



# E-Review

## Electronic Newsletter of the African Seed Trade Association

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### **AFSTA CONGRESS 2006 PREPARATION ON TRACK**

As directed by the General Assembly 2005 of the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) held on 18th March 2005 in Yaoundé, Cameroon, the venue of the sixth AFSTA annual congress will be the Imperial Resort Beach Hotel in Entebbe, Uganda from 28<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006. The National Organizing Committee (NOC) has been working hard to prepare for this international annual event for the African seed industry so that the congress meets every one's expectations. The NOC would like to cordially invite all the seed stakeholders to advance the cause of the African seed industry by being there. We do hope that you will not miss this opportunity to visit Uganda to enjoy its beauty and to see its vibrant seed industry. It will also be an opportunity to make contact and/or reinforce the business relationship with seed people. Apart from important topics that will be on the agenda of AFSTA congress 2006, seminars will be organized on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2006 to empower the competence of the African seed industry. The topics to be addressed during this training will be carefully selected in close collaboration with international organization and regional seed associations. With a view to serving better AFSTA members and the participants, the registration to AFSTA Congress 2006 will be handled by AFSTA Secretariat in Nairobi. It will make

efforts to ensure that this innovation will meet the expectations of all the participants. Online registration will be available and payment of the financial transactions for the congress using credit cards will be possible. All the details on the AFSTA congress 2006 will be soon posted at AFSTA website [www.afsta.org](http://www.afsta.org).

***By Ms. Josephine Okot, Chairperson of NO for AFSTA Congress 2006***

### **ECOWAS MEMBER STATES HARMONIZE THEIR SEED SYSTEMS**

In the process of implementing its agricultural policy (APU), the Economic and Monetary Union of West Africa (UEMOA) initiated the harmonization of the national seed regulatory frameworks in its member States in January 2004 with the support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations (FAO), the International Center for Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development (IFDC) and the West Africa Seed and Planting Material Network (WASNET). Based on the conclusion and recommendations of its first regional workshop held on 27-29 January 2004 in Dakar, Senegal, UEMOA proposed two documents on a common and harmonized regulatory framework for the control and certification of seeds and for the regional variety catalogue. These documents were validated by the UEMOA member States in Lomé on 25 – 26 November 2004. Subsequently, the

need arose to extend the UEMOA initiative to cover all the 15 ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) member States after the adoption of its Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) in January 2005.

The ECOWAS agricultural policy (ECOWAP) is articulated around three complementary axes of intervention, namely (1) Improvement of the productivity and competitiveness of agriculture, (2) Implementation of the intra-community trade regime, and (3) Adaptation of the external trade regime according to the specific circumstances of the agricultural sector. One of the key components of the first axis of intervention is the adoption and the implementation of common regulatory frameworks for ensuring fair competition between agricultural input producers and dealers while protecting farmers and consumers against abuses and dangerous practices.

The species identified as priority for the sub-region and will be considered for the harmonization program are the following:

- **Cereals** : rice, maize, sorghum and millet
- **Legumes** : groundnut and cowpea
- **Roots and tubers** : cassava, yam and Irish potato
- **Vegetables** : tomato and onion

To start with, ECOWAS officials, in collaboration with various international and regional partners, organized a technical workshop from 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> September 2005 in Accra, Ghana, in which seed experts from 7 countries, which are not members of UEMOA (Those which did not participate in November 2004 workshop in Lomé, Togo) and the representatives of Guinea Bissau (also absent during Lomé

workshop) actively participated to examine the two documents. Their inputs will be taken into consideration so that the final documents will be produced. To avoid a possible discrepancy in the same sub-region, the ongoing harmonization process undertaken by CILSS (Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel) has been considered and a close collaboration between all concerned parties has been strengthened for a better coordination. ECOWAS would then organize another workshop in which seed experts from 15 members States will participate to validate the final documents. It would take place on 15 and 16 December 2005 in Lomé, Togo.

*By Mr. Justin Rakotoarisaona  
Secretary General of AFSTA*

#### **TECHNICAL EXPERTS AGREE ON HARMONIZED SADC SEED SYSTEMS**

SADC (South African Development Community) Seed Security Network (SSSN) has taken leadership to harmonize the seed systems such as Variety Release, Seed Certification, Quality Assurance and Phytosanitary issue, which will improve movement of seed between SADC Member States when implemented. This will promote seed trade and availability of good quality seed to farmers, which will ultimately foster the agricultural development of the SADC. Technical experts on seed issues at their last meeting from 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> July 2005 in Lusaka, Zambia agreed on the proposed harmonized SADC Seed Systems and SSSN was given a mandate to take these technical proposals to the Permanent Secretaries, Directors of Phytosanitary and Policy and Planning in the Ministries of Agriculture for further consultations at policy level. The process of consultation has already started with visits to Angola, Malawi, Mozambique,

South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe and the remaining Member States will be visited in October 2005 and this will include Madagascar which was admitted into SADC as a member in August, 2005. A workshop is planned for these authorities 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> December 2005 in Maputo, Mozambique to discuss the technical agreements and agree on a way forward.

