

Emergence of the All Africa Postharvest Congress and Exhibition: Creating Awareness about Food Loss & Waste and Sustainable Solutions

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United Nation's International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste



The 74th United Nations General Assembly designated 29 September as the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste, recognizing the fundamental role that sustainable food production and consumption plays in promoting food security and nutrition. Observance of this day globally marks a clear call to action for all stakeholders in both the public and private sectors to bolster efforts to reduce food loss and waste. This year the day will be marked under unprecedented conditions occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has sounded a global wake-up call on the need to transform our food systems to ensure food and nutrition security for all and particularly the most vulnerable, impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Food loss and waste problem and reduction targets

It is estimated that one third (30%) of the food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted along the supply chains globally. Proportionately this translates into 1.3 billion metric tons of the total volume of the food produced. It is unacceptable that this amount of food is wasted while 820 million people go hungry globally. Food Losses and Waste (FLW) impacts food security and nutrition in three ways: 1) reduction of global and local availability of food; 2) a negative impact on food access, for those who face FLW-related economic and income losses, and for consumers due to the contribution of FLW to tightening the food market and raising prices of food; and 3) a longer-term effect on food security results from the unsustainable use of natural resources on which the future production of food depends. Food is lost or wasted at every stage of the supply chain due to various causes/drivers including: preharvest practices that predispose food to spoilage; poor harvest practices; poor postharvest handling & storage practices; lack of awareness/access to applicable postharvest technologies are all stages; poor/lack of access to markets; poor stock management at the retail stage (including confusing date labels); poor coordination of supply chain actors; consumer behavior; lack of enabling policies among others. These causes could in part be addressed through awareness creation about the problem of FLW and application solutions. This requires participation, support and involvement of all stakeholders including governments, the private sector, civil society, development agencies, research and academic institutions and consumers because reducing FLW is a shared responsibility.

There have been concerted efforts from all stakeholders to reduce FLW in our food supply chains. In the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), under the goal on sustainable production and consumption, SDG 12, a target, 12.3, has been set to 'halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reducing food losses along production and supply chains (including postharvest losses) by 2030'. In addition, the Africa Union under the Malabo Declaration (2014) has a target to halve postharvest losses by the year 2025. To tackle the problem of FLW, there is need to create awareness for all stakeholders to be aware of the FLW problem, the extent of FLW, drivers/causes of FLW, sustainable solutions to FLW and the collective responsibility. The All Africa Postharvest Congress and Exhibition has provided an excellent platform for this discourse, not only to raise awareness about FLW but also showcase sustainable solutions to the problem.

The All Africa Postharvest Congress and Exhibition (AAPHCE)

The AAPHCE was conceptualized as a platform to create awareness about FLW and showcase sustainable solutions to address the problem in the Africa context. The idea of a uniquely Pan-African convening on FLW dialogue gained importance following the 1st International Congress on Postharvest Loss Prevention which was organized by the ADM Institute for the Prevention of Postharvest Loss (University of Illinois) in Rome, in October 2015. The delegates from Africa who were in attendance felt the need to organize a convening that would be tailor-made for the unique FLW challenges in the African context. With support from Dr. Charles Wilson (the Founder and CEO of the World Food Preservation Center) and Dr. Lisa Kitinoja, (the President of Postharvest Education Foundation), Prof. Jane Ambuko, a Postharvest Specialist from University of Nairobi (UON) was tasked to drive the convening of the 1st All Africa Postharvest Congress. Prof. Ambuko constituted local organizing committee (LOC) which was drawn mainly from the University of Nairobi (UON) as the Lead institution. Some of the LOC members from UON included Prof. Margaret Hutchinson (Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor, FPD at UON), Prof. George Chemining'wa (Acting Principal, Turkana University College), Dr. Catherine Kunyanga, Dr. Maina Muiru, Dr. Judith Mbau, Dr. Joyce Maina, Dr. Joshua Amimo and Dr. Rawlynce Bett. Additional members of the LOC were identified from other institutions in Kenya including Jomo Kenya University of Agriculture & Technology, Egerton University, Kenyatta University, KALRO, AgriProFocus, Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), Eastern Africa Grain Council, among others. The organizing committee received strategic guidance and oversight from The Rockefeller Foundation team led by Ms Betty Kibaara (Director, Food Initiative). The congress whose theme was **'Reducing Food Losses and Waste: Sustainable Solutions for Africa'** was held on 28th to 31st March 2017 at Safari Park Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya.



