



E-Review

Electronic Newsletter of the African Seed Trade Association

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SOUTH AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC) SEED NEWS

The slow process of harmonizing seed related legislation now seems to be gaining momentum. Harmonized seed rules will facilitate cross-border movement of seed consignments to alleviate periodic seed shortages that lead to food insecurity. A protocol has been developed for testing, registration and release of varieties that will lead to a regional catalogue of varieties that may be sold. A secondary catalogue is envisaged for land races. Earlier this year, the technical committee on seed certification and quality assurance met to draft a regional system with the objective of encouraging acceptance of seed with consistent high and known quality. National seed certifying authorities will control such certified quality seed and a SADC seal and label are planned.

(Sources: SADC Seed News, SADC Seed Update)

HARMONIZATION OF SEED LEGISLATION IN THE UEMOA COUNTRIES

With the financial support of France through an FAO program, the harmonization process of seed legislation in the UEMOA (West African Economic and Monetary Union) is under way. The workshop held from 27 to 29 January 2004 in Dakar, Senegal, identified 11 crops as priority for the UEMOA zone:

- Cereals: maize, rice, sorghum, and millet.

- Legumes: peanut and cowpea
- Root and tuber: Yam, potato and cassava.
- Vegetables: onion and tomato.

Studies for the elaboration of a UEMOA variety catalogue and for the harmonized norms of control and certification for these 11 above-mentioned crops, which will be submitted to the experts from the eight member States for discussion, are currently undertaken.

Justin Rakotoarisoana, Secretary-General of AFSTA

BIRTH OF THE EASTERN AFRICA SEED COMMITTEE (EASCOM) TO SPEARHEAD HARMONIZATION IN THE EASTERN AFRICA SUB-REGION

The Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA), through its Eastern and Central Africa Program on Agricultural Policy Analysis (ECAPAPA) organized a highly successful workshop on promoting harmonized policies and procedures for quality seed production and trade in Eastern Africa. The workshop took place at Novotel Hotel Arusha, Tanzania, on 28 - 29 June 2004 and was attended by 54 delegates drawn from 24 organizations and included representation from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Eritrea, USAID/REDSO, AFSTA, Seed Regional Working Group of ASARECA/ECAPAPA

Project on Harmonization and ASARECA/ECAPAPA itself.

The workshop was opened by Dr. N. Weggoro, Sectoral Economist, East African Community and closed by the Secretary-General of the EAC, Ambassador Amany-Mushega, with his speech being read by Dr. Weggoro.

The participants brainstormed on the need to have a common regional forum for completing the rationalization and harmonization of the harmonization process and ensure full operationalization of the agreements. The delegates resolved to form an Eastern Africa Seed Committee (EASCOM) to oversee completion of the process of harmonization and implement the agreements arrived at by the participating member countries. The mission of EASCOM includes:

- Providing a forum for the seed stakeholders in Eastern Africa for purposes of promoting harmonization and implementation of appropriate seed policies in the region;
- Promoting the emerging seed markets in Eastern Africa and encouraging seed trade in Africa.

EASCOM will work closely with the East African Community and COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Central Africa) on implementation of harmonized seed policies and development of the seed sector in the Region with the following key functions:

- Influence review of seed policies, laws and regulations;
- Strengthen national seed and plant breeders associations;
- Operationalize harmonized agreements on: variety evaluation, release and registration, plant variety protection, seed certification, phytosanitary measures and biosafety issues, import/export procedures.
- Develop and maintain data bases and disseminate information to stakeholders;
- Capacity building;
- Representation in East African Community and COMESA Committees;
- Fund raising;
- Create linkages and collaboration;
- Enhance seed market development;
- Attend to any other emerging issues.

The EASCOM shall comprise of one representative from each member country from the following: Ministry of Agriculture, regulatory Agency, national seed trade association, and national plant breeders association. The Committee will elect a Chairperson, Vice

Chairperson and Secretary from among its members on a country rotational basis after every three years

The delegates mandated ASARECA/ECAPAPA to facilitate the take-off of EASCOM. To speed up this exercise, the participating organizations were requested to send the name of their nominee to the ASARECA/ECAPAPA Co-ordinator **by 27th August 2004**. The delegates further resolved that the first meeting of EASCOM be convened by ASARECA/ECAPAPA **by November 2004** to elect office bearers and launch the Eastern Africa Seed Committee.

Obongo Nyachae, Secretary of Seed Regional Working Group (Eastern Africa)

MODERN BIOTECHNOLOGY IN AFRICA

Biotechnology in SADC

To date only South Africa has commercially released GM crop varieties, following the start of GM cotton testing in 1990 in terms of government approval under a set of biosafety guidelines. The GMO Act was passed in 1997 and, together with its regulations, became effective in 1999. The crop of the past season under GM cotton (85% adoption rate), white and yellow GM maize (12% adoption), and GM soybeans (35% adoption), totaled almost 400,000 hectares. The government division responsible for regulating all genetic modification research, production and trade in all GM organisms, is the Genetic Resources offices in the Department of Agriculture. They have just released updated application forms for permits, as well as extensive new biosafety guidelines for GMOs.