The SSSN has currently developed technical proposals for harmonization of seed regulation in the following areas:

### Variety Release System

Various systems of variety release operative in the SADC Member States delay and sometimes prevent varieties to be released. This denies farmers' access to new varieties and increasingly limiting their choices of seed varieties. Further, the system is costly, duplicates efforts and delays returns on investment.

The proposed system of variety release seeks to enhance the process of release of seed varieties in the SADC region to the benefit of farmers and variety owners. Some of the features of the system include:

- (i) The SADC Seed Security Network (SSSN), on behalf, and under the supervision of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resources (FANR) Directorate of SADC Secretariat will be designated to manage the SADC Regional Variety Release System during its formation;
- (ii) Testing and release of varieties will be done in two countries at least for two seasons, including the country of application, by independent competent agricultural organizations (public or private) taking into account the broader environments that cut across countries;

- (iii) The SSSN will register in the SADC Variety Catalogue successfully released varieties and such varieties will be eligible for use in all SADC Member States, effectively abolishing the need for further testing of such varieties. A variety will only need to be tested and released once and will have wide usage in the region.

### Seed Certification and quality Assurance System

Seed experts agreed to adopt a common SADC seed certification scheme based on Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). This will facilitate that all SADC Member States will have a common test procedure and naming of seed classes as shown in table below:

Seed Class	Code	Produced from	Label Colors
Pre-basic	A	Breeder's Seed	Violet band on white
Basic	B	Pre-Basic or Breeder's Seed	White
Certified Seed (1 <sup>st</sup> Gen.)	C1	Basic or higher seed classes	Blue
Certified Seed (2 <sup>nd</sup> Gen.)	C2	C1 or higher classes of seed	Red
Quality Declared Seed	QDS	Complies with special requirements	Green

In implementing the SADC Seed Certification Scheme, experts further proposed minimum standards.

### Phytosanitary for seed System

Phytosanitary experts in the region reviewed pests currently subjected to import and export controls in seed trade and they have shown that most of these pests are common in all SADC Member

States and neither are they seed borne of economic importance. The pest list to be checked for seed moving to regional trade has been elaborated. This is a much reduced list and inspectors will only have a few pests to check from and this will speed up the process of inspections at the points of entry.

**By Mr. Daniso Mbewe, Database and Information Office, SADC**

### **PLANT HORMONE RECEPTOR DISCOVERY COULD LEAD TO BETTER CROPS**

Plants produce their own hormones as they grow, develop, and respond to environmental stimuli. One of these is gibberellin, which can induce, among others, seed germination, stem elongation, leaf expansion, pollen maturation, and flowering. How gibberellin is made has been well studied and characterized. How it is sensed and transmitted to induce plant growth, however, is still a mystery. In the latest issue of Nature, Miyako Ueguchi-Tanaka and colleagues find that "GIBBERELLIN INSENSITIVE DWARF1 encodes a soluble receptor for gibberellin." Since plant breeders often prefer semi-dwarf varieties of cereal crops to double their grain production, and since these varieties are often deficient in gibberellin, such findings can aid scientists in producing higher-yielding crops. As researchers mapped genes in rice mutants, they found a gene called *GID1*, whose sequence was similar to genes belonging to a hormone receptor family, and which they surmised would code for gibberellin receptors that would make plant cells sense the presence of the hormone. They also found that

underexpression of the gene produced a severe rice dwarf with wide, dark green leaves; while overexpression resulted in long, spindly rice, typical of gibberellin overdosed plants. Read the supplementary article at <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v437/n7059/full/437627a.html>.

**Source: CropBiotech Update of ISAAA, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2005.**

#### **Upcoming events:**

- **17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> October 2005:** Training on Material Transfer Agreement and Coexistence of GM and non-GM seeds followed by the meeting with International Research Centers (CGIAR) in Nairobi, Kenya.
- **20<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> October 2005:** AFSTA Board meeting in Nairobi, Kenya
- **7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> November 2005:** ASPA congress 2005 in Shanghai, China.
- **15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> December:** Workshop on modern biotechnology in Tunis, Tunisia.
- **26<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> January 2006:** ISTA workshop on Purity, Nakuru, Kenya.

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#### **Disclaimer:**

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