



## Building a Local Food Safety Culture through Business-Led Solutions

### Why food safety?

In a world plagued by persistent hunger, undernourishment and malnutrition, food safety plays a key role in addressing such issues. The [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) estimates that unsafe food causes 600 million cases (nearly 1 in 10 people) of foodborne diseases and 420,000 deaths annually. Most of the global burden of foodborne disease falls on those living in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), comprising 75 percent of deaths from foodborne illness, despite comprising only 41 percent of the global population. Therefore, there is an ever-increasing demand for higher quality and healthier foods, particularly from consumers located in LMICs. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) operating in these economies are uniquely positioned to meet this consumer demand, but food safety practices along the value chain — processing, handling, transporting, and storing/serving — must be established, upheld, and routinely monitored. If the global community is to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, food safety, as a prerequisite for food security, must be a priority for the development community in deciding interventions, programming, and capacity building efforts.

### A Business-based Approach

Food safety for the SME sector has been largely overlooked in many LMICs. Not only is the consumption of unsafe food a major health concern, it increasingly affects domestic markets. Often, food safety standards and enforcement mechanisms in LMICs are more tailored to larger businesses in terms of affordability and accessibility. This paradox — lack of access to and resources for food safety enhancement paired with the fact that LMICs are most vulnerable to and at risk for foodborne illnesses — is one that must be adequately addressed through collaborative, codesigned and co-implemented initiatives that are contextualized to local needs.



*Food labeling at Muna Krishi Limited, Laitpur, Nepal. Photo Credit: Rajani Maharjani*

Within this context, [Feed the Future Business Drivers for Food Safety \(BD4FS\)](#), funded by [USAID](#) and implemented by [Food Enterprise Solutions \(FES\)](#), has been working since 2020 to make food safer and of higher quality by addressing postharvest challenges for growing food businesses (GFBs). The main goal of BD4FS is to implement a business-based approach to strengthen food safety practices along supply chains, with Senegal, Ethiopia, and Nepal being focal Feed the Future countries. FES is achieving this goal through educational campaigns that support inclusive and sustainable business-led growth, strengthening the capacity of people and systems to activate positive action to reduce foodborne hazards, and by improving the availability of and access to safer foods for consumers — particularly women and children. To this end, supporting GFBs is a win-win from business, public health, sustainability, and environmental perspectives.

## Local responses to local problems

Food safety is a crosscutting issue that requires collaboration and shared responsibility. As SMEs are a major driver of employment and income generation in most economies, combining the goals of businesses with the urgent need to reduce foodborne illnesses is a mutually beneficial vision. BD4FS recognizes the significance of partnering with GFBs and local food safety experts in helping to promote sustainable outcomes that will benefit local food systems. The BD4FS theory of change proposes that by cocreating with GFBs on how to adequately address food safety challenges and by delivering training, technical assistance and promoting business-to-business facilitation programs, GFBs will adopt improved food safety practices and invest in affordable technologies to reduce food loss and waste and the risk of foodborne hazards. Through such collaboration, a locally led culture of food safety will emerge and spread to non-BD4FS businesses. Ultimately, less food products will be rejected at the market and GFBs will see improved business outcomes.

BD4FS and its partner GFBs are facilitating change that is led by local experts and has the potential to increase sustainable outcomes. Localization places the power of autonomy in the hands of local actors to strengthen local systems and ensure that interventions are responsive to such communities. By leveraging the knowledge, expertise, and realities of our partners on the ground, BD4FS supports local solutions to food safety through incentive-based strategies and accelerates the adoption of practices and technologies that can reduce the risk of foodborne hazards.

**Learn more about FES and BD4FS activities at <https://www.foodsolutions.global/> and follow us at:**



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