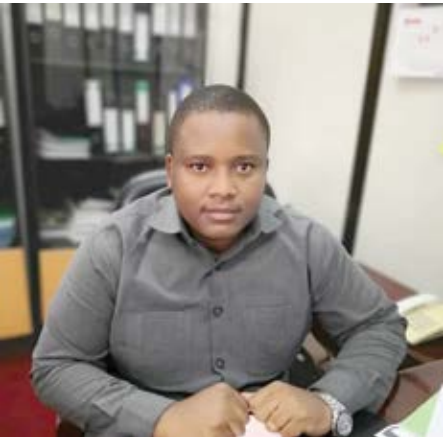




# Can you bring your food and drinks on flights?



By Innocent Kyara



As we are approaching the end of year 2021, on this International Civil Aviation Day, it is imperative to recognize the decision of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Council to designate 2021 as the Year of Security Culture. This followed a resolution which was adopted during the 40th ICAO Assembly identifying security culture as top priority in aviation. To mention just few, security culture entails understanding risks, being proactive and making decisions against security breaches consistently through the application of fingertips knowledge on the applicable policies, regulations, guidelines and standard recommended practices. Food contamination during air travel presents unique risks to those affected. Foodborne pathogens can cause serious illness among all on board, and potentially jeopardize flight safety. On friday, 26 November 2021 a video of a 27-year-old Paul Mubiru went viral on the internet. The video was showing him hawking a local Ugandan delicacy (Nsenene) to other passengers onboard Uganda Airline's Flight 446 departing from Entebbe to Dubai. The common question that was raised from incident includes how did the nsenene end up inside the cabin? ICAO annex 17 on Security provides preventive security measures relating to passengers and their cabin baggage. It puts a requirement of screening passengers and their cabin baggage prior to boarding an aircraft. The Annex recommends to establish practices that assist in the identification and resolutions of suspicious activity that may pose threat to aviation. Ms. Shakira Rahim, the Uganda Airlines Public Relations Manager was quoted by one of the local newspapers (Daily Monitor) that they are doing investigation on how the

Nsenene ended up in the cabin since there are things that are not allowed on the plane as part of security. This brings us to the main question, are passengers allowed to bring to the cabin their own food? Bringing your own food in your carry-on baggage would be convenient and actually cheaper compared to the food price at the most airport restaurants. International flights tend to be a little stricter compared to domestic flights when it comes to bringing food to the cabin. It is stricter to fresh foods such as fruit and vegetables so as to prevent the introduction of invasive plant pests or diseases into new environments. But most airlines allow you to take food on the plane with no problem. This of course depends on duration of the flight as it is also great way to keep your hunger pangs at bay while waiting between in-flight meals. It can be difficult to figure out exactly what is and isn't allowed on a flight. Many people have had to throw away entire bottle of water when passing through security. Some were left with one option to eat their packed meal before passing the security, this is if they are lucky to have more boarding time. ICAO Annex 18 on Safe Transport of Dangerous Goods by Air provides restrictions on dangerous goods to be carried in an aircraft cabin occupied by passengers or on the flight deck of an aircraft, except in circumstances permitted by the provisions of the Technical Instructions. Annex 18 defines dangerous goods as articles or substances which are capable of posing a risk to health, safety, property or the environment and which are shown in the list of dangerous goods in the Technical Instructions or which are classified according to those instructions. Most airport security and airlines allow solid food items onboard. If the food can be poured, spilled or spelled then it is considered liquid thus not allowed. However, a reasonable amount of baby formula and breast milk (enough for your trip) can be allowed if declaration has been made that you are travelling with a child under two years. It is equally important to be wary of the odor and scent of food you pack in your cabin luggage. One should always be mindful of their fellow passengers. The strong scent could cause another passenger to complain about stench or worse make your fellow passenger have an allergic reaction. It is difficult to predict with any accuracy who will be overly sensitive to a particular smell on board. Not to mention, the olfactory sense of most



