



E-Review

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BIRTH OF THE ETHIOPIAN SEED TRADE ASSOCIATION (ESTA)

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Ethiopia has high potential for agricultural development with a total area of 113 millions hectares out of which 73.45 millions hectares (65%) arable. The area under major crops is about 7 millions hectares (9.5%). The main food crops include cereals, legumes and oil seeds. Cereals occupy 80 to 85% of the total cultivated area, followed by legumes and oil seeds.

The smallholder farmers, almost exclusively dominate the agricultural sector of the country. They account for about 96% of total land cultivated and more than 95% of all food crops produced. Although smallholder farmers produce the bulk of crops, the production and productivity are very low. The main reason is restricted use of inputs, notably improved seeds and fertilizers. The use of seed of poor genetic potential is one of the contributing factors for low productivity. Over 95% of seed sources come from farm-saved seed of non-improved land races. The total seed requirement (potential demand) is estimated at 400,000 to 500,000 Metric tons of the major cereal crops. However, the amount of improved seed supply is very small i.e. about 22,000 Metric tons or about 6% of the potential demand for all crops per year. This indicates that only few farmers have access to seeds of improved public varieties. The existence of such an enormous gap between potential and effective demand can be considered as the major indicator for the existence of huge potential market for seed in the country.

The Government policy and strategy are aimed at broadening the agricultural production by improving the support to research, extension, infrastructure, irrigation and above all the private sector. There is favorable policy environment for the development of seed industry in the country.

Although the policy environment is conducive, the participation of the private sector is not to the level expected due to reasons mainly associated with lack of capital, limited technical know-how about seed and lack of confidence in the business.

Different public research centers and universities are involved in the seed variety development. Currently, about 390 varieties (including cereals, pulses, oil and fiber crops, vegetable and forage crops) are released and registered under the regulatory body. However, many of the released crop varieties are not multiplied for commercial distribution mainly due to a weak linkage between research and seed growers.

Formal seed production is mainly in the hand of the Ethiopian Seed Enterprise (ESE), which is one of the public enterprises involved in the production, seed quality control, distribution and marketing of both foundation and commercial seeds. It mainly produces under contract arrangement with farmers and commercial seed growers. Limited private companies like Pioneer Hi-Bred Seeds and some commercial seed growers are involved in the production of limited quantity of seeds with about 8% of the total certified seed supply annually.

It has been noted that the existing private and public companies produce limited amount of seed that do not cope with the growing demand in the country. In addition, seed production is faced with substandard seed quality, lack of facilities and equipments, absence of an organized seed system, loose coordination among stakeholders.

In view of the above, the Ethiopian seed stakeholders got organized to set up the Ethiopian Seed Trade Association (ESTA) whose objectives are mainly to work in partnership with the policy makers to address these constraints in order to improve the supply of quality seeds to farmers and to strengthen an enabling

environment where the private sector will operate more efficiently.

With the funding from the French Government, the launch workshop of the association in which 25 persons participated, was held on June 13, 2007 at the Hilton Hotel in Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia.



Participants in the launch of Ethiopian Seed Trade Association (ESTA), Addis-Ababa, 13 June 2007

The Secretary General of the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA), Mr. Justin Rakotoarisaona stated during his presentation the key elements for the good functioning of seed association and gave practical advice for its management. He insisted, among others, that the association should consider as a priority the establishment of a Secretariat, which is crucial for the success of the association. He also thanked the French government for its financial support to the African seed industry for the creation and the reinforcement of national seed associations in Africa.

A Board composed of 6 members, chaired by Mr. Melaku Admasu of Pioneer Hi-Bred Seed Ethiopia, was elected during this launch.

With a view to being networked with the African seed industry and beyond, the Ethiopian Seed Trade Association considers joining AFSTA amongst its priorities.

DEVELOPMENT OF A WEB-BASED VARIETY CATALOG FOR REGIONAL VARIETY RELEASE IN EASTERN, CENTRAL, SOUTHERN AND WESTERN AFRICA

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A variety release system – the process of testing to registering a variety for marketing – differs from country to country. This often results in problems transferring varieties across national borders even though the agro-ecological zones that they are to be grown in may be the same. The three African regions, East and Central, Southern, and West Africa, are working on harmonizing their variety release system at regional level to prevent such bottlenecks.

West Africa has agreed that a variety released/registered in one country should be included in the regional catalogue and may be marketed throughout the region. Southern African Development

Community (SADC) and Eastern countries Africa have endorsed that a variety released in two countries may be registered and marketed in the region.