In view of practical trade problems experienced in 2002/2003 with import of emergency food aid that might have contained GM grains, destined for Zambia and other countries, South Africa set up procedures for handling in transit consignments. Part of the requirements is that raw product imports must be milled before transport to country of destination. The SADC expert Committee on Biosafety and Biotechnology is in the process of developing proposals for harmonized regulatory systems for the region. Their approach is based on the SADC guidelines that deal with handling food aid, policies and regulations, capacity building, and public awareness. SADC acknowledges both the benefits of GM crops and the need for biosafety regulations. Guidelines include harmonizing regulations, sourcing food aid from

the region, donor compliance with advance informed agreement, milling of grain that may contain GM, identification of consignments with GM, and interim use of requirements under AU model law and South African GMO Act.

Workshop on communicating biotechnology, Lusaka, Zambia

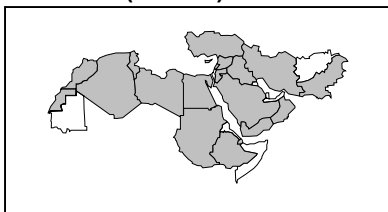
Over 50 representatives took part in a two-day workshop on communicating biotechnology held in Lusaka, Zambia on June 17-18. The event, organized by the Biotechnology Outreach Society of Zambia, was opened by the Zambian Permanent Secretary for Science, Technology and Vocational Training, Dr Paul Zambezi. He stated that modern biotechnology is a cutting edge technology and requested that scientists should speak with one voice. Zambia is engaged in developing a strategy for implementation of its policy on biotechnology. Participants included members of parliament, scientists, media, and government officials. The workshop ended with proposals that will be compiled into a communication strategy.

Conference on science and technology in agriculture, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

A ministerial conference on science and technology in agriculture took place in Burkina Faso on June 21-23, 2004. Apart from Presidents from Burkina Faso, Mali, Ghana, and Niger, 13 ministers attended the event from ECOWAS countries. Participants totaled over 300 from 22 countries. Issues on the agenda included water management and smallholder irrigation technologies, agricultural biotechnology, regional cooperation, capacity building, and technical assistance. Crop biotechnology was of specific importance as Burkina Faso had just approved field trials for GM cotton resistant to insect pests.

(Information from AfricaBio reports, SADC Guidelines, South African GMO procedures)

THE WEST ASIA AND NORTH AFRICA (WANA) SEED NETWORK



The WANA Seed Network, established in June 1992, has 19 member countries in

the region, namely - Algeria, Cyprus, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon,

Libya, Morocco, Pakistan, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, and Yemen. It has links to 11 regional and/or international organizations which have observer status, and they include the International Seed Testing association (ISTA), the International Seed Trade Federation (ISF), the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), in addition to development agencies such as the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), FAO and GTZ.

Objectives

The WANA Seed Network is intended to support the development of a strong seed sector in member countries. The primary objective is to enhance cooperation, exchange of information and create a forum for consultation to share existing experiences, expertise and resources for seed program development in the region. The Network acts as a catalyst for harmonization through policy, regulatory, technical and institutional support to promote regional seed trade.

Activities

The Network, through its member countries, undertakes various initiatives to develop a common policy and regulatory framework for integration of national seed systems to promote regional seed trade. The WANA Seed Council identifies, prioritizes and approves activities based on their relevance and common interest for member countries. These activities are focused on the following key areas:

- Collection and dissemination of information through technical or specialized publications, a regular Newsletter 'Seed Info' and reviews of National Seed Programs;
- Harmonization of technical procedures pertinent to seed production and quality control;
- Harmonization of policy and regulatory issues relevant to varieties, seeds, seed trade and quarantine;
- Linkage with regional and international organizations working on seeds and development

Looking ahead

The WANA Seed Network has made considerable progress given its short period of existence and limited resources. While past efforts were focused on the public sector, it is imperative for the Network to respond to the changing environment in the seed sector. The

representation and activities of the Network should reflect the increasing diversity of the national seed systems. The Network may eventually evolve into a Regional Seed Association with active participation of all those involved in national seed industries particularly the private sector. Such an Association could play a key role to assist governments in creating favorable environments for policy and regulatory reforms that are required for seed sector development in the region.

Dr. Zewdie Bishaw
Seed Systems Specialist

STRENGTHENING NATIONAL SEED ASSOCIATIONS

With **funding** from the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA), three national seed associations will be officially launched soon. Being aware of the importance of seed associations, the seed stakeholders in the Gambia, Congo-Brazzaville and Malawi got organized to form their national seed associations to work in partnership with the public sector in their respective country. The Minister for Agriculture or his/her representative will attend the workshop during which an objective analysis of the current situation of national seed industry will be undertaken with a view to defining the way forward in the short and long run. These associations would join the African Seed Trade Association after the launch. More countries are on their way to setting up their seed association with close collaboration of AFSTA Secretariat.

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With the same funding, AFSTA Secretariat will be organizing training in “**seed association management**” for national seed associations, which are members of AFSTA in order to reinforce their capacity. This training will be held on 20th and 21st September 2004 in Nairobi, Kenya. Twenty national seed associations from 20 African countries will be participating in this training. Apart from the training, this will be a good opportunity for them to interact for future cooperation among them. Topics to be addressed during this training include:

- Secretariat of seed association: management and efficiency;
- Financial management: budgeting and planning for national seed association;
- Private and public partnership: Lobbying technique and fund raising;
- Strategic planning for national seed association;
- Importance of statistical database for seed trade purposes;
- Role of seed associations in harmonizing the seed regulations.

AFSTA hopes that this training will improve the capacity of national seed associations in fulfilling their tasks at national, sub-regional, and continental levels.

Justin Rakotoarisaona, Secretary-General of AFSTA