

World Pest Day 2024 Celebration

**Press Statement by Dr. Yakubu Mohammed Baba,
Registrar/CEO, Environmental Health Council of Nigeria
(EHCON)**

**held at the Meeting Room of the Federal Secretariat Complex
Phase I, Shehu Shagari Way, Abuja on 6th June, 2024**

Protocol,

It is my honour to address you today on the occasion of World Pest Day 2024. This year's theme, "**Global Solutions, Local Impact: Mapping Success in Pest Management**" underscores the importance of our collective efforts in Pest Management and the significant role we all play in safeguarding Public Health.

World Pest Day provides a unique opportunity to increase awareness about the essential services that Pest Management Organizations offer globally and locally. These services are not just about the eradication of pests; they are about protecting our homes, our food supply, our businesses, and, most importantly, our health.

In Nigeria, pest-related issues pose significant threats to Public Health, Agriculture, and the Environment. From malaria-carrying mosquitoes, Lassa Virus-infected rodents to crop-destroying insects, the impact of pests is far-reaching and cannot be underestimated. Today, I would like to highlight three critical goals that are fundamental in modern Pest Management:

You are aware that Pest management organizations, such as the Pest Control Association of Nigeria (PECAN) collectively and severally, play a pivotal role in preventing and controlling the spread of diseases. Effective pest control strategies help reduce the incidence of vector-borne diseases such as Malaria, Dengue fever, Typhoid fever, Lassa Fever etc. By ensuring Pests-free homes, offices, factories, schools, recreational facilities, transportation facilities, farms among numerous others, Pest Control Service Providers ensure that we stay safe away from the harmful effects of essentially domestic animal pests. These Professionals do not only contribute significantly to the overall well-being of our communities, they also protect our moveable and unmovable assets thus shielding us from economic losses.

The application of scientific principles and the adoption of best practices are paramount in modern Pest Management. It is essential to employ environmentally friendly and sustainable methods that minimize the impact on our ecosystems while effectively controlling pest populations. Training and certifying professionals in the field ensures that Pest control measures are both effective and responsible. In its bid to facilitate this, the Council places premium on Continuing Professional Development that ensures constant enhancement of the knowledge and skills of the professionals in accordance with national and international best practices. Similarly, Council is regularly issuing and updating Practice Standards which are the minimum expected of every registered Public Health Pest Control Service Provider. Essentially, these will serve as basis of addressing any concerns, complaints and issues as may be raised by the Nigerian Citizens who uptake pest control services. This is in line with accountable professionalization which ensures the prioritization of Human and Environmental safety.

As neglected as they are Small pests such as rodents, termites and insects, may seem inconsequential but can have devastating effects on health, property, and agriculture. These pests contaminate and destroy food supplies, damage structures, and transmit diseases. Raising awareness about the risks associated with these pests and implementing preventive measures are crucial steps in mitigating their impact. It is on record that pests such as Roaches, mice, mosquitoes and fleas are well-known for their disease-causation capabilities. Rodent droppings for instance spread viruses that cause salmonellosis, rat-bite fever, bubonic plague, and leptospirosis. Mice and rats spread bacteria and viruses which cause skin diseases, trigger allergic reactions and some Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers like Lassa fever. Additionally, dry faecal matter is a physical hazard that when inhaled by humans, it gives rise to allergic reactions.

The Federal Ministry of Environment is also playing prominent role in the control of Pests and Vectors of Diseases. You may recall that on 21st of February, 2024, an outbreak of Lassa fever which resulted in the death of a Patient and three Health Workers, was reported at the Nigerian Army Reference Hospital, Kaduna in Kaduna State. This led the Honourable Minister of Environment to immediately flag-off an Intervention Campaign which include Deratization exercise to break the Chain of Transmission of Lassa Fever and other Rodent-borne Infectious Diseases in Kaduna State. Subsequently, the Campaign was extended to cover the most affected State in each of the other Five Geopolitical Zones. These States

include Bauchi in the North East, Benue in the North Central, Ebonyi in the South East, Ondo in the South West, and Edo in the South South Zones. This intervention is proving to be effective with the downward trend of the infection incidences.

It is important to remind the Nigerian Citizenry that the number one strategy for Pest Control is **Pest Exclusion** which is achievable through sound Environmental hygiene by removing of any sources of food, water, and shelter which attract pests especially in the Kitchen. Ensuring that food items are stored in safe and enclosed containers, while refuse are properly stored, disposed of sanitarily and regularly is a sure way of keeping pests at bay. Further, Building Sanitation should be encouraged to ensure that during design and construction of buildings, Pest infestation potentials are addressed in terms of building material to ward off opportunity for pests to hide and multiply whether in cracks or holes. Essentially, builders must ensure removing lumbers, woods, plants, cardboard, and paper from the foundations of building in order to prevent the activities of Termites.

Adequate cleaning of house-holds is required such that pests like bed bugs which find refuge in furniture, beds couches, ceilings, carpets etc are controlled while keeping of doors and windows closed prevent mosquitoes out. Of significance also is the removal of water-retaining items e.g. tires, buckets, planters and bins to disallow mosquitoes from laying eggs.

The Council is working towards standardizing the Pest Control Business sub sector of the Environmental Health Business. Globally, the Pest control industry is worth nearly USD 25 Billion while in Nigeria it is expected to be an NGN 5 Billion sector. It is imperative to inform the Nigerian public to in their best interest, engage the Services of only registered Public Health Pest Control Service Providers for their safety, effective and efficient services. Not doing so, translates into contravention of the National Environmental Health Practice Regulations, 2016.

As we celebrate World Pest Day, let us acknowledge the dedication and hard work of Pest Management Professionals who strive to protect us daily. Let us also reaffirm our commitment to supporting their efforts by promoting scientific, effective, and socially responsible pest management practices. Together, we can make a difference. Together, we can achieve global solutions with local impact.

Thank you.