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NEWS FROM THE SEED TRADE ASSOCIATION OF BENIN (ANASEB)

National Seed Association of Benin (ANASEB) was created during a founding General Assembly of private seed people in May 2006 and attended by the Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries of Benin. An interim Board chaired by Mrs. Isabelle Megbleto was elected. Its principal mission is to defend and develop professional, social and moral interests of its members.



Members of ANASEB during the drafting of the strategic development plan

Despite the fact that ANASEB is not yet one year old presently, it has elaborated, among others, a draft strategic development plan in which an analysis of seed sector of Benin was done with a view to define the action plan for the promotion of “seed”. It was identified that the absence of a functional structure to exchange views is the first cause of the bad functioning of this sector and the regulatory texts are also inadequate.

Taking this analysis into consideration, the consolidation of the achievements and the development of ANASEB will pass through the following four strategic pillars: mobilization of members,

development of economic and technical services, reinforcement of the basis of the financial sustainability, and reinforcement of the representation and lobbying. ANASEB has already participated actively in the activities of the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) and became its members a few months after its creation. The supply of basic seeds is also a constraint faced by the private seed people in Benin. They have harnessed themselves to finalize their “business plan” for the Foundation Seed Enterprise in partnership with SCOSA (Sustainable Commercialization of Seeds in Africa) and AFSTA. Indeed, ANASEB participated in the two training workshops on business plan organized by AFSTA/SCOSA which took place in Bamako, Mali in May 2006 and in Dakar, Senegal in September 2006.

*By Isabelle, Chairperson of ANASEB
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AFSTA CONGRESS 2007 IN BRIEF

The African seed Trade association (AFSTA) received a major boost from the Zambian President, Mr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa S.C, when he officially opened 7th annual AFSTA Congress 2007 in the tourist city of Livingstone, Zambia. The President, who is a farmer in his own right, emphasized in his speech the importance of using improved seed among the farmers in Africa. *"We in Zambia have long realized the importance of improved seed in sustaining national and household security. This we shall only achieve with the continental commitment to certified seed usage by our farmers and I will be champion of this commitment at every opportunity I have, to discuss with my brothers and sisters on the continent"*, said the President of Zambia.

The congress was informed that the seed industry in Zambia had greatly benefited from an early start in public/private partnership and eventual liberalization. Consequently, appreciable investment has been committed to the seed industry and the results were very evident. The country has more than its annual

seed requirements and has become a major seed exporter to its neighbors and beyond.



Sitting right to left: H.E L. P. Mwanawasa - President of Zambia, Marcel Kanungwe - Chairman of ZASTA

Standing right to left: Deon van Rooyen – ISF President, Mark Sachs – AFSTA President, Justin Rakotoarisaona – AFSTA Secretary General

The congress 2007 drew the highest number of participants with 180 delegates from 33 countries, including representatives from regional and international bodies. The mood at the congress was that of great satisfaction and the quality of presentations and level of participation of the delegates were regarded as excellent.

It was an excellent opportunity for the delegates to discuss and exchange information and views amongst themselves. All the technical sessions on important topics such as: Towards a harmonized seed trade in Africa: coordination efforts between the Regional Economic Communities, Global approach to face the challenges of seed trade in Africa in COMESA Zone: analysis and way forward, development of private seed companies in Africa – “SEEDS” (Seed Enterprise Enhancement and Development Services), highlights of the Material Transfer Agreement of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (IT-PGRFA), importance of horticultural seed trade in Africa: particularities and appropriate rules for development, and status of Biosafety Protocol for the commercialization of Genetically Modified seeds in Africa were well attended.

The congress was preceded by a half-day workshop: One on “Plant Variety Protection, a key to economic development” facilitated by the Union for the Protection

of New Plant Varieties (UPOV) and a half-day conference on “Seed Treatment” facilitated by the International Seed Federation (ISF).

Objectives for AFSTA continue to be the organization of technical training related to seeds to build capacity of its members in 2007/2008, among others strengthening the knowledge of its membership about seed quality insurance management, seed marketing and business plan. It will continue to actively support the seed legislation harmonization process in the sub-regions.

