

REPORT ON THE REGULATION OF STREET- VENDED FOODS BY THE FOOD AND DRUGS AUTHORITY

BACKGROUND

Street-Vended Foods (SVF) refer to a wide range of ready-to-eat foods and beverages including cereals, fruits and vegetables which are prepared and sold in outdoor public places, notably streets, markets, school premises and lorry stations.

It is estimated that globally, 2.5 billion people consume street-vended foods on a daily basis. The situation is not different in Ghana as these foods account for a significant proportion of the daily food consumption of millions of low and middle income consumers. As a result, street food vending and consumption has seen an alarming increase over the past few decades. This proliferation can be attributed to socio-economic changes and urbanization which has created a daily need among many working people to eat outside the home. SVF come with diversity as they often reflect a blend of traditional local food cultures as well as semi-exotic cuisines. In Ghana SVF are usually sold outdoors or under a roof which is easily accessible from the street. They mostly have low-cost seating facilities which are sometimes rudimentary. Street-vended foods in Ghana are often a source of inexpensive, convenient and varied foods for urban consumers and are mostly low cost compared with restaurant meals.

Despite the nutritional, economic, social and cultural importance of street foods there are major critical issues of food safety which is compounded by the widespread informality of the sector and have been implicated in the outbreak of foodborne diseases and illnesses over the years.

FDA'S STRATEGIC PLAN

The regulation of the operations of Street Food Vendors (SFV) in Ghana is carried out by the Environmental Health and Sanitation Directorate of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development in close collaborations with the Food and Drugs Authority (FDA). The regulatory

process mainly involves the medical screening of Food Handlers within the Street Food sector from communicable diseases to the neglect of the more critical aspect of their operations i.e. food safety and hygiene.

The Food and Drugs Authority in pursuance of the Food and Drugs Act, 1992 (PNDCL 305B) and its amendment i.e. Part Seven, Act 851 of the Public Health Act, 2012 therefore developed a fifteen (15) years strategic plan in 2007. This became necessary due to the food safety and hygiene challenges confronting Street Food Vending in Ghana and the serious public health concerns. The strategic plan was to provide a holistic approach for the regulation of SVF through awareness creation and the involvement of all relevant stakeholders in order to promote food safety and hygiene within the sector. The strategic plan was further broken down into three (3) phases to allow for effective implementation of same.

- **PHASE ONE (2007-2011)**

This phase primarily focused on conducting a situational analysis of the street food vending sector. Consequently, guidelines and code of practices were developed to help regulate the activities of the sector. The phase started with developing and administering questionnaires to street food vendors and consumers within the Greater Accra metropolis. This was also to help identify the specific areas of the operation that require support from the FDA in order to tailor the regulation protocol towards addressing the challenges identified, thus ensuring that street-vended foods are safer and more hygienic to consume. The phase was characterized by series of meetings between FDA and the various stakeholders within the street food vending sector. The first phase was hugely successful and was marked by an inter-agency collaboration between the Food and Drugs Authority and the Environmental Health and Sanitation Directorate and the Port Health Unit. With the conglomeration of the agencies, the following documents were developed to assist in the regulation of street food vendors at the end of the first phase:

- ✓ Food vendors hygiene permit application form
- ✓ Code of hygienic Practices for Street food vendors in Ghana
- ✓ Guidelines for the licensing of Street Food Vendors
- ✓ Checklist for the inspection of Street Food Vending Facilities

- ✓ Manual for the training of the Street Food Vendors and Environmental Health Officers (EHO's)
- **PHASE TWO (2012-2016)**

Following from the successes chalked by phase one and in line with the Fifteen (15) years strategic plan, phase two (2) was started. Prior to the implementation of the documents developed during the first phase, a fact finding inspection in some selected Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDA's). The inspection revealed some challenges that were likely to affect the effective licensing of the SFV. Such challenges though mainly financial included mobility of vendors, vending and preparation sites not having adequate structures. As a result the FDA resorted to intensifying public awareness campaigns due to the increasing risks of serious food poisoning outbreaks linked to street foods becoming a major threat with microbiological contamination being one of the most significant problems. The following schemes were the highlights of the second phase:

- ✓ Television and Radio documentary/live shows in English and other local languages such as Twi, Ga, Ewe and Hausa
- ✓ Food Safety Awareness Campaigns at lorry stations and markets.
- ✓ Training of traditional Caterers
- ✓ Intensification of Food Safety Campaigns during festive periods such as Christmas, Easter etc
- ✓ Celebration of food safety awareness week, world food day as well as world health day.

