

2020/21

Q3 e-bulletin

Enforcement of the Irish Potatoes Regulations

AFA to conduct a crackdown to ensure food safety

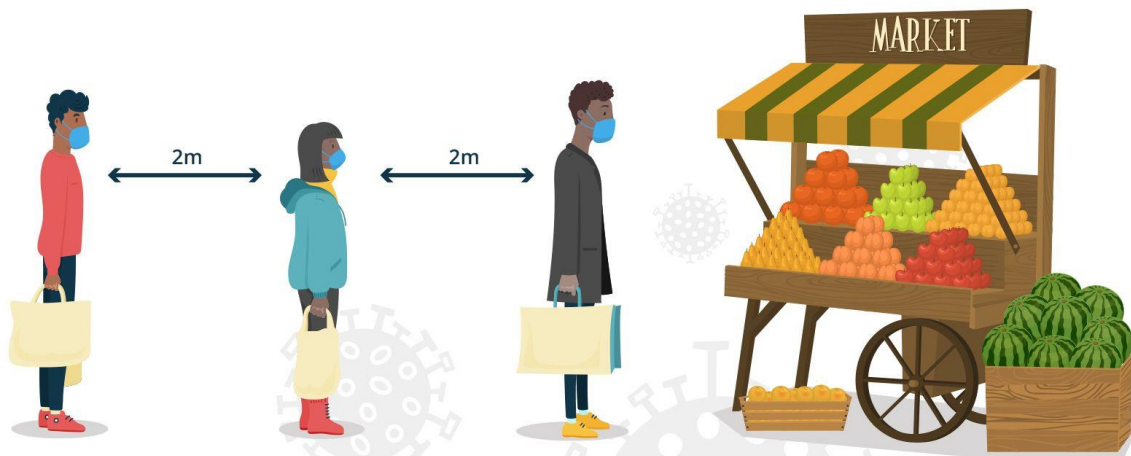
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Enforcement of the Irish Potatoes Regulations

Nyandarua, Nakuru, Narok, Elgeyo Marakwet, Uasin Gishu, Meru and West Pokot counties are implementing the potato regulations in conjunction with the State Department for Crop Development, Agriculture and Food Authority - AFA, National Potato Council of Kenya - NPCK and the Agricultural Council of Kenya - ACK.

A crackdown is currently going on targeting traders and transporters violating the 50-kilogramme rule in the packaging of Irish potatoes as outlined in the new regulations. The regulations banned packaging of potatoes in extended bags and approved the 50 kilograms' bag.

AFA Acting Director General, Kello Harsama said that the Authority wants to ensure packaging in the required standard of 50Kg is adhered to and that enforcement will be implemented in the entire value chain from the farm to the markets. This will be extended to 10 other potato-growing counties. Some of the major producing potato counties include Nyandarua, Meru, Nakuru, Narok, Bomet, TransNzoia and Uasin Gishu.

The DG said that, having sensitized stakeholders on the regulations, they expect value chain players to comply with the guidelines adding that inspectors have been recruited and duly briefed ahead of the crackdown. They will be supported by law enforcement agencies from the national and county governments.

The Government has insisted that the maximum weight for each single unit of package of Irish potatoes shall be 50kg, a departure from the current and past scenarios where traders use extended bags of up to 110 kilogrammes.

The use of the lengthy bags, the Government argues, has been used by traders to deny farmers their rightful earnings from their sweat.

Under these regulations all processors, importers and exporters shall register with AFA, which shall issue certificate of registration. Under the laws, any person who contravenes the regulations commits an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding Sh50, 000 or imprisonment for a period not exceeding three months, or both.

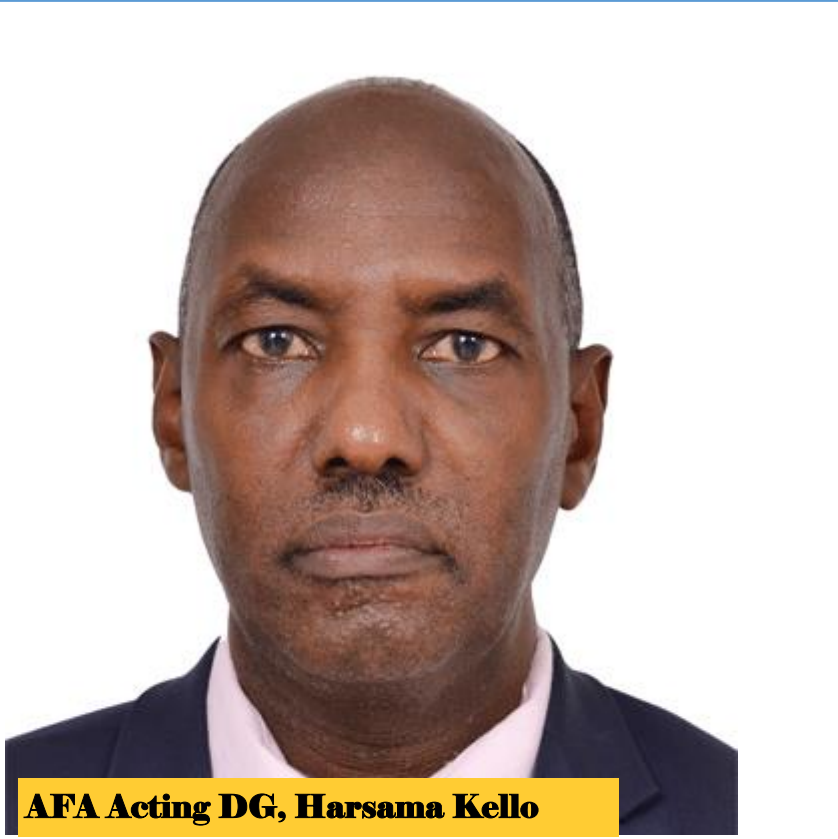
Potatoes are grown by more than 800,000 farmers, majority who are smallholders and produce 83 per cent of the national harvest.



