

# Webinar Proceedings

## Food Fraud – What It Means to Africa

Tuesday March 10, 2026



### Webinar Highlights

The first webinar of the 2026 AFRAF–GFORSS Webinar Series attracted **166 participants** from across Africa and beyond, demonstrating strong interest in strengthening food integrity systems and addressing emerging risks of food fraud in global and regional food supply chains.

#### 1. Purpose and Objectives

The webinar was convened under the **AFRAF–GFORSS** collaboration framework to:

- Foster dialogue on emerging food safety and food fraud challenges relevant to Africa
- Strengthen cooperation among African food regulatory authorities
- Introduce science-based tools and approaches to detect and combat food fraud

- Position Africa’s food systems within the broader context of global food security and trade.

#### 2. Introduction

On 10 March 2026, the African Food Regulatory Authorities Forum (AFRAF), in collaboration with the Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GFORSS), launched the first webinar of the 2026 AFRAF–GFORSS Webinar Series, titled “Food Fraud – What It Means to Africa.” The session featured **Prof. Chris Elliott**, a globally recognized expert on food supply chains, food integrity, and authenticity, as the keynote speaker, and was moderated by **Prof. Samuel Codefroy**, President of IUFOST and GFORSS. The webinar brought together 166 participants from across Africa and beyond, including regulators, scientists, and food system stakeholders, to explore emerging risks and practical strategies to address food fraud and strengthen food control systems in the African context.

The session highlighted the growing importance of addressing food fraud as a component of food safety and security, consumer protection, and fair trade.

Discussions focused on the vulnerabilities of global and regional food supply chains, the need for stronger analytical and regulatory frameworks, and the role of international cooperation in detecting and preventing fraudulent practices in food markets.

### 3. Opening Remarks

In his opening remarks, **Dr. Mamodou Bah**, Director General of the Food Safety and Quality Authority of The Gambia and Regional Codex Coordinator for Africa, emphasized the importance of strengthening food regulatory systems across the African continent in the face of evolving global and regional challenges. He highlighted the growing pressures on food systems driven by climate change, infrastructure and technology gaps, and increasingly sophisticated forms of food fraud that pose risks to consumer protection and fair trade.

Dr. Bah also underscored the need for stronger regional cooperation, regulatory harmonization, and enhanced analytical capacity to support effective food control systems. He noted that initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) present an important opportunity to advance regulatory alignment, facilitate safe intra-African

trade, and strengthen food integrity frameworks across the continent.

## 4. Key Points Covered in the Presentation

### 4.1 Global Drivers Reshaping the Food System

- The presentation began by outlining four major global forces currently transforming food systems:
- Climate crisis
- Wars and geopolitical instability
- Deglobalization and shifting trade patterns
- Geopolitical tensions affecting food supply chains

These factors are increasingly reshaping global food supply systems and trade flows, creating vulnerabilities that may be exploited for fraudulent activities.

Prof. Elliott also referenced his “Sinister 7” risk framework, highlighting interconnected threats affecting modern food systems, including supply chain disruptions, trade tariffs, labor shortages, regulatory changes, cybercrime, food theft, and food fraud.

### 4.2 Climate Change and Food System Vulnerability

Prof. Elliott highlighted the strong link between climate change and food system instability, noting that climate impacts can increase the risk of fraud through supply shortages, price volatility, and pressures on food security.

Particular emphasis was placed on rising temperatures and water scarcity, which are affecting agricultural productivity and increasing pressure on food systems. These pressures contribute to greater food system vulnerability and may create incentives for fraudulent practices.

### 4.3 Trade Disruptions and Supply Chain Complexity

Another key theme was the impact of trade disruptions and increasing supply chain complexity. The presentation noted that:

- Tariffs and geopolitical tensions are altering global trade patterns.
- Supply chains are becoming longer, more fragmented, and harder to monitor.

This complexity increases opportunities for mislabeling, substitution, and adulteration within food supply chains and highlights the need for stronger monitoring systems and international collaboration.



