



E-Review

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UPDATE ON AFSTA CONGRESS 2009

The ninth annual AFSTA Congress 2009 will be held at the Southern Sun Cape Sun Hotel from 2nd to 6th March 2009 in the beautiful city of Cape Town, South Africa. Preparations are underway for this important event. Mark the dates on your calendar now!



Seed people from all over Africa and overseas will meet for the ninth time to foster seed business and focus on improvement of the general framework of the seed sector within Africa and the World. Various international seed organizations and agricultural policy bodies are expected to attend to enrich the congress discussion and guide the seed industry in complying with international rules governing seed trade.

The National Organizing Committee (NOC) for the Congress 2009 has put together an exciting program for both the 2009 Congress and for the pre and post-congress tours. With its many attractions, Cape Town is a famous destination site for tourists

that is worth visiting with your family while participating in the AFSTA Congress 2009.

As in previous years, the Congress will be preceded by two interesting workshops: one on Plant Variety Protection (PVP) and one on seed treatment on 3rd March 2009.

Registration will commence early November 2008. Since accommodation will be in high demand in Cape Town, especially during the month of March, delegates are urged to register at their earliest convenience to secure rooms in the selected hotels for the AFSTA Congress 2009 at the negotiated rates. All the information will be posted on the AFSTA website (www.afsta.org) soon.

The South African seed industry, host of AFSTA Congress 2009, looks forward to welcoming the delegates and their family to Cape Town.

NEWS FROM THE SEED ASSOCIATION OF DRC (AISC)

By Mr. Pierre Bukasa, Chairman of AISC, DRC
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Seed production has been an important challenge in Democratic Republic of Congo. There is a decrease of quality and a mixture of seeds in the market due to the coexistence of various types of seed production in the country.

The basic technical requirements for good seed production are not respected because no seed quality control is enforced for most seed production. The commercial structure of seed production is at an embryonic stage and is undergoing several major challenges (e.g. absence of credit facility and marketing policy, etc.). The National Institute for Study and Agronomic Research (INERA) in charge of pre-basic and basic seed production has not been able to play its role correctly.

In addition, the difficult economic context and the general status of the country hamper the use of improved seeds by the majority of farmers to improve agricultural production, and the distribution network is practically non-existent.

To deal with this situation, the agricultural policy of the Ministry of Agriculture mobilizes the private sector through a privatization strategy of the seed production and commercialization activities.

The seed sector of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has benefited from financial support of the donors. The World Bank gave US\$ 42 million to support seed multiplication but the results have not been tangible. The Belgian Technical Cooperation has just set up a project to support the improvement of planting material with a view to reinforcing INERA and to strengthening all the key components of seed sector ranging from the seed production, seed control and certification to seed commercialization. The seed sector of DRC should benefit from these financial supports to face the major bottlenecks (technical, financial, human and institutional) which hinder its development. The national seed association of DRC (AISC) is ready to play its role to contribute to the development of the seed sector of the country.

THE DROUGHT TOLERANT MAIZE FOR AFRICA (DTMA) PROJECT

*By Dr. Wilfred Mwangi, CIMMYT
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The Drought Tolerant Maize for Africa (DTMA) Project is part of a broad partnership involving CIMMYT and IITA, National Agricultural Research System (NARS), extension, seed companies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs) and advanced research institutions (ARI). Working in 13 major maize producing countries*, the Project focuses on developing and disseminating drought tolerant maize for Africa through conventional and molecular breeding, and is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Howard G. Buffet Foundation for five years (December 2006 – November 2011). The Project has a ten-year vision of success within which it aims to:

- Generate maize germplasm with 1 ton/ha yield increase under drought stress conditions;
- Increase average maize productivity under smallholder farmer conditions by 20-30% on adopting farms;
- Reach 30-40 million farmers in sub-Saharan Africa;
- Potentially add an annual average of US\$ 160-200 million of grain in drought-affected areas.

The main activities of the Project include:

- Identifying sources with significant improved drought tolerance;
- Using modern breeding tools such as molecular tools, double haploids, bioinformatic tools to accelerate breeding gains for drought tolerance

and revised phenotyping protocols at up-graded phenotyping sites;

- Developing adapted drought tolerant germplasm;
- Training and capacity building of partners i.e. new maize breeders, technicians, seed companies and graduate students;
- Supporting variety release and scaling-up of seed production;
- Collaborating with complementary partners (NGOs and government organizations' programs) for product delivery to farmers; and targeting drought tolerant maize for impact.

