



E-Review

Electronic Newsletter of the African Seed Trade Association

July 2009

In this edition:

- ***Birth of the National Seed Trade Association of Burundi (COPROSEBU)***
- ***Progress on the African Seed and Biotechnology Program (ASBP)***
- ***Tanzania forum to facilitate local debate on agricultural biotechnology***
- ***The World Vegetable Center (AVRDC) builds capacity for the vegetable seed sector***
- ***News from the Gambian Agro-chemical and Seed Trade Association (GASTA)***

BIRTH OF THE NATIONAL SEED ASSOCIATION OF BURUNDI

By Juvent Baramburiye

E-Mail: juventbaramburiye@yahoo.fr

Burundi is situated in the heart of Africa and its agricultural sector represents more than 90% of food crops and contributes to 46% of the GDP. The industrial crops (coffee, tea, sugar cane, cotton, etc.) account for more than 90% of the export earnings. The seed sector of Burundi is being reorganized to become market oriented. Indeed, the country underwent a more than fifteen-year socio-political conflict and all the efforts were focused on the humanitarian help at the expense of seed sector development. The seed sector is dominated by the public sector, which is not able to produce and meet the seed demand. Less than 10% of the farmers use improved seeds. The strength of the Burundian seed sector is principally the diversity of its climate with more than 9 months of rainy season each year as well as diversified agro ecological zones for a regional specialization of the crops.

The preparation for the seed association of Burundi "Collectif des Compagnies et Coopératives Semencières du Burundi" or COPROSEBU started in March 2009 as part of seed harmonization, policies, laws and regulations in the East African Community (Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi). The seed stakeholders of Burundi realized that before harmonization, the seed sector of Burundi must first be organized as private industry players. This is the main reason why

Eastern Africa Seed Committee (EASCOM), which has been following the harmonization process since 2003 took the initiative of organizing the seed producers of Burundi to set up a legally acceptable organization to represent the interests of the seed industry in Burundi. The seed association was formed during a workshop held on 24th June 2009 in Bujumbura, where representatives of seed producers across the country participated. An interim committee was formed to finalize the Constitution and Bylaws of the association together with the activities and budget. The opening ceremony of the workshop was attended by Chief of staff of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, the Secretary General of the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA), Senators, Members of Parliament, Regional Directors of Public and Private Agricultural Research Institutions. The national Television and the private media also covered the event.

The workshop and its outcomes were acclaimed as big positive step since for the first time, the Government gave the private sector in Burundi the opportunity to manage seed trade business, it (government) will focus on seed certification and control. The Government is very supportive of this initiative. The founding members of the association decided to get organized and to become seed cooperatives and immediately defined the program activities from July to December 2009 such as, among others, finalization of the Constitution and Bylaws, registration of COPROSEBU, joining

AFSTA by December 2009 once it is registered.



A photo of participants at the launch of COPROSEBU
The main objectives of COPROSEBU include (1) Creation of a forum for interaction and information exchange between professional seed producers; (2) Representation of the interests of private seed sector of Burundi at national, regional and international levels; (3) Promotion of a viable and economically competitive national seed industry; (4) Improvement of the communication between seed actors in the country and the other countries by providing them with necessary information on meetings, seminars, congress and other national, regional and international fora concerning seeds; (5) Professionalization of the seed sector and promotion of the use of improved seed; (6) Promotion of harmonious working relationship with the national and international agricultural research institutions. We hail the Government of Burundi for promoting private seed sector development and wish COPROSEBU success in achieving their objectives.

PROGRESS ON THE THE AFRICAN SEED AND BIOTECHNOLOGY PROGRAMME (ASBP)

*By Charles Nyachae
E-mail: afsta@afsta.org*

The African Seed and Biotechnology Programme (ASBP) was endorsed during the Twenty-fourth Africa Regional Conference of Food and Agriculture

Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), held on 30th - 31st January 2006 in Bamako, Mali. The overall program objective of the FAO supported ASBP is to contribute to increased food security and nutrition and poverty alleviation in Africa through the establishment of effective and efficient seed systems.

An ASBP validation workshop was organized by the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture of the African Union in collaboration with the FAO to chart out the institutional arrangement and its implementation strategy from 19th to 21st May 2009 at the office of the African Union Commission (AUC) headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It was opened by HE Dr. Elham Mahmoud Ahmed Ibrahim, AU Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy on behalf of the Commissioner of Rural Economy and Agriculture who stressed on the mandate of the African Heads of State in developing the seed sector.



Group Photo of participants in the workshop

Participants were from various international and regional organizations such as the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA), Farmer's organisations, Agricultural Universities, and International Agriculture Research Centres.

At the end of the workshop, a draft proposal for the institutional arrangement was produced to be submitted to the participants for further input and responsibilities of the key African seed stakeholders in the implementation of the ASBP were identified.

TANZANIA FORUM TO FACILITATE LOCAL DEBATE ON AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

Source: <http://africasciencenews.org>

At the heart of agricultural biotechnology is the mission to change the situation of almost 800 million people who go to bed daily on an empty stomach, most of whom come from developing countries in Africa.

