



E-Review

Electronic Newsletter of the African Seed Trade Association

December 2004

AFSTA WISHES THE READERS OF THIS ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER WONDERFUL HOLIDAYS AND A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR 2005

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AFSTA CONGRESS 2005

*By Guy Blaise Satsa
Chairman of the NOC*

The National Organizing Committee is settled to welcome all the participants in the fifth AFSTA annual congress to be held from 15th to 18th March 2005 at Djeuga Palace Hotel, in the beautiful town of Yaoundé, Cameroon.

An exciting program has been put together so that participants would benefit from it in every aspect. Indeed, apart from the interesting technical congress program, Cameroon has marvelous tourism sites that would offer a wide range of enjoyable activities for the participants.

It will be another opportunity for the seed people to create/strengthen their business relationship and friendship. The NOC can assure you that it will be another unforgettable event in a friendly environment with the Cameroonian hospitality. We are inviting all the seed stakeholders to the AFSTA Congress 2005 and we do hope that you will join us and enjoy it.

Online registration is available at the website www.afsta.org where you can also find all the details about AFSTA congress 2005 including the registration form that can be downloaded.

SEED LEGISLATION HARMONIZATION PROCESS IN UEMOA ON TRACK

*By Justin Rakotoarisaona
Secretary General of AFSTA*

With the financial and technical support of FAO – France program, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) has continued its program of harmonization of the seed legislation, which started with a workshop held at the end of January 2004 in Dakar, Senegal during which a roadmap and the priority species were defined. A second workshop was held on 26th – 27th November 2004 in Lomé, Togo in which seed experts from 8 member States participated to agree with the norms and standards for the seed control and certification and the elaboration of the regional catalogue for the eleven identified species (rice,

sorghum, millet, onion, tomato, cowpea, peanut, yam, cassava and potato). The specific crops to the sub-region such as cowpea, cassava and yam received special attention from the seed experts since they play important role in the alimentation of the population of UEMOA. The participants in the workshop adopted among others that onions and tomatoes as well as all the other vegetable seeds are traded as “**standard seeds**”, which does not mean at any event low quality seeds and their certification is voluntary. Seed experts from 8 member States will hold again another workshop to validate the final document for the seed certification and control and the seed regional catalogue to be enforced in the UEMOA.

The completion of the seed legislation harmonization process will be a big step forward in promoting the seed trade in this sub-region and in Africa.

MALAWI HAS LAUNCHED ITS SEED TRADE ASSOCIATION

*By Felix Elia Jumbe
Interim Secretary General*



Malawi has moved the first mile towards making its seed industry work harmonious between the private and public sector by launching its seed association called Seed Trade Association of Malawi (STAM) on 24th September 2004. The deputy Minister of Agriculture Hon. SIDIK Mia MP graced the launch of the association. In his speech, the Minister welcomed

the development and indicated that the association will assist government in facilitating the formulation of policies and regulations for the seed industry that are in tune with the world seed practices at large and Malawi private sector practices in particular. The Minister assured the private sector of government support and indicated that the current reduction of fertilizer prices is evidence of such support. Later the Minister unveiled the improved seed use promotion campaign.

In response, Mr. Enock Chikava, General Manager for Monsanto (Malawi), welcomed the support and requested the government to consider the reduction of the prices in fertilizer to extend to seed because application of fertilizer on local seed will still not translate into better yield for the farmers due to genetic limitation of the local seed varieties.

Later, the interim members of STAM elected interim Board of Trustees (BOT) to finalize the formation of the association. The members elected Mr. Enock Chikava as Chairman, Mr. Patrick Khembo of Chemical & Marketing & Pioneer Seeds as Vice-Chairman, Mr. Felix Jumbe of Peacock Enterprises as Secretary General, Abel Banda of ASSMAG as vice Secretary, Mr. Moyo, General Manager-ADMARC as Treasurer and the following as technical committee members; Dr. Zaki Chalira, Lucia Mtambo, Ian kumwenda and Dr. John Kumwenda of Seed-Co Malawi Ltd and Dr. Jeff Luhanga as its Patron.

The board has been mandated to devise the scope of work for STAM, come up with a strategic plan and establish a Secretariat.

The elected President thanked the American Seed Trade Association in particular for supporting the whole function financially.

