



E-Review

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NEWS FROM THE SEED TRADE ASSOCIATION OF MADAGASCAR (AMPROSEM)

By Eddy Randrianatsimbazafy, Chairman of AMPROSEM
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The Seed Trade Association of Madagascar (AMPROSEM) is an association of private seed people working in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture to implement activities aimed at improving the future of the Malagasy seed sector including the sensitization of its members and seed stakeholders at large to conduct seed activities in a professional manner. Members are focusing their efforts on the reinforcement of AMPROSEM so that it becomes a valid representative body of the private seed sector.

Some activities have been scheduled including the elaboration of the strategic and business plan of the association, the installation of a seed laboratory, the edition of seed brochures to be distributed at national level and in particular the setting up of a soft loan as revolving fund for AMPROSEM members.

The national seed strategy was adopted during a cabinet meeting on 11th November 2008. The duration of this strategy is three years i.e. until 2011 and includes the following: general use of quality seeds, professionalization of seed production and distribution, and improvement of the seed business environment to give more incentive and security.

There is also a seed project funded by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The objective of this project is to reinforce the Malagasy seed sector. A work plan has been set up to finalize the seed regulations, build capacity (staff and equipment) for the seed

service in charge of seed quality control and variety release, and the support of the seed establishment (Seed Growers Groupings and Seed Multiplication Centers).

Considering the present context and the production method in Madagascar, many activities need to be undertaken regarding seeds. For many years, Malagasy farmers did not worry about seeds because they used the farm-saved grains. This situation should be changed for the use of quality seeds encouraged through sensitization on the benefits of improved seeds produced by seed professionals.

To this end, AMPROSEM has made particular effort for radical reforms of the seed sector of Madagascar with a view to contributing significantly to the development of the agricultural sector of the country. The association also considers strengthening relationships with the international and regional seed organizations such as the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) and the Eastern Africa Seed Committee (EASCOM) as important.

Despite the fact that there remains a lot to be done for the Malagasy seed sector, the determination of the seed stakeholders to improve on it so that it contribute to the green revolution being undertaken currently by the country, proves to be promising.

AFSTA CONGRESS 2009 IN BRIEF

By Justin Rakotoarisaona, Secretary general of AFSTA
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The Ninth annual AFSTA Congress was held in the city of Cape Town, South Africa from 2nd

– 6th March 2009. The Opening Ceremony was graced by Mr. Paul Marais, Chairman of the South African National Seed Organization (SANSOR).

The AFSTA Congress 2009 attracted 230 delegates from 35 countries, including representatives from regional and international bodies such as International Seed Federation (ISF), The International Seed Testing Association (ISTA), the Asia and Pacific Seed Association (APSA), the African Organization for Intellectual Property (OAPI), the African Regional Intellectual Property Right Organization (ARIPO), the Union for the Protection of New Plant Varieties (UPOV), and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The atmosphere at the congress was that of great satisfaction and the quality of presentations and level of participation by the delegates was regarded as excellent.



Congress delegates during the opening ceremony

With “seed trade” as main topic of the congress 2010, it was an excellent opportunity for the delegates to discuss and exchange information and views amongst themselves.

The congress was preceded by two half-day workshops. The first one was on Plant Variety Protection facilitated by the Union for the Protection of New Plant Variety (UPOV). The presentations were followed by a question and answer sessions that allowed the delegates to deepen their knowledge on the subject. The second one was on seed care and facilitated by Syngenta during which experts in seed

treatment presented various fascinating topics such as “seed care application machinery, seed safety and carryover of treated seeds, operator safety and stewardship, and the global seed care market” among others.

All the important topics such as strengths and weaknesses of the seed trade in Africa vis-à-vis the world seed trade, promoting seed trade in Africa, opportunities, constraints and latest development on seed trade in Africa, the African seed industry in the face of the food crisis, strategy for the implementation of the harmonized seed regulations to become a reality for the promotion of the seed trade, and analysis of the status of the Commercialization and the use of Genetically Modified Crops in Africa vis-à-vis the rest of the world – the South African case were well attended. During the AFSTA General Assembly 2009, a new AFSTA Board was elected and 8 new AFSTA members were approved.