The AFSTA annual congress is surely establishing itself as an event to look forward to and eyes are now cast at the next congress 2008 to be held at the Rivoli Hotel in Casablanca, Morocco from 26 to 29th February 2008. The National Organizing Committee for AFSTA Congress 2008 has been working hard to ensure that it will meet your expectations in every aspect.

By Marcel Kanungwe, Chairman of the Zambia Seed Trade Association (ZASTA); E-mail: busumafarm@zamtel.zm

PROGRESS OF THE HARMONIZATION OF SEED REGULATIONS IN WEST AFRICA

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Permanent Inter State Committee for the Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) significantly advanced the harmonization process of seed certification and quality control and variety registration of 11 species to the regional Catalogue. Indeed, the last regional workshop held from 27th February 2007 to 2nd March 2007 in Accra, Ghana in which 66 persons representing the private and public seed sector from 17 States Members of ECOWAS, CILSS and WAEMU participated. This workshop was officially opened by the Assistant Minister for Food and Agriculture of Ghana, Honorable ELEDI Clement.

This workshop was an opportunity for the participants to:

- Discuss and validate the proposal for technical regulations for seed quality control and certification. The divergences between the standards have been rectified and harmonized standards for the eleven considered species (Maize, rice, sorghum, millet, cowpea, peanut, cassava, yam, Irish potato, tomato, and onion) have been adopted. It is worth noting that a group of regional experts on yam participated in the workshop allowed to fine tune the seed certification and control quality standards for this species.
- Discuss and validate the draft agreement about the creation of West African Seed Committee (COASem).

The composition, organization, functioning and financing of COASem were discussed, fine tuned, and

validated by the workshop as follows:

- i. Full members of the COASem are uniquely the 17 representatives (public sector) of members States and representatives of ECOWAS, CILSS and WAEMU. All the other members attend the meetings of COASem as observers. The reason why the private sector is eliminated is that they cannot be at the same time referee and player.
 - ii. The COASem has a permanent Secretariat run by ECOWAS. A president elected amongst full members convenes and chairs once a year ordinary meeting. Bylaws ascertain the other aspects of functioning of the COASem.
 - iii. The workshop proposed that financial resources of COASem come from the intergovernmental organizations according to the following proportions: 60% for ECOWAS, 35% for WAEMU and 5% for CILSS.
- Examine and approve the first common regional variety catalogue for the eleven species.



Participants at the workshop in Accra, Ghana

This first catalogue for the aforesaid eleven species contains a total of 666 varieties of which 60 for maize, 175 for rice, 91 for millet, 12 for sorghum, 65 for cowpea, 54 for peanut, 37 for Cassava, 28 for yam, 10 for Irish potato, 7 for tomato, and 10 for onion. As presented during the workshop, the first regional catalogue gives incomplete information for some varieties. Each country has therefore designated one participant who is charged with the gathering and the transmission of the missing data least that the varieties will be removed from the catalogue. The consultant from CILSS who did the work should make an effort to eliminate various denominations (equivalent names) of the same variety. The regional catalogue will be managed by the COASem.

The last two days of the workshop were reserved for the training on procedure manuals for certification and

accreditation and on variety registration in the regional catalogue with a view to facilitating the implementation of harmonized regulations.

The discussion at the end of the workshop about the next steps of the process resulted in the following conclusions:

- All future development of the process is dependent on the adoption of the regulatory texts by ECOWAS, WAEMU and CILSS;
- The setting up of COASem with its permanent Secretariat and election of its Chairman;
- The setting up of members of COASem at national level (Seed National Committee) with the creation of seed funds in each State.

Following this adoption by the three Intergovernmental Organization (ECOWAS, CILSS and WAEMU), partners will be able to support the diffusion system by national authorities and the involved actors in the Member States through the elaboration of communication and information means about the regulatory texts and the regional catalogue.

Some countries will benefit from specific support for the adaptation of new harmonized regional framework to national legislative provisions.