The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), with the support of the Africa-wide Sustainable Commercialization of Seeds in Africa (SCOSA) program of the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and Iowa State University (ISU), had developed a web platform for each regional catalogue and the information required for the database to harmonize the regional variety catalogs to promote seed trade among the regions. The regional database will also serve to improve the national variety catalogs of the different countries within each region.



Participants in the variety catalog meeting in Addis-Ababa, 11 – 13 June 2007

ILRI organized a three-day workshop (11th to 13th June 2007) in Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia to review and improve the database of the selected crops. Experts from the three regions, representing Eastern Africa Seed Committee (EASCOM), Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), Interstate Committee for the Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA), Sustainable Commercialization of Seed in Africa (SCOSA), Iowa State University (ISU), and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), attended this workshop.

ILRI committed to finish the database and catalog software by August 2007. The three regions also agreed to be the database and catalogue web managers. The SADC representative confirmed that they will be ready to install and manage the system by September 2007. West Africa needs to determine which regional organization will manage the system and East Central Africa will continue working on the harmonization of their regional variety release system.

PROMOTING PLANT VARIETY PROTECTION UNDER UPOV CONVENTION IN AFRICA

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With a view to promoting Plant Variety Protection in Africa, the Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), in cooperation with the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) and with the financial assistance of the United States Patent and

Trademark Office (USPTO), organized a regional seminar on Plant Variety Protection under the UPOV Convention and a workshop on Data Handling was organized from 5th to 8th June 2007 at KEPHIS Headquarter in Nairobi, Kenya. A total of 59 delegates from 16 African countries actively participated in these two events. The main objective was to train participants in testing methodologies, data collection and data analysis to determine qualification for protection. The objective of the regional seminar was to provide participants with information on UPOV and the UPOV system of plant variety protection, the plant variety protection situation in the region, the impact of plant variety protection, the interface between the UPOV Convention and other international treaties.

The Workshop on DUS Examination and Data Management was to provide participants with information on basic principles of the examination of distinctness, uniformity and stability (DUS test), arranging DUS tests, experience and cooperation in DUS testing, the practical examination of characteristics and the use of UPOV Test Guidelines, trial design, data analysis and the assessment of distinctness and uniformity, and variety denomination requirements and the UPOV-ROM Plant Variety Database.

The seminar and workshop targeted officials responsible for the administration of plant breeders' rights, for agriculture or intellectual property rights, or areas related to plant breeders' rights, experts responsible for the examination of distinctness, uniformity and stability (DUS), and those who may be involved in the near future in all the above areas.

For the first time in Africa, the UPOV Technical Working Party for Vegetable Crops was also held at KEPHIS Headquarters, Nairobi, Kenya from 11th to 15th June 2007. It brought together 41 experts in various vegetable crops from the 18 UPOV member States and Observers (States and Organizations) to develop test guidelines for each vegetable crop before approval by the Technical committee.

SADC FANR MINISTERS APPROVE HARMONIZED SEED REGULATORY SYSTEM

Source: Seed Update of SADC Seed Security Network, June 2007, E-mail: dmbewe@sadc.int

Southern African Development Community (SADC) Secretariat through Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR) Directorate presented the SADC Harmonized Seed Regulatory System to SADC FANR Ministers at a meeting held on 29th June 2007 in Lusaka, Zambia.

At this meeting Ministers noted that Senior Officials of Agriculture at their meeting of 18-19 September 2006 agreed to harmonize the Seed Regulatory System. The system comprises the following:

i) SADC Variety Release System – The main feature of this system is that seed of any new variety that has

been tested and released in two SADC Member States, and listed in the SADC Common Catalogue, shall be allowed to be marketed in any SADC Member State with similar agro-ecological regions without any more testing. Currently new varieties of seed have to be tested for at least 2 - 4 years before they can be considered for release. In the proposed system, new and existing varieties of crops will gain access to SADC countries quickly since the restrictions imposed by the current national legislations on variety testing and release will no longer be valid. Implementation of the SADC variety release system will increase the number of varieties available to farmers, promote investment into the seed sector, and will make it easier and cheaper for Seed Companies to introduce seed varieties in other SADC Member States.

ii) SADC Seed Certification and Quality Assurance System – Variations in the certification and quality assurance systems among Member States make it difficult to compare the quality and classes of seed between countries. It also increases the cost of seed when traded across borders because of the need to establish the quality of the seed based on the importing country's standards.