Prof. Peter Mbiti (former Vice Chancellor, University of Nairobi) addressing delegates during the opening ceremony of the 1st AAPHCE at Safari Park Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya

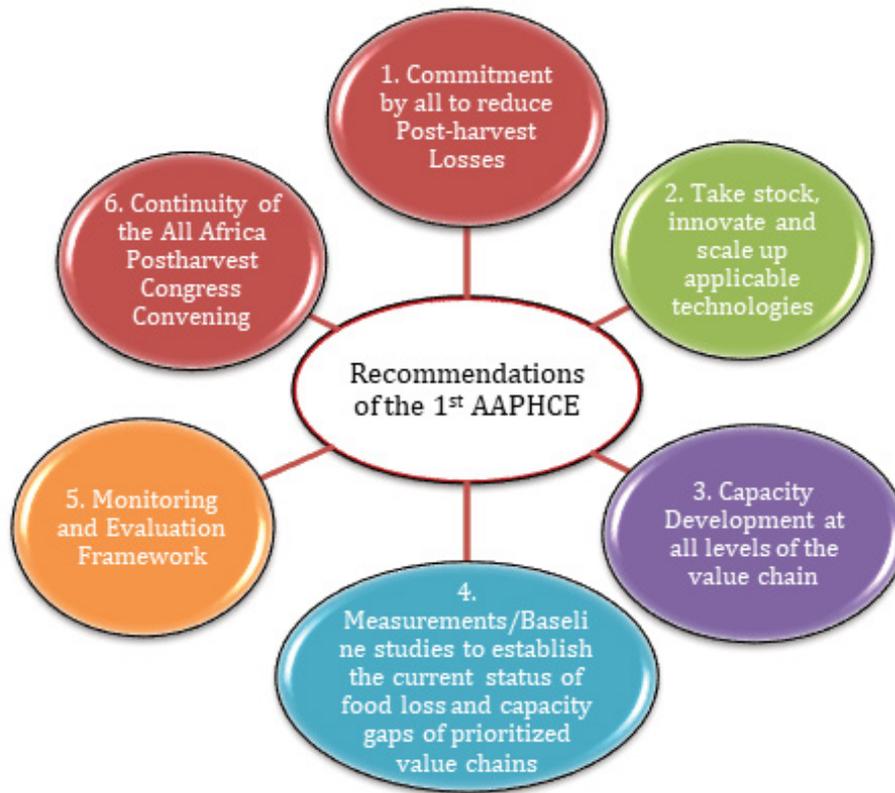


The winners of the top prize (USD 5,000) for their innovation 'Drycard' a simple technology used in drying to ascertain the right moisture content for safe storage of dried products

The congress planning was financially supported by various local and international organizations including The Rockefeller Foundation (Strategic Partner), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Netherlands Development Organization (SNV), Horticulture Innovation Lab, UC Davis (USAID), Postharvest Education Foundation (PEF), Global Alliance for Improve Nutrition (GAIN), East Africa Grain Council (EAGC), International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), International Development Research Center (IDRC), East Africa Trade and Investment Hub (EATIH-USAID), the World Food Programme, Global Cold Chain Alliance among others.

The congress was attended by more than 800 delegates from 42 countries including farmers/producers, traders, transporters, processors, technology developers/manufacturers, researchers/academia, policy makers, development partners, private sector, civil society and Non-governmental organizations among others. The delegates shared information, data, experiences on FLW reduction through interactive sessions which included keynote presentations, plenary discussions, scientific papers (oral & posters), business to business meetings and exhibitions.

One of the highlights of the 1st AAPHCE was the Postharvest Technologies Challenge whose output was a database of postharvest technologies and innovations with potential to reduce postharvest losses in food value chains. Out 200 entries received from innovators (from Africa and beyond), the top 10 technologies/innovations were identified and awarded seed funds to support their innovations for scale up.



Members of the organizing committee of the 2nd AAPHCE with Prof. Kiama Gitahi (Vice Chancellor, University of Nairobi) and Betty Kibaara (Rockefeller Foundation)



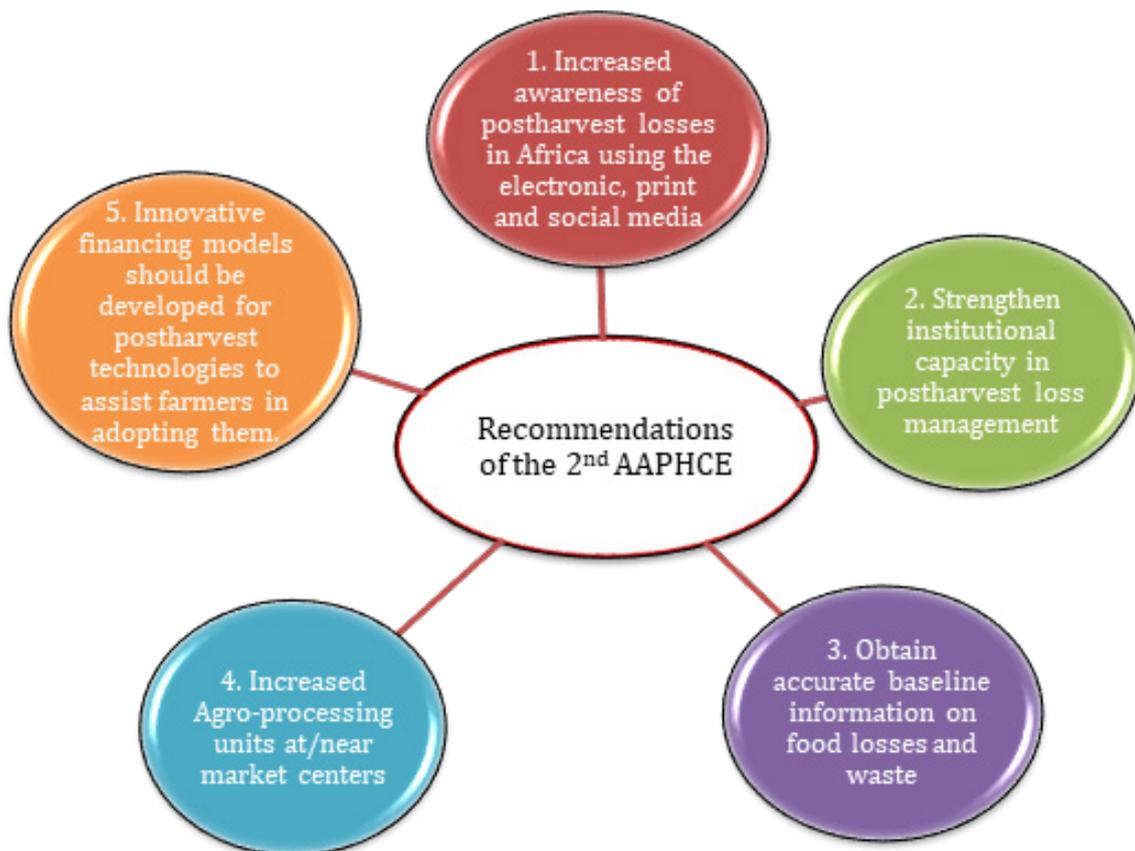
Group photo of some of the delegates who attended the 2nd AAPHCE held at the AUC Headquarters in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa

There have been some actions by various stakeholders in response to each of the six recommendations of the 1st AAPHCE. However much more stakeholder involvement is required to achieve the set targets of halving FLW by 2030 and 2025 under the SDG 12.3 and Malabo Declaration (2014).

As recommended in the 1st AAPHCE communique, in October 2018 the core team of the LOC of the 1st AAPHCE from UON with support from the Rockefeller Foundation initiated plans for the 2nd AAPHCE. Thereafter, during a regional postharvest workshop co-hosted by the African Union Commission, FAO and Rockefeller Foundation, a proposal to hand over the AAPHCE convening to a pan-African institution was unanimously adopted. Subsequently, the African Union Commission (AUC) agreed to take over convening of the AAPHCE. Led by Dr. Janet Edeme (Head of Rural Economy Division, Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture at the AUC) and Mr. Komla Prosper Bissi (Head of Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the AUC joined hands with selected members of the local organizing committee of the 1st AAPHCE to plan the 2nd AAPHCE. The organizing committee was expanded to include other regional institutions namely Stellenbosch University (South Africa), and Ethiopian Society of Postharvest Management (Ethiopia).

The AUC team spearheaded resource mobilization from various partners including FAO, Rockefeller Foundation, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, Sasakawa Africa Association, AGRA, African Development Bank, Ethiopian Airlines, Famsun, Buhler, IFPRI, World Food Program, Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa and SNV (Netherlands Development Organization). The congress was successfully hosted at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa on 17th - 20th September 2019 under the theme **‘Post-Harvest Loss Reduction and Agro-Processing: Drivers of Agricultural Transformation in Africa’**. The congress was attended by 450 delegates from all over the world including member States of the African Union, Academia, Research Institutions, Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society, Media organizations, Regional Economic Communities, Financial Institutions, Development partners, Farmers Organizations, Women and Youth Groups, and the Private Sector.

The congress communique prepared and adopted by the delegates of the 2nd AAPHCE contained five (5) recommendations which can be summarized as follows:



These recommendations mirror the ones of the 1st AAPHCE. There are concerted efforts by various stakeholders to implement the recommendations with the goal of contributing to the FLW reduction targets.



Prof. Gitahi Kiama (UoN) symbolically hands over the hosting of AAPHCE to AUC, represented by Mr. Komla Bissi

During the 2nd AAPHCE Congress Dinner, Prof. Kiama Gitahi (Vice Chancellor), on behalf of the University of Nairobi officially handed over the convening of the AAPHCE to the AUC. We are glad to report that planning of the 3rd AAPHCE has already commenced under the leadership of the AUC team. The University of Nairobi team will continue to give technical support to the AUC team in planning the 3rd AAPHCE and subsequent ones.

Call to action for all stakeholders

The AAPHCE has evolved into an all-inclusive pan-African convening where diverse stakeholders in the food and agriculture sector interact and share ideas, knowledge, data and experiences on FLW reduction. The congress will continue to play the critical role of creating awareness about food loss and waste in line with the goal of the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste.

Reduction of food loss and waste is a key strategy towards attaining food and nutrition security in sustainable food systems. While FLW reduction seeks to achieve the set target under SDG 12.3, it also has direct impact on other SDGs including SDG 1 (no poverty); SDG 2 (zero hunger); SDG 3 (good health and well-being); SDG 13 (climate action) among others. Reduction of FLW is a shared responsibility and hence a call to action by all stakeholders in the food supply chain to play their role for greater good – for the people and the planet.

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