Some of the key achievements of the Project, within its one and a half years are:

- Based on feedback from farmers and seed companies, project breeders chose 16 open-pollinated varieties and 20 hybrids for rapid improvement in Kenya, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe, combining drought tolerance with other desired traits like disease resistance. Also launched two new software programs - Fieldbook and MaizeFinder - available via the internet and are already being used by several NARS. Seed producers supported with breeder seed and a simple tool for planning the production of OPVs and hybrids.
- Initiated the annual "Best Maize Breeding" and "Technology Dissemination Team" awards in 2007 to recognize output-orientation and teamwork; these were won in eastern Africa respectively by Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research – Melkassa and a multi-institutional team led by the Selian Agricultural Research Institute (SARI), Tanzania.
- Inaugurated a 7-member Advisory Board comprising internationally recognized experts to provide guidance on scientific, organizational, and institutional issues.
- Conducted training and capacity building of NARS, and seed company technical teams in molecular breeding, variety testing and release approaches, econometric modeling and seed business management.
- Invested heavily into the strengthening of multi-stakeholder National Coordination Units or Maize Working Groups which bring together representatives from all national stakeholders in the maize seed value chain (seed companies, NGOS, NARS, extension, seed traders' associations and national regulatory authorities) to increase the impact of new technologies at the national level.
- Expansion and upgrading of managed drought screening/phenotyping facilities undertaken in Kenya, Mexico and Nigeria.
- Conducted in 2007 a seed sector study to identify the bottlenecks in getting seed to farmers and

received feedback from 80 seed companies and 46 NARS and NGOs in eleven countries and the policy recommendations are being compiled into a report to be released in late 2008.

On July 28, 2008 the DTMA Project will hold a one-day regional policy workshop in Nairobi, Kenya that will bring together senior policy makers to dialogue on the findings of the seed sector study and recommend policy actions for increased production and deployment of maize seed in sub-Saharan Africa by the public and private sector.

The main activities and partnerships of the Project outlined above will continue until the ten-year vision of success is realized. For more details please contact Wilfred Mwangi, DTMA Project Leader, w.mwangi@cgiar.org and visit the project website www.cimmyt.org/dtma

* Angola, Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe

AFSTA COMMUNICATION ON FOOD CRISIS

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The African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) is aware of the increased food prices in Africa and the world putting at risk the livelihood of several people. It is therefore an imperious necessity to pay particular attention to the strengthening of the agricultural sector in general and the seed sector in particular so as to prevent this food crisis or at least try to reduce its impact on the livelihood of the population especially the rural dwellers.

Indeed, 60 to 90% of the population live in rural areas and depend on subsistence agriculture while 60 to 70% of smallholder farmers sow low-yielding local seed varieties saved from their harvest. But moreover for many years, governments and donors in Africa have not supported the seed sector.

Some good varieties are currently available in Africa, but the most limiting factors are the lack of an enabling environment to develop an efficient seed industry and the difficulties to move seed between countries.

Considering the crucial role of quality seed in agriculture, AFSTA, through its 53 members represented in 28 African countries and since its creation in 2000 actively supports the promotion of agriculture by improving seed supply. To this end, it is imperative to create an enabling environment, which means, among others:

- More support to producers of good quality seeds,
- Acceleration of the harmonization process of regulations to allow access to genetic progress through new varieties and circulation of seeds between countries.

More urgently, the 27 national seed trade associations in Africa who are members of AFSTA are ready to mobilize seeds and hold out their

knowledge and efficiency in the compulsory actions to improve, now and for the future, staple food security in Africa.

To ensure that the African seed industry possesses enough superior varieties adapted to various agro ecological zones of the continent, it is important to allocate more funding to support plant breeding activities.

AFRICAN AGRICULTURE MINISTERS MET ON WORSENING FOOD SITUATION

Source: ISAAA AfriCenter, Nairobi, Kenya

African agriculture ministers met in Nairobi to discuss the worsening food security problem. The 25th Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) regional conference hoped to find solutions to the food situation that has already sparked off food riots in Kenya, Cameroon, Senegal, Egypt and Burkina Faso, and Kenya's Agriculture Minister William Ruto, who also chairs the meeting, admitted that the continent was not giving priority to the agricultural sector in their annual budgets. Kenya for instance, allocated Kenya Shillings 11.7 billion (about US\$ 186 million) to the Agriculture Ministry, a far much lower allocation compared to 42 billion (about US\$ 667 million) for the Security or Education Ministries. "Many Africa governments admit that agriculture is the engine for growth but our economies have neither allocated sufficient funds nor developed appropriate well researched policies and programs to make agriculture the focal point that it really is", Ruto said. Lack of policy implementation has increased food imports, costing Africa about \$20 billion annually since 2000. The five-day conference sought remedial measures to combat rising food shortages, costs and high fuel prices that have heightened food production and distribution costs posing a starvation threat to the region. For more information, contact Daniel Otunge (d.otunge@cgiar.org) of ISAAA AfriCenter.

