



## Press Release

### UP-RISE project kick-starts to strengthen African Food Safety Systems

- Ghent University will lead the European Union (EU) funded project for the next four years
- The consortium is built up on 14 international partners bringing together an interdisciplinary approach and a well-framed gender dimension to maximize the impact
- Focusing on Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa, it will provide groundbreaking knowledge for understanding mycotoxin contamination and possible solutions

**Ghent (Belgium), 26 February 2024** – No single African country is on track to achieve all the global nutrition targets by 2030, according to the United Nations. Africa remains the worst- affected region, with one in five people facing hunger on the continent, more than twice the global average.

As part of the African Union-European Union (AU-EU) High Level Policy Dialogue (HLPD) on Science, Technology and Innovation, the Partnership on Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture (FNSSA) was endorsed in 2017. FNSSA aims at stimulating joint AU-EU research and innovation activities in the field of nutrition and health.

Responding to the challenge of reducing food contaminants, in particular mycotoxins, for a greater food safety and fewer zoonotic and food-borne diseases, Ghent University and consortium partners have been awarded an European Horizon grant -the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation- to implement project UP-RISE: EU-AU Partnership for Resilient, Inclusive and Safe food systems for Everyone.

#### Fermented foods value chains

The project aims to provide new knowledge for understanding mycotoxin contamination in the informal sector, prediction of mycotoxin contamination, improving risk assessment tools to strengthen regulatory frameworks, and developing innovative tools for reducing mycotoxin contamination in fermented food value chains, thereby aiming for safe food systems for all.

Prof. Sarah De Saeger and Prof. Siska Croubels from Ghent University will be leading the EU funded project for the next four years. Both have an outstanding track record of research in the field of food safety and mycotoxin research, and have exceptional experience collaborating with African countries.

*"The UP-RISE Horizon Europe project will respond to one of the greatest global food safety challenges – mycotoxins. UP-RISE will unite EU and AU multi-stakeholders in the transformative process for a safer food supply for all!".*

**Prof. Sarah De Saeger**, Project Coordinator, Ghent University, Belgium

*"Leveraging our EU-AU network, UP-RISE guarantees sustainability through Training Hubs and an Accelerator Platform, which will ultimately contribute to the Food Safety Strategy for Africa".*

**Prof. Siska Croubels**, Project Coordinator, Ghent University, Belgium





The project consortium is built up on 14 international partners bringing together an interdisciplinary approach and a well framed gender dimension to maximize the impact of UP-RISE. They are all committed to creating resilient, inclusive, and safe food systems for everyone associated with mycotoxin contamination in the African Union.

*"UP-RISE taps onto the wealth of indigenous fermentation technologies to upscale and create holistic innovations that are resilient and safe food safety systems in Africa".*

**Prof. Sheila Okoth**, University of Nairobi, School of Biological Science, Kenya

*"UP-RISE is a unique project gathering key actors within the value chains of fermented foods with significant nutritional importance in the 5 target African countries. Given the high risk of mycotoxin contamination, our aim is to ensure the safety and the quality of these products through targeted research and innovative approaches that focus on fermentation processes".*

**Yann Madode**, Deputy Director, Laboratory of Food Sciences, University of Abomey-Calavi, Benin

### **Engagement with local stakeholders**

Focusing on five target AU member states -Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa-, UP-RISE foresees a large engagement with local stakeholders at every stage of the proposal by bringing together five building blocks for knowledge generation and implementation:

- 1. Roadmaps for quality culture and informal sector integration**
- 2. Strengthening regulatory frameworks by empowering both formal and informal sectors**
- 3. Early Warning Systems to prevent mycotoxin contamination and adapt to climate change,**
- 4. Innovative microbiome-based solutions to reduce mycotoxins**
- 5. Co-creation, training, and mentoring.**

UP-RISE will showcase its co-created solutions through demonstrations of representative fermented food product value chains, for maize, millet, sorghum, and milk. These solutions will be implemented in ten business cases of SMEs in the target AU member states.

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**Picture.** Group picture of UP-RISE consortium at the kick-off meeting in Ghent in January 2024.



#### Related links

- [UP-RISE: EU-AU Partnership for Resilient, Inclusive and Safe food systems for Everyone](#)
- [Food 2030: Pathways for action 2.0. Pathway 9: Food Systems Africa](#)
- [Partnership on Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture \(FNSSA\)](#)
- [MYTOX-SOUTH](#)
- [Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa \(PACA\)](#)
- [International Mycotoxin Society \(IMS\)](#)
- [African Society of Mycotoxicology \(ASM\)](#)

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