

Lastly, the inability to detect these issues originates in lack of knowledge and lack of proper infrastructure to be able to identify and test the key food safety markers, which are context-dependent. For example, lack of reliable data on the presence of aflatoxins in maize in one country in East Africa along with the absence of a reference lab within the same country to test aflatoxins has hampered general awareness amongst policy makers and thereby the creation of policies, monitoring tools and mitigation measures – which, by some research estimates, has allowed aflatoxins in the crop to run rampant in the country and may be a primary cause of stunting amongst children.

In our line of work at WFP, food safety needs to be addressed throughout the supply chain, starting from the source. Storage of foods, whether raw or processed, falls under the bigger umbrella of food safety across the supply chain from harvest to consumption.

WFP has been and continues to liaise with the private sector to allow industry best practices to be channeled through its work at the grassroots and to bring about a transfer in knowledge to the people in need.

Yet, I personally believe that the solution to protection of stored foods across the supply chain lies in innovation. WFP strives to innovate in new ways of shortening the supply chain, such as by purchasing more locally and regionally; in packaging through research and development; in storage by using elemental energy to cool temperatures in the warehouses and so on.

WFP is a voluntary funded organization with the mandate of achieving Zero Hunger globally. It serves people in conflict contexts, on the move, malnourished children, pregnant and nursing mothers and some of the most vulnerable populations in the world. We deliver food through barges on Baro river in South Sudan and on the backs of donkeys in Nepal; it is stored under tents and in iron containers. While we strive to deliver the maximum food to these beneficiaries, the onus is also on the organization to provide safe food for consumption in an ever changing context.

Food waste and food losses - Importance of international partnerships and research

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More than 800 million people are still starving worldwide and around two billion humans are suffering from “hidden hunger”. And the world population continues to grow, thus increasing the demand for food. Additionally, changed consumption patterns in emerging economies and an increased global demand for sustainable raw materials for the non-food area are leading to increased demand and competition for agricultural products. On top of this, global challenges such as climate change are putting considerable pressure on agriculture to adapt. At the same time, food waste and losses is one of the greatest challenges of our times. Around one third of all available food is spoiled or wasted before it is consumed. To improve the nutritional situation and to reduce food waste and losses worldwide in the long term, international cooperation of agricultural and nutritional research institutes, industries and the society is fundamentally important. The German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) supports long-term national and international partnerships with the objective to enhance the direct benefit of German research, innovation and technologies to develop high-performance, nutrition-sensitive and sustainable agri-food systems worldwide. The focus of BMEL is on an effective and efficient cross sector information and knowledge exchange to create a bridge between science and the practical application of research results by the society, industry and policy makers.