



THE AFRICAN SEED TRADE ASSOCIATION

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MEDIA RELEASE FOR AFSTA CONGRESS 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AFSTA Congress 2022, a global show piece for the African seed sector, was opened on Wednesday, 2nd March 2022 by the Prof Mohamed Habib Ben Jamaa, the Director General of Plant Health and Control of Agricultural Inputs of the Ministry of Agriculture of Tunisia

DJERBA, MARCH 3, 2022 – The African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) Annual Congress, which ended today, March 3, 2022, was yet another memorable gathering of the seed sector in the region.

The event, which was held at Royal Garden Palace in Djerba, Tunisia, a location surrounded by the beautiful sandy beaches of Tunisia's Mediterranean coast was attended by nearly 180 delegates representing seed traders and producers from various regions of the world.

The Guest of Honour, Prof Mohamed Habib Ben Jamaa, Director General of Plant Health and Control of Agricultural Inputs told the delegates that Tunisia has been committed since the 1970s to setting up a system of multiplication and certification of cereal seeds in accordance with international standards (start of the national program in 1976). The current rate of use of certified cereal seeds is around 18%, the medium-term objective is to reach a rate of 25%.

He added that the country has taken regulatory measures to encourage and subsidize stakeholders crop production efforts such include farmers, promoters and producer organizations.

Thanks to the registration and introduction of new varieties, Tunisia has experienced a spectacular boom in greenhouse crops and geothermal crops, which contributed to satisfying national needs and to the growth of exports from market garden products.

The congress, which saw the transition of leadership at AFSTA from Azariah Soi from Kenya to Dr Kulani Machaba from South Africa. In his acceptance speech, Dr Machaba, the new AFSTA President, noted that his tenure will seek to move the current Strategic Plan forward with speed. He expressed faith that the Plan's mission of creating the best environment for trade and innovation in quality seed for the benefit of members and farmers in Africa shall be achieved. This he noted, would be executed by improving services rendered to AFSTA members, promote cross-border movement of quality seed in Africa, improve partnerships and collaboration with various stakeholders in seed trade and create a right environment that promotes innovation in the African Seed Trade. He thanked his predecessor, Mr Azariah Soi for

a job well done and Mr Riadh Gabsi the immediate past president and President of Tunisia Seed Trade Association for the success of the Congress 2022, Board of directors and the AFSTA Secretariat for their great work.

He also thanked the Organising Committee for the 2022 Congress, sponsors and all delegates for their support and attendance.

During the Congress, various presentations were made.

Dr Simplicite Nouala Fonkou, Head of Agriculture and Food Security Division, African Union Commission said that continental guidelines on the use of Biotechnology for Food and Agriculture are on the way. It will address issues such as Trade-related transboundary movements of genetically engineered products; A functional biosafety regulatory system; Confined Field Trials of Genetically Modified crops and Public awareness and participation in biotechnology.

In his presentation, Dr Yacouba Diallo, Seed Expert from CORAF observed that his organisation had compiled data on released varieties as well as generated the regional catalogue from some of the national catalogues.

“We also use a web-based system to facilitate the recording of plant species and varieties in the countries catalogues of the regional one,” added Dr Diallo.

Support that CORAF/ECOWAS extend to members include Advocacy and sensitization engagements with policy makers; policy reforms toward the implementation of the harmonized regulations; trainings and capability actors and systems: quality seed production, business management, Plant Vartiey Protection, etc.; development and validation of the harmonized executive regulations and protocols.

This year, the Congress addressed issues facing the African seed industry such as:

- Regulatory approaches on Plant Breeding Innovation by Dr Leena Tripathi from International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) – Eastern Africa Hub in Tanzania.
- Challenges and opportunities for the use of e-Phyto in the seed trade in Africa by Mr Eric Quaye, Head of Plant Protection and Regulatory Services Directorate (PPSRD) in Ghana.
- Development of rice seed systems in Africa by Dr. Ajay Panchbhai – International Rice Research Institute (IRRI).
- Statistics on the formal seed sector in Africa by The African Seed Access Index (TASAI).
- Missing links and opportunities for seed companies in legume seed business viability in Africa by Mr. Jean Claude Rubyogo – Global Bean Program Leader of Alliance of Biodiversity International and CIAT & Pan-Africa Bean Research Alliance (PABRA) Director.
- The African seed sector vis-à-vis the global seed trade – Latest developments by International Seed Federation’s Michael Keller.

- Realization of farmers' Rights in Africa under the framework of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA).
- Progress on the implementation of the harmonized seed regulations at the Regional Economic Communities (ECOWAS and COMESA).
- Latest developments on various seed related regulatory frameworks at the African Union: continental guidelines and harmonization by Dr Simplicie Nouala Fonkou.

Like in the past, the Djerba Congress 2022 was a magnificent forum to explore more seed businesses and strengthen the network among the seed stakeholders.

The association was started in March 2000 in Pretoria, South Africa and it meets annually around the first week of March. It has 120 members of which 27 are African national seed trade associations.

The next Congress will be held in Dakar, Senegal, from 6th to 9th March 2023.

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***About AFSTA:** AFSTA is a not-for-profit membership association which champions the interests of private seed companies in Africa. It is registered in Kenya as an International Organization.*