### 4.4 Understanding Food Fraud as a Systemic Risk

Food fraud was presented not as isolated incidents but as a systemic risk within global food supply chains. Key points included:

- Fraud is typically economically motivated and driven by financial gain.
- It may involve substitution, dilution, misrepresentation, or counterfeiting.
- Although economically motivated, food fraud can also create serious food safety risks.

The presentation emphasized that fraud prevention should be integrated into broader food safety and food security strategies.

### 4.5 Role of Science, Technology and Innovation

The presentation highlighted the importance of scientific tools and technological innovation in addressing food fraud. Emerging solutions include:

- Advanced analytical methods for food authenticity testing
- Rapid screening technologies and portable detection devices
- Digital systems and cloud-based platforms for data sharing
- Improved traceability across supply chains

These tools can improve the speed, accuracy, and accessibility of fraud detection, particularly when integrated into regulatory surveillance systems.

## 4.6 Building Stronger Food Integrity Systems

The need for integrated food integrity systems combining:

- Strong regulatory frameworks
- Laboratory and analytical capacity
- Supply chain transparency
- International cooperation
- Training and capacity building

Such systems are essential to protect consumers, ensure fair trade, and maintain trust in the global food supply.

## 5. Key Issues Raised During the Q&A Session

The Q&A session reflected strong engagement from participants across Africa and beyond, with questions focusing on practical implementation, technological solutions, and regulatory challenges in addressing food fraud.

### Types and Examples of Food Fraud

Participants sought clarification on the main forms of food fraud occurring in food supply chains, including requests for examples of common fraud cases. Questions highlighted concerns related to adulteration, substitution, dilution, and misrepresentation of food products, with particular interest in commodities vulnerable to fraud, such as spices, honey, oils and dairy products.

### Food Fraud in Dairy Products

Several participants raised questions specifically related to fraud detection in dairy products, including:

- Methods to detect adulteration in milk and dairy products.
- Detection of vegetable oils (such as palm oil) added to dairy products, including cheeses, yogurts, and milk analogues.
- Analytical approaches to identify changes in fat composition resulting from adulteration.



### Rapid Detection Technologies and Hand-Held Devices

A significant portion of the discussion focused on emerging technologies for rapid food authenticity testing, particularly:

- The availability, cost, and specifications of handheld analytical devices used for food fraud detection.
- Whether such devices require supporting laboratory infrastructure or cloud-based systems.
- The feasibility of portable rapid testing tools for field inspections, particularly in resource-limited settings.
- Whether these technologies could also be extended to detect microbiological hazards such as pathogens.

## Laboratory Capacity and the “Lab 2030” Initiative

Participants raised questions about the Lab 2030 concept, including:

- When and how such initiatives could be implemented in Africa.
- The challenges related to quality infrastructure gaps, including laboratory capacity and technical expertise.
- The potential limitations that infrastructure constraints may impose on implementing advanced testing systems.

## Harmonization and Regional Collaboration

Participants highlighted the need for harmonized approaches to tackling food fraud across African countries, asking:

- How countries could pool resources and expertise to strengthen food fraud detection systems.
- What mechanisms could support regional coordination and shared surveillance approaches.

## Food Fraud in Informal Food Markets

Questions were also raised about regulatory strategies in regions where informal food markets dominate, particularly:

- How regulators can engage small-scale producers and

traders in improving food integrity.

- How to strengthen oversight without negatively affecting livelihoods or local food economies.

## Costs and Accessibility of Technologies

Several participants asked about the financial aspects of implementing food authenticity technologies, including:

- The cost of detection technologies and analytical equipment.
- How governments and institutions in developing regions can prioritize investments in food fraud detection systems.

## 6. Conclusion

The webinar underscored the growing importance of addressing food fraud within food regulatory systems, particularly in regions experiencing rapid growth in food trade and supply chain complexity. By bringing together experts and regulators, the AFRAF–GFORSS webinar provided an important platform to exchange knowledge, raise awareness, and identify practical pathways for strengthening food integrity and consumer protection across Africa and beyond.

