

# AFSTA CONGRESS 2006 PRESS RELEASE

31<sup>st</sup> March 2006 – Entebbe, Uganda

- **Introduction**

AFSTA, the African Seed Trade Association, represents the seed industry in Africa and the Indian Ocean islands. AFSTA now has 60 members in 30 countries. It is a non-profit, non-political association with a mission to promote development of seed industry and national seed associations, which will facilitate farmers' access to improved varieties.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Congress held in Entebbe, Uganda, on March 28 – 31, 2006, was officially opened by The Right Honorable Prime Minister, Prof. Apolo Nsibambi, on behalf of the President of the Republic of Uganda. He emphasized the key role played by seeds in agricultural development and called upon all the seed stakeholders to join hands in promoting the use of high quality seeds in Africa.

This congress 2006 attracted 118 delegates from 31 countries. Delegates included representatives from regional and international bodies such as:

ASARECA – Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa  
AU – African Union  
ISF – International Seed Federation  
ISTA – International Seed Testing Association  
OECD – Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development  
USAID – United States Agency for International Development  
WASNET – West African Seed and Planting Material Network

- **Topics**

The morning of the day of 28<sup>th</sup> March 2006 was reserved for a half-day ISTA facilitated regional workshop on “how to install ISTA accreditation for governmental and seed company testing laboratories”. The Secretary of ISTA, Dr. Michael Muschick, facilitated the workshop and replied to various questions from the participants. Interesting discussions took place mainly about the practical aspects of the accreditation of the seed laboratories and its importance.

The afternoon of the day of 28<sup>th</sup> March was reserved for a half-day Cornell University facilitated workshop on Seed of Development Program (SODP). The program aimed at helping the small and medium seed companies in Africa to improve their efficiency mainly from financial and managerial point of view.

The first topic of the Congress was about “Financing for private sector investment in Africa with reference to agricultural sector in general and with the seed sector in particular”. It was obvious from the discussions that lack of financing is a serious impediment for the development of the agricultural sector in general and the seed sector in particular.

The second topic about “New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) - Brief on Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) and Aligning the Seed Industry for its implementation” was meant to brief the seed sector to understand this important program for the development of agriculture in Africa. It highlighted the main components of the program and its objectives, which can be summarized as the betterment of the livelihood of African population through a better agricultural productivity.

The third topic was about “Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA): Developing trade capacity for market access”, which gave an overview of COMESA, its progress made in trade capacity building for market access, and its opportunities and challenges.

The fourth topic talked about the “importance and interests of seed treatments for sustainable agriculture”. The objectives of seed treatments, its evolution, operator and user safety and its final impacts on the seed industry were explained.

The fifth topic covered “Agricultural Investment Opportunities in Uganda”, which permitted the participants to be aware of the opportunities of investing in Uganda in various sectors of activities and its achievements.

The sixth topic covered “Facilitating access to publicly available germplasm to support the development of the seed industry”. Constraints to the seed sector in general and to access publicly available germplasm were mentioned together with possible solutions. Participants debated among other issues the establishment of the Foundation Seed Enterprise as a link between the public plant breeding and the commercial seed companies with a view to taking performing public varieties to the hands of farmers.

The seventh topic was “Challenges of the seed market in Africa for seed companies: discussions and recommendations on the way forward” during which a lively discussion took place so that the African seed industry can face the challenges which include: variety release, realistic demand, seed marketing, seed price, regional seed trade barriers, plant variety protection and biotechnology.

The eighth and last topic dealt with the coexistence “situation of harmonization of seed policy and regulations, including biotechnology, in Africa”. Representatives from the three sub-regions in Sub-Saharan Africa i.e. Southern African Development Community (SADC), Eastern Africa and Western Africa presented their achievements followed by discussion panel during which efforts for coordination of the actions amongst the organizations involved in the harmonization process were reached so that they are more efficient.

All the papers of AFSTA Congress 2006 are available on request at AFSTA Secretariat ([afsta@afsta.org](mailto:afsta@afsta.org)).

- **Capacity building and partnership in 2005**

The creation and reinforcement of national seed associations in Africa was among the priorities of AFSTA in 2005 in collaboration with various partners. With SCOSA (Sustainable Commercialization of Seeds in Africa) program, training on coexistence of Genetically Modified with Conventional seeds and on Material Transfer Agreement were conducted in Nairobi, Kenya in October 2005. This was followed by a dialog between the private seed sector and representatives of International Agricultural Research Centers of the CGIAR whose goals were to inform the seed sector about the availability of germplasm entrusted with those Centers. AFSTA also worked in partnership with sub-regional and international organizations to implement seed related projects, among others the harmonization of seed legislation in the sub-regions. The production of statistical database on the African seed industry has also been among the priorities of AFSTA using its website [www.afsta.org](http://www.afsta.org) to facilitate the collection of the data.

- **AFSTA objectives**

Objectives for AFSTA continue to be the organization of technical training related to seeds to build capacity of its members in 2006/2007, among others strengthening the knowledge of its membership about seed quality insurance management, seed association management, seed marketing and business plan. AFSTA will strive to increase its membership for its financial

stability. It will continue to actively support the seed legislation harmonization process in the sub-regions.

- **New membership**

New members approved by the General Assembly include:

Ordinary members:

- Mount Elgon Seeds – a private seed company, Uganda
- Riverwalks Seeds and Grains – a private seed company, South Africa
- National Seed Association of Burkina Faso (UNPSB), Burkina Faso

Associate member:

- Sustainable Commercialization of Seed in Africa (SCOSA), Kenya

- **Elections**

The General Assembly (GA) 2006 elected Mr. Enock Chikava (Malawi) and Mr. Mr. Dominic Gitau (Kenya) to join the AFSTA Board.

The composition of AFSTA Board members for 2006/2007 elected by the General Assembly is therefore as follows:

Mr. Mark Sachs	President, South Africa
Mr. Marcel Kanungwe	Vice-President, Zambia
Mr. Raouf Ghariani	Past President, Tunisia
Mr. Dominique Gitau	Member, Kenya
Mr. Amadou M. Djigo	Member, Senegal
Mr. Enock Chikava	Member, Malawi
Mr. François Burgaud	Associate member, France
Mr. Alexis Ellicott	Associate member, USA

- **Position papers**

The General Assembly adopted three position papers on Modern Biotechnology, on International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture of the FAO, and on the Coexistence of Genetically Modified and Conventional seeds, which are all available on request at AFSTA Secretariat and at [www.afsta.org](http://www.afsta.org).

- **Venue and date for AFSTA Congress 2007**

The General Assembly confirmed that the seventh AFSTA annual congress 2007 will be held in Livingstone, Zambia from 27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

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**Secretary General of AFSTA**