Extended bags that has been banned



Recommended 50 kg bags of potatoes



AFA Acting DG, Harsama Kello

The Agriculture & Food Authority (AFA) will start inspections to make sure that all food consumed in the country is safe with immediate effect. The Acting Director General Harsama Kello said that many government agencies were deployed at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) to check on the safety of all food leaving the country for the export market but no one has taken the initiative of checking on what was being consumed locally. He is concerned that some of the food intended for export such as the fresh horticultural produce and is rejected at the airport due to high chemical residues finds its way into the local market.

The DG, said that AFA will start a crackdown on dangerous chemicals that were being used in growing vegetables like cabbages, spinach, sukumawiki, tomatoes and other crops in the rural areas and transported to urban centers. The DG further reiterated that the Authority will be examining chemical residues in vegetables as they had information that some chemicals being used in them were dangerous and carcinogenic. He said that the increase in cancer cases in the country can be attributed to these chemicals use in growing vegetables. Some of the chemicals have been banned in other countries and were being smuggled into the country through our neighbours.

The agency will be collecting samples from various markets in the country and conducting tests on them. Anyone found with food containing harmful chemical residues will be prosecuted. "I will make sure this is done very strictly so that we protect our children and our people," says Kello. He added that the use of chemicals in the right manner will also be enforced.

The Authority will also liaise with the Nairobi Metropolitan Service, Provincial administration and other government agencies to ensure that all the food grown in the city is safe for human consumption especially with complains of people farming using sewage effluent.

"We are also going to educate the public on food safety using horticulture officers across the country. Food safety is one of our mandates under the AFA Act," adds Kello.

The Agriculture & Food Authority (AFA) has launched the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS), an online trade system that was developed with funding from Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) through Trade Mark East Africa. IMIS will replace the tedious paper-based and semi-manual administration of trade and business processes.

In a speech read on his behalf by Agriculture CAS Lawrence Omuhaka during the launch, Cabinet Secretary Peter Munya said they have been experiencing challenges in service delivery which are expected to be solved by the new system. The challenges that IMIS is expected to address include:

- Lengthy application procedures requiring stakeholders to physically visit AFA offices for services.
- Inadequate and inaccurate accountability of crop production by stakeholders in the field through submission of annual returns on the platform by farmers.
- Lack of reliable data and statistics for decision making on better regulation and administration of agricultural commodities.
- Tedious export and import processes
- Duplication of efforts in service delivery by AFA Directorates

Munya said that through IMIS, traders and stakeholders will be able to access regulatory services from AFA from the comfort of their locations.

“This system will facilitate registration, licensing and provision of production, processing and trade information on all scheduled crops regulated by Agriculture and Food Authority,” said Munya.

The system will significantly improve service delivery by:

- Reducing transactional time and cost in applying for and issuing permits/licenses/certificates regulated by AFA Directorates, as the system eliminates the need for physical presence or interaction.
- Enhancing process visibility by enabling traders to trace their application and related transactions in real-time through the system.
- Advancing trade document integrity through the introduction of security features that enable authentication and verification of documents submitted, and issued to traders.
- Improving access to information relating to production, processing, and trading in agricultural commodities regulated by AFA Directorates, thereby eliminating a key barrier to trade – access and availability of information
- Incorporates electronic payments by integrating to both online and mobile banking hence increasing convenience in submitting applications and paying for services.
- Availability of data for analytics and other business intelligence functions that will support regulatory and trade operations

Acting AFA Director General, Harsama Kello thanked Trade Mark East Africa and the Danish government for the financial and technical support in the development of the system. He added that the system will change the way the Authority will do business with the private sector as the bureaucracies that have been existing will be eliminated thereby shortening the time that processes used to take.

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