In so far as possible, capacity of human resources of countries (seed certification and control services, etc.) will be reinforced to facilitate the implementation the new regulatory framework.

In conclusion, the three Intergovernmental Organizations have been requested to make an effort for the adoption of this new common regulatory framework by their decision making instances before the end of the year 2007.

By Norbert Maroya, Former Coordinator of WASNET

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INTERNATIONAL SEED FEDERATION (ISF) APPOINTS NEW SECRETARY GENERAL

The President of the International Seed Federation (ISF), Mr. Deon van Rooyen, has confirmed the recent appointment of Mr. Marcel Bruins as the Secretary General Designate of the ISF. He will be succeeding the well-known incumbent, Mr. Bernard le Buanec who will be retiring shortly after the ISF Congress in Prague in May 2008. The intention is that Marcel Bruins will deputize from 1st September 2007 and officially take over as Secretary General on 1st January 2008 with Bernard le Buanec staying on in a full-time advisory and management support capacity until May 2008. Marcel is married with two children and the family will be moving to Switzerland where Marcel will be joining the ISF Secretariat in Nyon.

Marcel Bruins completed his initial studies in plant breeding and pathology at the University of Wageningen in the Netherlands in 1989. Based on research he did on Fusarium resistance in wheat at

Plant Research International he was awarded his PhD in 1998. He was responsible for the patent portfolio of a large research institute for a number of years and then moved to Rotterdam to work at the Innovation Centre for Inventions where he was active in the commercial aspects of agricultural and biotech inventions. Since 1998 he has been involved in intellectual property and plant variety protection with Seminis Vegetable Seeds. Of recent he has held the position of Manager Plant Variety Protection at Seminis Vegetable Seeds Holland B.V.

Marcel is a member of several international seed-related committees, such as the European Seed Association's Committee on Intellectual Property Rights, the Plantum NL Intellectual Property Committee and the ISF Sustainable Agriculture Committee. He also chairs the Intellectual Property Working Group on Genetics within the European Seed Association. Since 1999 he has represented the ISF at the UPOV Technical Working Party for Vegetables.



Bernard Le Buanec (left) and Marcel Bruins (right) discussing the Secretary General position in Zurich.

"Marcel joins the ISF with extensive and sound seed industry experience and in particular a good background and credentials in the fields of plant breeding as well as Intellectual Property Rights. IPR was identified by our members as a major and ongoing challenge for the ISF as well as the global seed industry during our recent strategic planning exercise and Marcel's extensive experience in this field will be of great value to us", said the President of ISF.

In announcing the appointment Deon van Rooyen also expressed his satisfaction at the very high standard of applications received for this important position. He thanked the members of the ISF Executive Committee as well as the Secretary General for their involvement

in the exhaustive selection process and the final interviews that took place in Zurich.

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ECOWAS MINISTERS AGREE ON BIOTECH PLAN

An agreement was forged by the Ministers from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to use biotechnology to increase food production in their region. This was reached at the third ECOWAS ministerial meeting on biotechnology and biosafety held in Accra, Ghana. A communiqué issued at the end of the meeting noted that the technology will improve productivity, make the farming sector more competitive and ensure sustainable management of natural resources. However, safety measures at both the national and regional levels were deemed important as part of the implementation process.

A regional and comprehensive plan is envisioned to benefit from biotechnology developments. This will necessitate the assistance of development partners and the collaborative efforts of governments of various countries, said Marcel Nwalozie, from the west and central African Council for Agriculture Research and Development, an umbrella organization that coordinates agricultural research for west and central Africa.

Source: Crop Biotech Update. Full report available at: <http://www.voanews.com/english/2007-03-31-voa16.cfm>.

Upcoming events:

- 5th to 11th May 2007: ISTA congress in Iguacu Falls, Brazil.
- 21st to 23rd May 2007: International Seed Federation annual Congress 2007 in Christchurch, New Zealand.
- 8th to 10th October 2007: AFSTA Board of Directors' meeting, Mombasa, Kenya.

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- Susan Miyengi, Personnel Assistant

The editorial team would like to thank the contributors of this issue.

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