Outcomes:** More cost-effective interventions; increased strategic planning and investment and co-responsibility in the management of food safety; improved functioning of the food safety systems of LMICs; improved design of future development assistance interventions in this field.
- **Impacts:** Sustainable reductions in the incidence of foodborne disease in LMICs.

**Major assumptions:** Sufficient resources to support the initiative. Managing entity for the Facility (e.g., the Global Network for Food Safety Innovation and Capacity Building or regional development banks), has convening power and mobilises appropriate partners/networks. Recognition and support for domestic food safety measures in LMICs continues to grow.

**Solution's alignment to the 'game changing and systemic solution' criteria:** This proposal directly addresses the need for solutions that will effectively address weaknesses in the food safety systems of LMICs in a manner that is effective, cost-efficient, and sustainable. The FSSIF will be characterised by having:

**Impact potential at scale:** The FSSIF would support the design and implementation of a range of interventions that would likely differ in scale from the local value chain or individual municipality level to the national scale. The testing of these interventions would take place within a common framework for assessing impact and sustainability. Successful innovations would be replicated elsewhere.

**Actionability:** The FSSIF would support the design/implementation of solutions by multiple actors considering prevailing capacities and resources. Co-financing would provide reliable expectation of local support, motivation, and capacity for the proposed action. Support will be provided to applicants to ensure that those with less capacity and/or involving marginalised groups (including women) are not excluded. The Facility could be managed either centrally by the Global Network for Food Safety Innovation and Capacity Building or regionally through existing regional development banks. The managing entity must have or work in partnership with an entity with prior experience managing competitive grant facilities and with strong fiduciary capabilities.

**Sustainability:** The entire focus of the FSSIF is to bring about sustainable improvements in how food safety risks are managed in LMICs. The interventions would likely have a multi-year timeframe to enable adjustments, generate multi-stakeholder buy-in, and facilitate rigorous assessment of impacts, including distributional ones. The pool of well-tested solutions can then be replicated by other countries and supported through mainstreamed development assistance and partnership programmes.

**Existing evidence:** Effective mechanisms for solving critical food-related problems have come from innovation facilities that have brought together public- and private-sector organisations to co-develop approaches to fill gaps that neither sector could fill on its own. Blended finance with advisory services offers great potential, and there are many proven successful models to follow that have generated evidence and models for scale. Successful examples of targeted innovation facilities include: the Global Innovation Fund, the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program, the Global Partnership for Education, and the GSMA fund for Digitization of Agricultural Value Chains, to name a few.

**Current/likely political support:** Many LMICs are struggling to strengthen their food safety systems, especially in the context of food destined for local rather than export markets. While it is evident that many of the approaches that are widely employed in high-income countries are not transferable to the contexts of many LMICs, knowledge of workable solutions remains limited. The need for locally appropriate solutions has been recognised by many LMICs, which are beginning to test alternative approaches. There is great interest in this issue among international institutions and the food safety practitioner community in the quest for innovative solutions that will bring sustained improvements in the safety of food in LMICs, at scale.

**Contexts where this is well/not well suited:** Priority should be given to low- and lower middle-income countries in which the food safety institutional ecosystem is weakest and in an effort to prevent an escalation of food-borne disease that could come from rapid economic development and demographic and dietary change.