The seed certification and quality assurance system will reduce costs and promote seed trade through production and sale of consistently high quality seed using common terminologies, standards, procedures, seals and labels throughout the region. The system will have the following seed certification classes: Breeder Seed, Pre-basic seed, Basic Seed, Certified Seed (1st Generation), Certified Seed (2nd Generation) and Quality Declared Seed. Seed traded in the region will have to meet the minimum laboratory standards as formulated under the System.

iii) SADC Phytosanitary Measures for Seed System – The system proposes the use of common quarantine and phytosanitary measures as well as a rationalized pest list to guide the safe movement of seed between Member States and also from outside SADC.

This will be supported by science-based common standards and procedures as well as efficient phytosanitary documentation based on the rationalized pest list.

At this meeting Ministers also noted that when the system is adopted, Member States will have to amend their national legislations in order to accommodate the SADC Harmonized Seed Regulatory System.

At this meeting Ministers also noted that before the SADC Harmonized Seed Regulatory System can be effected in Member States, all the countries will be required to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will facilitate the implementation of the system. To this effect, a draft MOU has been produced by the Secretariat, which will be finalized after receiving inputs from Member States.

Ministers further noted that the SADC Secretariat is also developing a framework of Plant Breeders' Rights

legislation, which will be used by Member States to develop their own and enact such legislation.

Ministers directed SADC Secretariat to ensure that issues of genetic piracy are addressed through the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Breeders Rights. The MoU will be circulated to Member States for approval at the next meeting.

At this meeting Ministers approved the SADC Harmonized Seed Regulatory System, comprising the following: i) SADC Variety Release System, ii) SADC Seed Certification System, and iii) SADC Phytosanitary for Seed System

Ministers also encouraged Member States to increase investment in the seed sector and promote the use of quality seeds at subsidized prices.

Ministers urged Member States to amend their national legislation in line with the SADC Harmonized Seed Regulatory System. Ministers referred the SADC Harmonized Seed Regulatory System to Council for approval.

PROGRESS ON SEED REGULATION HARMONIZATION IN EAST AFRICA

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The process of harmonization and rationalization of seed policies and regulations in EAC has made progress since its inception in September 1999 until now. The most important results of this process in three participating countries of East Africa include the following:

Tanzania:

- Gazetting of Seed Regulations in February 2007 to fully operationalize the Seeds Act of 2003. These Regulations contain regionally agreed seed certification standards;
- Operationalizing of the Plant Breeder's Rights Law in 2005, following passing of a PVP Act of 2002. Already by February 2007, two grants had been awarded and three are awaiting gazetting;
- Tanzania has initiated the process of acceding to OECD Field Schemes and ISTA lab testing rules.

Uganda:

- A Seeds and Plant Bill 2007, which has been approved by Uganda's Government, is under publication. This Bill repeals the Seeds and Plant Statute of 1994 and contains agreed regional seed certification standards;
- Uganda acceded to OECD Field Certification Schemes in October, 2005 and has initiated the process of acceding to ISTA lab testing rules;

Kenya:

- A draft Seeds and Plant Varieties Act (Amendment) Bill 2007, and Draft Seeds and

Plant Breeder's Rights Regulations, which contain regional seed certification standards and provide for compliance to UPOV 1991 Convention, have been produced. These are with the Minister for Agriculture, Kenya;

- Draft National Seed Policy Document, providing for liberalization of the seed sector has been made. The Document is also with the Minister for Agriculture;
- Kenya has published the Biosafety Bill on 22 June, 2007, which is due to be presented to Kenya's Parliament any time now. The Bill paves the way for development of biotechnology in Kenya;
- Kenya organized ISTA training on Purity Analysis to which representatives from Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda and Southern Sudan participated;
- Seed trade between Kenya and Uganda is going on based on inter-agency seed certification i.e. field inspection takes place in Uganda and seed is processed packaged and labeled in Kenya

Rwanda:

- Rwanda has fully joined EAC starting in June 2007 and participates in the harmonization of seed regulations in Eastern Africa.
- Passing of Rwanda Seed Act of 2003 with Draft Decrees (Regulations) to operationalize the Act.

Upcoming events:

- **8th to 10th October 2007:** AFSTA Board of Directors' meeting, Mombasa, Kenya.
- **6th to 10th November 2007:** APSA annual congress 2007 in Manila, Philippines.
- **28th to 29th November 2007:** AGM of EASCOM in Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia.
- **26th to 29 February 2007:** AFSTA annual congress in Casablanca, Morocco.

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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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