The objectives for AFSTA continue to be the organization of technical training related to seeds to build capacity of its members in 2009/2010 among others, strengthening the awareness of its membership about the latest developments in technology in relation to seeds and seed marketing. It will continue to actively support the seed legislation harmonization process in the sub-regions.

The AFSTA annual Congress has indeed proved itself to be an event to look forward to and the focus is now cast on the next AFSTA Congress 2010 to be held in Bamako, Mali from 1st – 5th March 2010. The National Organizing Committee for AFSTA Congress 2010 has already begun preparations to ensure that the Congress meets your expectations.

ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL PERFORMANCE TRIALS (NPT) REGULATIONS IN KENYA

By STAK Secretariat, stak@stak.or.ke

In the spirit of public/private partnership, the Seed Trade Association of Kenya (STAK) has been working with the Kenyan Government, its regulatory agencies and the seed industry stake-holders in developing National Performance Trials (NPT) Regulations to

govern variety evaluation (testing), release and registration in Kenya. The purpose of these regulations is to facilitate faster release to improve access by farmers to improved varieties. The Regulations establish two committees, which are a technical committee (NPT) of crop experts to evaluate the trials data and make recommendations for release and a policy committee (National Variety Release) to regulate the process. The two committees include key stake-holders. The Regulations also provide for harmonization of the release process with the regional seed harmonization agreements to facilitate regional variety listing. They further provide procedures for application for entering a new line (variety) into NPT's and the process leading to gazettment and entering the variety in the national and regional variety lists.

Kenya has National Performance Trials Regulations, through the stewardship of the Seed Trade Association of Kenya, which have been published and gazetted by the Minister for Agriculture in the *Kenya Gazette Supplement No. 12 (Legislative Supplement No 8,) Legal Notice No. 25 of 27th January, 2009.*

Kenya now awaits implementation of the Seeds and Plant Varieties Bill 2008 to fully liberalize the seed sector in Kenya.

The 5 EAC (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi), who are also members of the Eastern Africa Seed Committee – EASCOM) are encouraged to take advantage of the provisions of these regulations to speed-up release and regional variety listing to enhance seed trade business within the EASCOM region.

MALAWI'S AGRICULTURE MINISTRY RELAESES DROUGHT-PROOF MAIZE VARIETIES

Source: Crop Biotech Update of ISAAA

Farmers in Malawi will soon reap the benefits of growing drought-tolerant maize varieties. The country's Agriculture Ministry has recently released two drought-proof maize varieties in the Balaka District, a drought-prone region in Southern Malawi. The varieties, developed by the Agriculture Ministry in collaboration with the

International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), can tolerate the region's dry, infertile soil. Both are open pollinated varieties. They are also resistant to an array of diseases that plague maize crops in sub-Saharan Africa, including the maize streak virus and the gray leaf spot.

According to Africa News Science, the new maize varieties will be included in Malawi's national agricultural input subsidy program. This program is credited as being the force behind the country's food self sufficiency. Agriculture Secretary Andrew Daudi said: "Farmers have embraced these new varieties and have even given them local names, meaning that they appreciate them, especially ZM 309, an early maturing, dwarf and disease-resistant variety."

The complete article is available at http://africasciencenews.org/asns/index.php/News/Latest/administrator/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1104&Itemid=2

LAUNCH OF SEED INVESTMENT FUND SET TO JUMPSTART THE AFRICAN SEED INDUSTRY

Source: Extract from Press Release of AGRA:

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The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), in partnership with the African Agricultural Capital (AAC) group has launched in Kampala, Uganda, the African Seed Investment Fund (ASIF). Over the next five years, it will invest in at least 20 small and medium-size seed companies in Southern and Eastern Africa, infusing equity and expertise into an industry that has languished for decades, and paves way for increasing the productivity and incomes of at least one million farm households.