**EASTERN AFRICA SEED
COMMITTEE (EASCOM) FOUNDED**

*By Obongo Nyachae
Executive Secretary, EASCOM.*

The Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) has been running a Project on Harmonization of Seed Policies and Regulations in East Africa. The Project on Harmonization started in late 1999, and set to harmonize policies and procedures relating to variety evaluation, release and registration; plant variety protection; seed certification; phytosanitary measures import/export and general seed trade development issues.

Operationalization of agreements on harmonization was undertaken by the Seed Regional Working Group, (SRWG), which was set up in June 2001 during a meeting of experts on variety release and protection, seed certification, phytosanitary and import/export and seed trade association representatives. The SRWG undertook its activities till June 2004, when seed stakeholders from various institutions met in Arusha and decided to create the Eastern Africa Seed Committee (EASCOM) to spearhead operationalization of agreements of the harmonization project for the ASARECA member countries, which have encompassed the harmonization process. The Committee was inaugurated by the Dr N. Weggoro, Sectoral Economist, East African Community on 29th April 2004. It would have representatives from member countries representing the following institutions:

- National Seed Certification Agency
- Ministry of Agriculture
- National Seed Trade Association
- National Plant Breeders Association

During the 5th Seed Regional Working Group Annual General Meeting held in Kigali, Rwanda on 29 – 30 November 2004, and attended by representatives from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Madagascar, DR Congo, Rwanda and Sudan, and facilitated by Dr Isaac Minde, the Coordinator of ASARECA's Programme on Agricultural Policy Analysis (ECAPAPA), EASCOM was formally operationalized and elected the following persons to run its Secretariat:

- **Chairperson:**

Mr. James Komayombi, Commissioner for Crop Protection, Ministry of Agriculture, Republic of Uganda. (The post is rotational annually)

- **Vice-Chairperson:**

Mr. Innocent Uwimana, Head Seed Certification, Ministry of Agriculture, Republic of Rwanda. (Becomes next Chairperson)

- **Executive Secretary:**

Mr. Obongo Nyachae, Former Secretary of Seed Regional Working Group and Executive Officer of the Seed Trade Association of Kenya (STAK). The Secretariat activities would be operated from STAK for the next three years.

The agenda for EASCOM for the year 2005 was set during the Kigali meeting and it was also resolved that expert Working Groups would help the Committee to achieve some of its stated objectives. The next EASCOM meeting would be held in Madagascar in November 2005.

**CROP MANAGEMENT AND GM
CROPS**

It is the way the crop is farmed, not the crop itself that determines its effect on biodiversity. So says Jeremy Sweet, scientific coordinator of a four-year study "Botanical and Rotational Implications of Genetically Modified Herbicide Tolerance" (BRIGHT) in the

United Kingdom. The first trial to compare transgenic and conventional crops farmed in rotation, the study showed that crops genetically modified to be resistant to herbicides could make weeds easier to manage without destroying valuable biodiversity. The study, featured in Nature magazine, involved alternating transgenic sugar beet or winter oilseed rape and conventional wheat or barley on the same plots of land. It was conducted on five different agricultural research stations in Britain using patterns of crop rotation that farmers use to preserve nutrients in the soil or disrupt pest life cycles. Results showed that the number of weed seeds on the plots, a measure of biodiversity, increased over the four years in all cases. Researchers noted that although weed plants themselves can be controlled, transgenic crops do not necessarily damage diversity.

Source: the Nature Magazine "Crop management gets vital role in transgenic debate" (November 29, 2004) online at <http://www.nature.com/news/2004/041129/full/041129-2.html>

THE US – AFRICAN AGRIBUSINESS CONFERENCE

*By Raouf Ghariani
President of AFSTA*

The Corporate Council on Africa (CCA) has organized the first US – Africa Agribusiness conference last November in Monterrey, California, USA to which the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) was invited. Mr. Raouf Ghariani represented AFSTA and delivered a speech, which brought into relief the current situation of the African seed industry in general and its potential to contribute to the world seed industry in enhancing food security for the fast growing population of the continent. It was an opportunity to make the participants in this conference

understand better the efforts of the African Seed Trade Association to promote the seed trade in Africa and globally according to its mission and the objectives.

Participants in this event were from various backgrounds such as government people namely the Secretary of Agriculture of the USA and the Minister for Trade of Kenya, and the professionals of seed from the private and public sectors from the USA and Africa.

For more information on this conference, please visit the following website: www.africanconcl.org.

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- *Justin Rakotoarisaona, AFSTA Secretary-General.*
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The editorial team would like to thank the contributors of this issue.

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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