

“Developing Eritrea’s National Food Control Policy is a Milestone Towards a Safer Food System”

Mr. Tekleab Mesghena

Following the inception workshop on the development of Eritrea's National Food Control Policy, held on 10 July 2026, the Public Relations Division of the Ministry of Agriculture interviewed Mr. Tekleab Mesghena, Director General of the Regulatory Services Department (RSD), about the significance of the initiative and the way forward.

Question: Mr. Tekleab, what is the significance of the inception workshop?

Answer: The workshop marked an important milestone in our collective efforts to establish a formal and coordinated national food control system. It brought together all key stakeholders to begin a collaborative process of developing a policy that will strengthen food safety, protect public health, and improve coordination among institutions responsible for food control.

Q: Why is Eritrea developing a National Food Control Policy at this time?

A: The policy is being developed as a follow-up to the National Food Control Assessment conducted last year. That assessment provided us with a clear understanding of the strengths and gaps in our current food control system. Developing a national policy is, therefore, a logical step towards creating a more effective and harmonized food control system.

Q: How has Eritrea prepared the stage for the process?



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A: We have been building a strong foundation through our national Codex activities, coordinated by the National Codex Coordinating Committee (NCCC), chaired by the Regulatory Services Department of the Ministry of Agriculture. These efforts have significantly

strengthened cooperation among food control authorities and enhanced harmonization in food control activities.

The experience we have gained through our national Codex activities has greatly assisted us

in developing a comprehensive National Food Control Policy.

It is important to mention that the current members of the National Codex Coordinating Committee include the Ministry of Agriculture (Chair), the Ministry of Marine Resources, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Eritrean Standards Institution, the Ministry of Land, Water and Environment, the Ministry of Finance and National Development, and the National Higher Education and Research Institute, represented by Hamelmalo College of Agriculture, Mai Nefhi College of Science, and Orotta College of Medicine. There are also plans to expand the NCCC in the future through the inclusion of other national institutions, such as the Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Tourism.

Q: Who is supporting this important initiative?

A: Basically, it is a national initiative. However, we are grateful to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for providing both technical and financial support. With FAO's assistance, two highly experienced consultants were recruited to lead the policy development process: Dr. Zaffar Mehmood as the international consultant and Dr. Senay Woldeab as the national consultant. They have already begun consultations with relevant institutions, and we are confident that their expertise will contribute significantly to producing a high-quality National Food Control Policy.

Q: Developing a National Food Control Policy is a complex process. What challenges do you anticipate?

A: Indeed, developing a National Food Control Policy is a complex process because it involves many institutions and sectors. However, I believe the challenge is manageable. With strong commitment, effective coordination, and active participation from all stakeholders, I am confident that we will successfully achieve our objectives.

Q: What is the next step after the National Food Control Policy is finalized?

A: Once the policy is approved by the Government and we gain experience from its implementation, the next logical step will be the development of Eritrea's National Food Law. Such legislation will provide the legal framework necessary for a comprehensive and modern national food control system in Eritrea. We hope to continue working closely with our partners, particularly FAO and WHO, as we move toward this important objective.

Q: What role do stakeholders play during the policy development process?

A: Stakeholder participation is essential. The policy must reflect the perspectives and experiences of all institutions involved in food control.

Currently, consultations are underway, allowing stakeholders to review existing practices, identify challenges, and contribute practical recommendations. Their active engagement will ensure that the final policy is realistic, effective, and nationally owned.

Q: What are the next major milestones?

A: Following this inception workshop, consultations will continue, at different levels, with all relevant stakeholders.

We expect to meet again during a validation workshop, planned for early August 2026, where all relevant stakeholders and participants will review and validate the draft National Food Control Policy before it is finalized for submission to the Government.

It is also important to note that, before the validation workshop is organized, a ministerial consultation meeting will be held to provide the necessary policy guidance essential for the development of the National Food Control Policy.

Q: Finally, what message would you like to share with stakeholders and development partners?

A: I would like to express my sincere appreciation to FAO for its continued technical and financial support, not only in conducting the National Food Control Assessment last year but also in supporting the development of the National Food Control Policy.

I also wish to thank all participating institutions and the staff of the Regulatory Services Department for their dedication and hard work.

Strengthening Eritrea's food control system is a shared responsibility, and I encourage everyone to continue contributing actively throughout this important process. Together, we can build a food control system that effectively safeguards public health and ensures safe food for all.

**We thank you
Mr. Tekleab Mesghena!**