ASIF's main aim is to provide high quality seeds to smallholder African farmers, thereby improving income and quality of life. AISF is specifically targeting promotion the growth of small and medium-sized African seed companies through long-term loans provided at below-market rates. ASIF will thus fill a critical funding gap in African agricultural development financing for its underdeveloped and undercapitalized seed sector.

Across Southern and Eastern Africa there are over 50 small and medium-sized African seed companies, compared to hundreds that

operate in Europe or in the United States. To help fill this gap, ASIF will operate in eight countries; Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia.

Having more than doubled in four years, sales revenues of African seed companies stood at about US\$2.5 million in 2006. Yet, in Eastern and Southern Africa alone, only about one-third of maize (the region's largest staple food crop) is produced from improved varieties. African seed comprises only a small fraction of the global seed market, estimated at US\$30 billion.

The lack of a robust African seed industry has left farmers with few choices. Smallholder farmers (who grow most of the food consumed in Africa) can neither afford nor access high-yielding quality seed varieties of their staple food crops. Whereas improved seed has been responsible for more than half of global yield increases, African smallholder farmers must rely on farm-saved seed whose quality has deteriorated over time, producing the world's lowest cereal yields and accounting for chronic hunger and malnutrition.

The AGRA-AAC partnership aims to jumpstart a well-capitalized, competitive and efficient regional seed industry; with commercial incentives to produce, distribute and market improved seed varieties that meet farmers' demands.

AGRA's investment in ASIF is part of a comprehensive approach to helping millions of small-scale farmers and their families end poverty and hunger. AAC is a diversified agri-business fund, incorporated in Uganda in 2004, with a track record of spurring the growth of pro-poor African agri-businesses.

Venture Capital for Seed Entrepreneurs

Alongside capital investment, the fund will provide business development services, including continual advice on issues like seed production, storage, and distribution and seed company management. Distributors will also be trained on the appropriate use of seeds and other inputs such as fertilizer, to ensure the most efficient, safe and environmentally sound use of all. ASIF will implement a gender policy that works to involve women actively as entrepreneurs, workers, and smallholder

farmers. Women make up the majority of Africa's smallholder farmers and have the greatest impact on the livelihood of their families, yet face many impediments to education, training and access to finance.

In addition to its larger loans to at least 20 African seed companies, ASIF will invest in about 10 early-stage businesses with big potential. These loans will range from approximately about \$50,000 to \$1,500,000 each. The fund overall will seek a net return of 3% on its investment.

And while maize will be an important crop for the program, companies producing seed for such staple crops as beans, cowpea, pigeon pea, rice, sorghum, millet and others will be encouraged to apply. To qualify, companies will need to meet investment criteria in three main areas: enterprise, performance, and development criteria. The latter includes measures such as overall job creation, skills development in rural communities, and an environment-friendly footprint.

Upcoming events:

- **18th – 21st April 2009:** ISTA Seed Vigor Workshop in Mashhad, Iran
- **25th – 27th May 2009:** ISF World Seed Congress 2009, Antalya Turkey.
- **10th – 13th June 2009:** ISTA Workshop on Molecular Markers for Variety Identity and Purity at the University of Bologna, Bologna, Italy.
- **15th – 18th June 2009:** ISTA Annual Meeting in Glattbrugg (Zurich), Switzerland.
- **20th – 24th June 2009:** ASTA's 126th Annual Convention, Hyatt Regency in Scottsdale Gainey Ranch Resort & Spa Scottsdale, Arizona, USA.
- **8th -12th November 2009:** APSA congress 2009 in Bangkok, Thailand.
- **1st – 5th March 2009:** AFSTA annual congress 2010 in Bamako, Mali.

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Disclaimer:

The African Seed Trade Association takes every precaution in verifying the accuracy of information supplied by its Secretariat, but does not accept liability for errors, which may nevertheless appear in this newsletter. Submissions by contributors to the newsletter may not necessarily reflect the views of the AFSTA Secretariat, the Board or its members.

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