Determination of baseline level of awareness on food safety practices including aflatoxin management among female agricultural practitioners and home caregivers in Kaduna and Kano States, Nigeria using focus group discussions

Women in Nigeria are under-represented in groups receiving sensitization and or training to manage aflatoxins due to social structures, suggesting they obtain limited information access. There is the need for equity in information access especially as women are the primary caregivers for households and vulnerable groups, and are normally responsible for preparing meals, including complementary foods with aflatoxin-susceptible cereal and legume-based products. Furthermore, women can be conduits of aflatoxins to babies via the umbilical cord and breast milk.

The purpose of the focus group discussion (FGD) to be implemented is to identify awareness gaps in aflatoxin management among adult female agricultural practitioners and household caregivers in Kaduna and Kano states. In each state, a community within each of two local government areas (LGA) will be selected for the assessment. One LGA will comprise sensitized communities (communities where aflatoxin management training has been previously conducted) and the other unsensitized communities (communities where aflatoxin management trainings have not been conducted previously).

Objective: Assessing the level of awareness and access to training on aflatoxin of female maize growers, household caregivers.

Location:

Sensitized or Unsensitized community of aflatoxin management group:

Length of time with aflatoxin management sensitization:

Number of participants M/F:

Age groups present:

- 18 to 35 years
- 36 to 55 years
- 56 years and above

Societal roles:

Welcome setting: Thank the participants for attending and welcome them to the session. Introduce the session and explain what the objectives of the session are. Avoid defining what aflatoxins are as awareness levels of the topic are to be deciphered from the FGD. Mention to participants that they are free to express themselves and that every voice would like to be heard, regardless of whether opinions differ from a larger group or not, every experience is important. Encourage free speech and others to encourage others to speak. Discourage comments or attitudes that put down others or discourage them from sharing their understanding, experiences, or opinions.

A. Awareness about aflatoxins Number of participants in exercise:	
1. Have you heard of aflatoxins before today? Please raise your hand if you have.	Count: Y= N=
2. How did you hear about aflatoxins? Capture source of information and mode of communication about aflatoxins	
3. Are you aware of anyone who has received training on aflatoxins before today? Please raise your hand if you have?	Count: Y= N=
4. If you answered yes to A.1 or A.3, can you mention what aflatoxins are? Capture definitions (Capture information about invisible chemical produced by group of fungus)	
5. If you answered yes to A.1 or A.3, can you explain how people are exposed to aflatoxins? Capture explanations. (Listen for dietary exposure from contaminated food)	
6. Have you ever heard about Aflasafe? Please raise your hand if you have.	Count: Y= N=
7. If Yes what have you heard about Aflasafe? Capture main points	
8. Have you ever heard about PICS bags? Please raise your hand if you have.	Count: Y= N=
9. If Yes what have you heard about PICS bags? Capture main points	

B Information about dietary exposure to vulnerable groups from caregivers Number of participants in exercise	
10. What are the priority meals for pregnant, lactating, breastfeeding mothers;	(List the main crops used to prepare these meals)
11. and who is responsible for sourcing and preparing the meals within the family?	List responsible people groups
12. What meals are given to weaning children?	(List the main crops used to prepare these meals)
13. Who is responsible for sourcing and preparing those meals within the family?	List responsible people groups
14. What meals are given to the sickly and elderly within the family and who is responsible for preparing their meals?	(List the main crops used to prepare these meals)
15. who is responsible for preparing their meals (sickly and elderly within the family)?	List responsible people groups
16. Have you observed diarrhea or jaundice (yellowing of the eyes) in your community? Please raise your hand if your answer is yes (Enumerator to count and indicate numbers)	Count Y= N=

How were these conditions treated?	Capture responses
17. If yes has this been associated with consumption of maize/groundnut or any specific crop/food?	Count Y= N=
18. Do community members take vaccinations especially for Hepatitis B? Follow up question: How and in what location are the vaccinations administered? To what community groups are the vaccinations administered (count and indicate numbers)	Adult males (Y = /N= I don't know=) Capture responses Adult females (Y = /N=) Pregnant women (Y = /N=) Children (Y = /N=)
19. Who is responsible for preparation of general meals in your community?	List people groups
20. What are the main household meals prepared with maize?	List the main meals prepared
21. What do you do with grains that are low density grains (e.g. floating or lighter during winnowing), discoloured, shrivelled or damaged? (Listen for alternative food, feed use, discard or any other use)	Capture responses

22. How much maize is consumed within a day in the family? (estimations can be made in measuring modus? held up to the participants or measurements that communities are conversant with)	Estimate from a third of the attendees
23. Average family size: What is the number of adults and children in the average family? Adults (male): Adults (female): Children below 5: Children 6-12: Teens: 13-19:	Estimate from a third of the attendees
C. Access to information Number of participants in exercise:	
24. Have you been invited to trainings on food safety, including management of aflatoxins? Please raise your hand if the answer is yes to this question. If yes, did you attend? If you did not attend, why not?	Count: Y= N= Count: Y= N= Capture responses
25. Do you have access to information about farming practices used for the management of aflatoxins or other farming practices? Please raise your hand if the answer is yes to this question. Follow up question: How did you receive this information? Listen for source and manner of sensitization?	Count: Y= N= Capture responses
26. Do you have access to digital information on farming practices or crop handling practices? Please raise your hand if the answer is yes to this question.	Count: Y= N=

27. If yes, how do you receive this information?	Capture responses
28. What are the common ways that you receive information on agricultural practices and food safety practices? Which is the most common method used?	Capture responses
29. What is your preferred mode of receiving information on food safety and agricultural practices? 30. Why do you prefer this method of communication?	Capture responses Capture responses
31. Which agricultural information do you remember the most?	Capture responses
32. How was this information disseminated?	Capture responses
33. How recently was this agricultural information disseminated (Year)?	Capture responses

Access to links with marketers including quality-sensitive off-takers Number of participants in exercise	
34. Are you aware of marketers that come to source special grains (e.g. grains treated with specific products or bagged in a particular manner?) (Y/N) (Allow for further discussion where available)	Count: Y= N=
35. Are you a member of any farmers'/ crop management of women's group?	Count: Y= N=
36. If yes (to 35) What groups are you members of?	List responses and purposes
37. If yes (to 35) How regularly do you meet?	List responses
Concluding questions Number of participants in exercise	
38. Do you think it is important for women and girls to know about how to ensure that food is safe and the community is protected?	Count: Y= N=
39. How do you think that this information can be best communicated to them?	Capture responses

Express gratitude to the participants for their participation and inform them of the value of their inputs for the development of the community and inform them of what will follow this stage as necessary.