

AFSTA CONGRESS 2005 PRESS RELEASE

18th March 2005 – Yaoundé, Cameroon

AFSTA, the African Seed Trade Association, represents the seed industry in Africa and Indian Ocean islands. AFSTA now has 56 members in 29 countries. It is a non-profit, non-political association with its mission to promote development of seed industries and national seed associations, which will facilitate farmers' access to improved varieties.

New members approved by the General Assembly include:

Ordinary members:

- Seed Association of Congo (ACSDA), Congo
- Seed Association of DRC (AISC), Democratic Republic of Congo
- Seed Trade Association of Malawi (STAM), Malawi
- TROPICASEM, Senegal

Associate members:

- National Federation of Professionals of vegetable and flower seeds, France
- Hoopman O&O b.v. The Netherlands

The 5th Annual Congress held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on March 16 – 18, 2005, attracted 97 delegates from 35 countries. Delegates included representatives from regional and international bodies such as:

ISF – International Seed Federation

OECD – Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

ISTA – International Seed Testing Association

UPOV – Union for the Protection of New Plant varieties

OAPI – African Organization for Intellectual Property

ASARECA – Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa

IFDC – International Center for Soil Fertility Management and Agricultural Development

AU – African Union

The morning of the day of 15th March 2005 was reserved for a half-day UPOV facilitated regional workshop on the protection of new plant varieties. Apart from the presentation made by the Vice Secretary General of UPOV, other speakers also presented the situation of the protection of new plant varieties in their sub-region such as the African Organization for Intellectual Property Rights (OAPI) for 16 countries in West Africa and the Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO) in Europe. Interesting discussions took place mainly about the practical aspects of the protection of new plant varieties.

The afternoon of the day of 15th March was reserved for a half-day Syngenta facilitated workshop on cotton seeds. Experts from Syngenta presented the workshop, which was an opportunity for the participants to learn more about the latest developments on seed treatment in general and cotton seed treatment in particular.

The first topic of the congress was about "Vegetable seed trade in Africa: Economic importance, market analysis and way forward". Vegetable seeds are of significant importance from economic point of view and for the health of the African population. Africa mainly imports its vegetable seeds. The way to strengthen cooperation between various partners was discussed.

The second topic about “Intellectual Property Rights” was meant to strengthen the knowledge of the participants i.e. its principle, its advantages, and its practical implementation along with the code of conduct.

The third topic was about “Material Transfer Agreement (MTA)”. An overview of the MTA afforded the participants to better understand its mechanism and the discussion provided an opportunity for the delegates to grasp more detail on how this relates to the seed industry.

The technical committees established within AFSTA were analyzed during one plenary session as the fourth topic. It was concluded that specific working groups would be more efficient for identified specific topics of interests to the African seed industry. A brain storming was conducted by the President of AFSTA during which AFSTA members present and other participants defined the way forward for the working groups in cooperation with AFSTA Secretariat.

The fifth topic covered “Accreditation”, which was an overview of the accreditation system including the factors that impact its viability. Participants had the opportunity to actively involve in constructive debates on the subject and in the exchange of views; a better understanding was achieved regarding this relatively new topic in Africa.

The sixth topic covered “arbitration rules” during which the needs for rules, ISF rules, dispute settlement, and some statistics were presented, among others. It enabled participants to understand the principles and the implementation process including the nomination of the arbitrators and their code of ethics.

The seventh topic was “Biosafety regulations and stewardship” dealing with international instruments and model for national regulations and stewardship. Among others, the Cartagena protocol on Biosafety was explained with its implementation procedure and various requirements at different stages from cultivation to storage as well as the labeling system.

The final topic dealt with the coexistence of genetically modified and conventional seeds. Identity preservation, coexistence in Africa, coexistence and the value chain, contamination and the impact on the value chain, cost of coexistence as well as some recommendations were covered during this presentation.

All the papers of AFSTA congress 2005 are available on request at AFSTA Secretariat (afsta@afsta.org).

The creation and reinforcement of national seed associations in Africa was among the priorities of AFSTA in 2004. In 2004, with funding from the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA), AFSTA organized training courses in English in seed association management in Nairobi, Kenya and six countries (The Gambia, Swaziland, Congo, Algeria, Malawi, and Democratic Republic of Congo) were targeted for the creation of the national seed associations of which three national seed associations (Congo, Malawi and DRC) have already joined AFSTA. With funding from CropLife, a workshop on modern biotechnology was conducted in French in Dakar, Senegal) to reinforce the capacity of seed stakeholders form this sub-region. AFSTA also worked in partnership with sub-regional and international organizations to implement seed related projects, among others the harmonization process of the seed legislation in the sub-regions. The production of statistical database on the African seed industry has been also among the priorities of AFSTA using its website (www.afsta.org) to facilitate the collection of the data.

Objectives for AFSTA continue to be the organization of technical training related to seeds to build capacity of its members in 2005/2006, among others expanding information to its membership on Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) and Coexistence of Genetically Modified

and non-Genetically modified seeds. 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.

The General Assembly (GA) 2005 elected Mr. Marcel Kanungwe (Zambia) and Mr. Amadou Moustapha Djigo to join the AFSTA Board.

The composition of AFSTA Board members for 2005/2006 elected by the General Assembly is therefore as follows:

Mr. Raouf Ghariani	President, Tunisia
Mr. Mark Sachs	Vice-President, South Africa
Mr. Guy Blaise Satsa	Past President, Cameroon
Mr. Hatem Quneby	Member, Egypt
Ms. Josephine Okot	Member, Uganda
Mr. Dominique Gitau	Member, Kenya
Mr. Eddy Randrianatsimbazafy	Member, Madagascar
Mr. Marcel Kanungwe	Member, Zambia
Mr. Amadou M. Djigo	Member, Senegal
Mr. François Burgaud	Member, France
Mr. Mark Condon	Member, USA

The General Assembly adopted a position paper on Intellectual Property rights.

The General Assembly confirmed that the sixth AFSTA annual congress 2006 will be held in Entebbe, Uganda from 28th to 31st March 2006.

M. Raouf Ghariani
President of AFSTA

M. Justin J. Rakotoarisaona
Secretary General of AFSTA