MAIN ACTIVITIES DURING THE PERIOD AND OUTCOIMES

- ✓ Training Street Food Vendors on food safety and hygiene:
 - Thirteen thousand seven hundred and sixty seven (13,767) Traditional Caterers were trained within the period
 - One hundred and five (105) different food safety awareness campaigns were organized among travelers at various lorry station and market women
 - Twenty one thousand four hundred and fourteen (21,414) basic school pupils and Five hundred and forty three (543) SHS students were educated in schools education campaigns on Food Safety and Hygiene with emphasis on WHO's five (5) keys to safer foods.

- Mass media engagements (i.e. radio and television talk shows) recorded six hundred and eighty two (682) engagements with various TV and radio outlets
- Organization of series of workshops on food adulteration awareness for selected Market Queens and commodity leaders and Environmental Health Officers (EHOs)
- Organization of workshops on Good Hygienic Practice for commercial millers and EHOs
- Sampling and testing of palm oil for Sudan dye, 1,025 samples were collected nationwide and submitted for analysis. Five hundred (500) samples representing (48.8%) of the total sample size were from the Greater Accra Region.
- A year piloting of Foodborne Disease Surveillance System was successfully implemented in the Adentan Municipality to give an indication of food safety compliance. One hundred and forty nine (149) cases of foodborne diseases were reported from the Adentan Municipality.
- Yearly participation in World Food Day celebration where a food safety workshop was organized for food vendors to commemorate the event
- Further sampling of Palm Oil was done from thirty (30) markets in Accra for Laboratory testing for the presence of Sudan IV dye. Sixty (60) barrels of palm Oil adulterated with Sudan IV dye were also seized and destroyed under supervision at a dumping site in Dobro near Nsawam. Periodic sensitization workshops were held with thirty-two (32) Palm Oil Sellers from major markets in Accra to discuss laboratory test results of Palm Oil adulteration with Sudan IV dye.
- Investigation into adulterated pepper powder and “Tomatoes powder” on the Ghanaian market. Ten (10) markets were investigated for the production and sale of the products with some seizures and destruction done. Education is still ongoing as a caution to the general public to desist from the use of the products.

PHASE THREE (2017-2021)

A fact finding inspection in some selected Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDA's) revealed some gaps and challenges for which phase three has become very necessary. This phase will build on the progress made in the education and regulation of Street Food vendors through phases one and two which is evidenced in the greater compliance to measures/practices that ensure food safety by some Street Food Vendors (SFV). The practices include increase usage of ice-chest and other food warmers by vendors to keep foods like waakye, kenkey, rice etc at safe temperatures. Most SFV's now have glass screens and appropriate sieve cases where their food is been displayed and sold to protect the foods from dust. The reduction in the sale and purchase of foods by uncovered gutters and refuse dumps is also evident. Despite these improvements over the years mainly due to the activities undertaken under phases one and two albeit predominantly within the Greater Accra Region, the challenges have been particularly revealing. It is in view of these challenges that intensive public education and a proposal for a nation-wide capacity building for street food vendors has been earmarked as central to the final phase of the fifteen (15) years strategic plan.

Way forward for Phase Three

This phase will see a stronger collaboration of the FDA and stakeholders in the SFV industry.

The phase will be characterized by the following activities:

- Training of Environmental Health Officers of the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies. The training modules will include but not limited to: Food safety and Hygiene training, Basic Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP), and Food Sample collection protocol
- Provision of Technical Assistance to Environmental Health Officers to adequately equip them to conduct food safety inspection and the institute a licensing regime
- Training of Street Food Vendors in food safety and hygiene.
- FDA to institute a monitoring protocol which will include a quarterly review of the operations of the MMDAs.

The effective regulation of Street Vended Foods through active collaboration of stakeholders as identified in the proposed project is crucial to ensure safe practices within the Street Food Sector.

This will engender safer and healthier consumers, satisfy the income and employment needs of the vendors as well as enhance the well-being of the nation thus realizing the objectives of the strategic plan.