PROGRESS IN HARMONIZATION OF REGIONAL SEED CERTIFICATION STANDARDS IN EAST AFRICA

By Mr. Obongo Nyachae, Secretary of EASCOM
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Seed certification in the East African Community (EAC) is undertaken by different public bodies and is governed by seed acts and regulations which are at different levels of development and enactment.

In Tanzania, Tanzania Official Seed Certification Institute (TOSCI), under the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Cooperatives (MAFC) is the regulatory institution and certification and is governed by the Seeds Act 2003 and implementing regulations of February 2007.

In Uganda, the National Seed Certification Service (NSCS) under the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) is responsible for certification services and is governed by the Seeds and Plant Act, 2007. Regulations are under preparation to operationalize this Act.

In Kenya, seed certification is regulated by the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) under the Ministry of Agriculture and is guided by the Seeds and Plant Varieties Act (Cap 326) of 1972 (Rev 1991). The Draft Seeds and Plant Varieties Act (Amendment) Bill 2007 together with its implementing regulations are with the Minister for Agriculture awaiting presentation for Cabinet approval. Kenya also has a National Seed Policy Document, which awaits government approval.

The following are the key results of regional harmonization of seed certification standards in East African Community:

- Enactment of Seed Acts in Tanzania (2003) and Uganda (2007), which very largely reflect the spirit and letter of agreements of harmonization;
- Development of National Seed Policy Document in Kenya in 2006, which has provisions for liberalization of Kenya's seed sub-sector;
- Development of Draft Seed and Plant Variety Act (Amendment) Bill 2007, in Kenya, which, provides for, among other areas agreed to harmonize:
 - o Authorization of private entities/individuals to undertake certain aspects of seed field certification services (e.g. preliminary inspections, sampling, etc.) and seed testing;
 - o Inclusion of private seed sector players in regulatory committees e.g. National Variety Release Committee and Seed Regulations Committee;
 - o Incorporation of agreed regional certification standards of 10 crops in Seeds Regulations or Draft Regulations
- Putting up institutional frameworks to ensure independent variety evaluation, release and registration process, notably, the legal provision in Tanzania's Seed Act of 2003, to give TOSCI full autonomy to undertake National Variety Performance testing and recommendation for release, as is the case in Kenya, where KEPHIS has the mandate to validate suitability of new varieties before release. *(A similar process is underway in Uganda to remove NARO from testing and chairing variety release as this creates a conflict of interest with private sector breeders;*
- Undertaking joint field inspections on selected food crops in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania in

2005/06 to test how harmonization is functioning on the ground, using three inspectors from Kenya, three each from Uganda and Tanzania and one from Rwanda. *(A report prepared by the inspection team from these four countries identified major weaknesses and strengths and proposed ways to address the weakness and build on the strengths);*

- Publication of the harmonized regional certification standards for the 10 crops selected for harmonization for Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda.

Despite these successes, there are still areas which need to be addressed to improve access to improved varieties. In particular, there is need to complete the process of amending the Seeds and Plant Varieties Act (Cap 326) in Kenya to incorporate the liberalized seed industry and entrench the agreements on harmonization. The Seed Policy Document also needs to be officially approved, though sections of it are already being implemented, using the general liberalization policy guidelines of 1996. There is also a strong need to build capacity for certification services particularly in Uganda, and to strengthen these services in Tanzania to enhance field inspection and laboratory testing of seeds for both National Seed Certification Services and seed companies.

Upcoming events:

- **31st July to 1st August 2008:** AGM of EASCOM in Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia.
- **13th to 14th October 2008:** AFSTA Board of Directors' meeting, Mombasa, Kenya.
- **9th to 13th November 2008:** APSA annual Congress 2008 in Hyderabad, India.
- **2nd to 6 March 2009:** AFSTA annual Congress in Cape Town, South Africa.

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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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