pregnant women are heightened. The smell of nsenene on board may be overwhelming to them and they may report gagging or becoming ill over the smell in the cabin. This why Technical Instructions for the Safe Transport of Dangerous Goods by Air which amplifies the broad provisions of Annex 18 classifies food such as Nsenene as Class 9 Dangerous Goods. Further, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) Regulations on Dangerous Goods Regulations limits bringing onboard the same if not properly packed and handled. Passengers are advised to pack their food in an air tight, leak proof and resealable container. Clear containers are best to allow security to screen the food quickly. This was not the case in the Uganda Airline incident. The Nsenene were carried in a big blue polythene bag on board and thereafter Mr Mubiru was seen scooping and serving the passengers on board in a transparent polythene bag, commonly referred to as Kaveera in Uganda. Further, it is important to note that food safety in aviation ensures hygiene and soundness of food from its production to its final consumption by passengers. Airlines are duty

bound to provide contaminants free, hygienic, safe, palatable and high-quality food to consumers. Any illness by passenger or crew would necessitate an emergency landing to the nearest airport for medical attention thus distort the whole flight schedule. Precaution must be taken to prevent contamination of food served in airlines. The application of high standards of hygiene forms an integral part of airlines operations to safeguard the health of passengers onboard against waterborne or foodborne illness. The incident drew the attention of the Uganda Airlines whereas in its Press Release the Airlines stated that it does not condone the acts of the passenger selling nsenene and low standards of serving it to the people who were buying it. Duty free stores are normally located after security screening. We are not sure how Mr. Mubiru passed this screening and enter through the cabin but passengers are advised to purchase food, beverages and other liquid products from these store as they are allowed on the first leg of their flight. One can bring small bottles of alcohol (the same he would purchase in-flight) as long as they do not exceed 70% alcohol by volume although many airlines may not allow you to consume your own liquor on board. In Tanzania, the Tanzania Civil Aviation Authority (TCAA) has enacted the Civil Aviation (Security) Regulations, 2018 to regulate the conduct of persons at airports and persons on board aircraft for the purposes of aviation security. The Regulation criminalize alcohol consumption if it ends up jeopardizing order and discipline on board so be advised to have what you can handle. Each passenger is limited to one quart-size bag of liquids, gels and aerosols. Common travel liquids like toothpaste, shampoo conditioner, mouthwash and lotion are allowed provided they don't exceed 100mls. The Covid19 pandemic brought an addition of hand sanitizer to the list which constitute a handsome percent of ethanol (alcohol). The Uganda Airlines Statement stated that it will not take the conduct on board lightly because it undermines the spirit of the national carrier and called the incident disruptive. TCAA Security Regulations, 2018 defines a disruptive passenger as a

passenger who fails to comply with the rules of conduct at an airport or on board an aircraft or to follow the instructions of the airport staff or aircraft crew members and thereby disturbs the good order and discipline at an airport or on board an aircraft. You may be criminally charged for being the same. In his apology statement Mr. Mubiru stated that he recorded the video in question not to tarnish or shame the Airline, the country or the passengers on board but for comical purposes but never for transactional gains. His apology did not bear fruits as the Uganda Police Force through its spokesperson Mr. Fred Enanga stated that Mr. Mubiru will be charged on three counts; common nuisance behavior, negligence act likely to cause the spread of an infectious disease to wit COVID-19 pandemic, and refusal to follow lawful inflight instructions. This time hawking Senene onboard became a lesson hard learnt. A good citizen wouldn't want to get into such trouble. Further, as stated earlier, considering that it's not always clear what you can or can't bring into a plane, if there is something that you are not sure about, be advised to contact the airline. Inflight food safety is a sensitive aviation security concern therefore adherence to the set standards is what continue to make flying the safest and secure means of travelling. The author of this article is the Executive Secretary of the Tanzania Civil Aviation Authority Consumer Consultative Council (TCAA CCC), a Government entity established under Section 56 of the Civil Aviation Act, Cap 80 R.E 2020 statutorily functioned with civil aviation consumers' representation and protection through empowering them by creating awareness on their rights and obligations and providing a redress mechanism to their complaints. The Council can be reached through a Toll-Free number 0800 110 190 with its address stipulated below;

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