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WASH for Food Safety in Growing Food Businesses

#WorldToiletDay #BD4FS

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services are essential for household health and equally critical for food businesses to reduce the spread of foodborne illness. Business Drivers for Food Safety (BD4FS), funded by USAID Bureau for Resilience and Food Safety and implemented by Food Enterprise Solutions (FES), is exploring how it can work with growing food businesses (GFBs) to improve access to WASH as part of its broader post-harvest safer food mission. With a market-based approach to create sustainable infrastructure and increasing user awareness about good hygiene practices, BD4FS aims to improve the overall culture of safer food among GFBs.



Photo credit: Mbaye Sall

As a first step, BD4FS recently completed a study on WASH conditions at 10 artisanal seafood processing sites in Senegal. Through site visits and interviews with women seafood processors and other key stakeholders, BD4FS discovered that processing sites are at high risk of food contamination that could be largely prevented through proper WASH infrastructure, use and facility management. Of particular relevance on World Toilet Day, this study revealed poor hygienic conditions at public toilet facilities, many unusable, that were the result of insufficient maintenance and management. The lack of access to hygienic public toilets poses serious human health hazards as processed seafood products can be contaminated with human waste. The absence of hand washing stations at public toilets exacerbates the situation as it prevents processors from washing their hands with soap and water before product handling. Proper hand washing is one of the most cost-effective ways to reduce the transmission of foodborne pathogens.



Photo credit: Mbaye Sall

BD4FS is considering lessons learned from several public toilet management business models to address WASH challenges faced by seafood processors in Senegal, and by extension, other food businesses that handle perishable products. Armed with information, processors and local food businesses will be empowered to choose evidence-based practices for better WASH design, use and management. By co-designing improved WASH facilities and promoting safer practices at seafood processing sites, this work serves as a critical pathway for reducing biological contamination during food processing and handling. This is good for both workers and for consumers!

If you know of any good WASH models for business, please drop us a note. We would love to hear from you!

COMING SOON: Watch this space for the soon-to-be released BD4FS technical learning note on WASH at seafood processing sites in Senegal.