Speaking during the launch of The Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology (OFAB) Tanzania, the Director General of Tanzania's Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH) Dr Hassan Mshinda said that a lack of proper information on the opportunities offered by biotechnology has resulted in a slow adoption of various agro-technologies that can help the country feed its citizens.

OFAB will hold monthly luncheon meetings, in which stakeholders will share knowledge and experiences; and explore new avenues of bringing the benefits of biotechnology to the agricultural sector in Tanzania.

The Chief Guest during the launch was the Minister of Agriculture Food Security and Cooperatives Hon. Stephen Wasira. The Minister said that public understanding of biotechnology has great implication in successful application of biotechnology in research for development and on the acceptance of products developed from that research.

OFAB is supported by the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) which also supports the Forum Chapters in Kenya, Uganda and Nigeria. The Forum aims to facilitate relevant discussion on agricultural technology as it relates to the needs of poor countries.

THE WORLD VEGETABLE CENTER (AVRDC) BUILDS CAPACITY FOR VEGETABLE SEED SECTOR

By Takemore Chagomoka

Email: takemore.chagomoka@worldveg.org

In its efforts to alleviate poverty and malnutrition in the developing countries through the increased production and consumption of safe vegetables, the vegetable Breeding Seed Systems (vBSS) of the World Vegetable Centre, Regional Centre for Africa (AVRDC) will organize a training on "Strategic Seed Business and Market Management" from 26th October to 1st November 2009 in Arusha Tanzania. The objective of the training is to build capacity in the vegetable seed sector in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), which has been faced with many challenges in the recent past. This training will be conducted in partnership with the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA), West Africa Seed Alliance (WASA), and Citizens Network for Foreign Affairs (CNFA) among others.

NEWS FROM THE GAMBIAN SEED TRADE ASSOCIATION (GASTA)

By Momodou A. Ceesay, Chairman, GASTA

E-mail: ganhort@qanet.gm

The economy of The Gambia is primarily dependent on agriculture, which contributes 25% of GDP, employs 60% of the population (1,500,000) and generates 55% of foreign exchange export earnings. The main crops produced include groundnut, maize, millet, sorghum, rice, and horticultural crops with groundnut representing 60% of export earnings. Improved seeds have been widely recognized as playing a pivotal role in increasing crop productivity. However, input availability and distribution, particularly of certified seed, have often been cited as a major constraint limiting agricultural development.

The Government policy is directed at easing supply bottlenecks and encouraging private traders and enterprises to import, produce and distribute these inputs at competitive prices. It plays a key role in agricultural

development through the Department of State for Agriculture and the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) and regulatory role. It also provides incentives such as tax and duty exemption on production inputs such as seed, fertilizer and pesticides.

The Gambia Agro-chemical and Seed Trade Association (GASTA) was launched in July 2004 initially as Gambia Seed Trade Association (GSTA) with assistance from the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA). The agrochemical sector was later included since most of the members deal in both inputs and Gambia being too small a country for two separate associations. Membership is open to all stakeholders in agrochemicals and seeds from both the private and public sectors. GASTA was formed out of the need to establish a seed industry body that would strive to promote the development of the seed industry and provide a forum through which various problems and constraints facing the seed sector in The Gambia could be effectively addressed. It is planned to strengthen GASTA with a Secretariat to provide a better coordination and harmonization of all seed related activities and better organize the seed industry giving members more voice in all seed matters.



Mr. Momodou Ceesay, GASTA Chairman awarded the National Honor by the President of The Gambia

GASTA has been collaborating with the government to develop the seed industry.

Indeed, their tremendous efforts were recognized by the Gambian government by including, Mr. Momodou A. Ceesay, Chairman of GASTA, in the National Honours List and decorated with the Order of The Republic of the Gambia by the Gambian President, His Excellency Yahya AJJ Jammeh during an investiture ceremony at the State House grounds on 2nd May 2009.

Despite the numerous efforts and successes achieved by GASTA, some challenges still face the seed sector in The Gambia such as lack of proper developed research facilities and limited funding and investment in seed production and distribution, lack of a National Seed Policy and shortage of trained personnel in plant breeding, seed production, post harvest technology and marketing.

Upcoming events:

- **8th – 10th September 2009:** World Seed Conference, Rome, Italy.
- **8th – 12th November 2009:** Asian Seed Congress 2009 - Bangkok, Thailand
- **25th – 27th November 2009:** China Seed Expo 2009, Guangzhou, China.
- **1st – 5th March 2010:** AFSTA annual congress 2010 in Bamako, Mali.

EDITORIAL TEAM:

- *Justin Rakotoarisaona, AFSTA Secretary-General*
- *Charles K. Nyachae, Information Officer, AFSTA*

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.

Tel: +254 – 20 – 272 7860 / 272 7853

Fax: +254 – 20 – 272 7861

E-mail: afsta@afsta.org

Website: www.afsta.org