



Seed Update

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SADC FANR Ministers Approve SADC Harmonised Seed Regulatory System

Southern African Development Community (SADC) Secretariat through Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR) Directorate presented the SADC Harmonised Seed Regulatory System to SADC FANR Ministers at a meeting held on 29th June 2007 in Lusaka, Zambia.

At this meeting Ministers noted that Senior Officials of Agriculture at their meeting of 18-19 September 2006 agreed to harmonise the Seed Regulatory System. The system comprises the following:

i) SADC Variety Release System – The main feature of this system is that seed of any new variety that has been tested and released in two SADC Member States, and listed in the SADC Common Catalogue, shall be allowed to be marketed in any SADC Member State with similar agro-ecological regions without any more testing. Currently new varieties of seed have to be tested for at least 2 - 4 years before they can be considered for release. In the proposed system, new and existing varieties

of crops will gain access to SADC countries quickly since the restrictions imposed by the current national legislations on variety testing and release will no longer be valid. Implementation of the SADC variety release system will increase the number of varieties available to farmers, promote investment into the seed sector, and will make it easier and cheaper for Seed Companies to introduce seed varieties in other SADC Member States.

ii) SADC Seed Certification and Quality Assurance System – Variations in the certification and quality assurance systems among Member States makes it difficult to compare the quality and classes of seed between countries. It also increases the cost of seed when traded across borders because of the need to establish the quality of the seed based on the importing country's standards. The seed certification and quality assurance system will reduce costs and promote seed trade through production and sale of consistently high quality seed using common terminologies, standards, procedures, seals and labels throughout the region.

The system will have the following seed certification classes: Breeder Seed, Pre-basic seed, Basic Seed, Certified Seed (1st Generation), Certified Seed (2nd Generation) and Quality Declared Seed. Seed traded in the region will have to meet the minimum laboratory standards as formulated under the System.

iii) SADC Phytosanitary Measures for Seed System – The system proposes the use of common quarantine and phytosanitary measures as well as a rationalised pest list to guide the safe movement of seed between Member States and also from outside SADC. This will be supported by science-based common standards and procedures as well as efficient phytosanitary documentation based on the rationalised pest list.

IN THIS ISSUE

SADC FANR Ministers Approve SADC Harmonised Seed Regulatory System	-1
UPOV Regional Seminar on Plant Variety Protection and DUS Examination and Data Management	-2
Training Workshop on Web-based Seed Catalogue and Database in Support of Regional Variety Release in Sub-Saharan Africa	-3
Establishment of SADC Seed Centre on the Cards	-4

At this meeting Ministers also noted that when the system is adopted, Member States will have to amend their national legislations in order to accommodate the SADC Harmonised Seed Regulatory System.

At this meeting Ministers also noted that before the SADC Harmonised Seed Regulatory System can be effected in Member States, all the countries will be required to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will facilitate the implementation of the system. To this effect, a draft MOU has been produced by the Secretariat which will be finalized after receiving inputs from Member States.

Ministers further noted that the SADC Secretariat is also developing a framework of Plant Breeders' Rights legislation, which will be used by Member States to develop their own and enact such legislation.

Ministers directed SADC Secretariat to ensure that issues of genetic piracy are addressed through the

proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Breeders Rights. The MoU will be circulated to Member States for approval at the next meeting.

At this meeting Ministers approved the SADC Harmonised Seed Regulatory System, comprising the following:

- i) SADC Variety Release System
- ii) SADC Seed Certification System
- iii) SADC Phytosanitary for Seed System

Ministers also encouraged Member States to increase investment in the seed sector and promote the use of quality seeds at subsidised prices.

Ministers urged Member States to amend their national legislation in line with the SADC Harmonised Seed Regulatory System. Ministers referred the SADC Harmonised Seed Regulatory System to Council for approval.

UPOV Regional Seminar on Plant Variety Protection and Workshop on DUS Examination and Data Management

A Regional Seminar on Plant Variety Protection under the International Union for the Protection of New varieties of Plants (UPOV) Convention and Workshop on DUS Examination and Data Management was held at the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Services (KEPHIS), Nairobi, Kenya, 5-8 June 2007.



Participants to a UPOV Regional Seminar and Workshop, Nairobi, Kenya

The regional seminar and workshop were attended by officials responsible for administration of plant breeders' rights or who may be involved in plant breeders' rights in future; officials responsible for agriculture or intellectual property rights in areas related to plant breeders' rights; and experts responsible for the examination or testing of

distinctness, uniformity and stability (DUS) and related administration or who may be involved in these activities in the near future. The officials were drawn from 14 countries in Africa namely: Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Also in attendance were representatives from East and Central Africa, Southern Africa Development Community and West Africa Economic Communities, African Seed Trade Association and Iowa State University.

Presentations for both regional seminar and workshop were made by experts from UPOV Office, Republic of Korea, France, the Netherlands, European Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO), the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), Iowa State University and Kenya. The format for the regional seminar and workshop were presentations, discussions, conduction of assignments by participants and field visit to observe and record characteristics for maize and chick pea.

The regional seminar and workshop was opened by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kenya, Dr. Romano Kiome.

The objectives of the regional seminar and workshop were to provide participants with information on:

- UPOV and the UPOV system;
- the plant variety protection situation in the region;

- the impact of plant variety protection;
- the interface between the UPOV Convention and other international treaties;
- the basic principles of examination of distinctness, uniformity, and stability (DUS test);
- arranging DUS tests;
- experience and cooperation in DUS testing;
- the practical examination of characteristics and the use of UPOV Test Guidelines;
- trial design, data analysis and assessment of distinctness and uniformity; and
- variety denomination requirements and the UPOV CD-ROM Plant Variety Database.

Participants expressed appreciation to the UPOV for organizing the seminar and workshop in cooperation with the KEPHIS with financial support from the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), CIMMYT, ICRISAT and Iowa State University and the Republic of Kenya for hosting the events.

Training Workshop on Web-based Seed Catalogue and Database in Support of Regional Variety Release in Sub-Saharan Africa

Three Regional Economic communities (RECs) namely: East and Central Community, Southern African Development Community and West African Economic and Monetary Union/Economic Community of West African States/Interstate Committee for drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) have developed a Web-based Seed Catalogue and Database in Support of Regional Variety Release in the three RECs.



Participants to a Training Workshop, Addis Abbaba, Ethiopia

The training workshop was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 11-13 June 2007, attended by representatives from regional groupings, Iowa State University (ISU), Food Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA).

The training workshop was opened by Mr. Tall Aguibou, Head of Administration, International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The objectives of the workshop included:

- Presentation of ILRI-developed draft software for the regional seed catalogue and database based on practical cases;
- Introduction of the management system and technologies for the regional seed catalogue and database; and
- Reviewing the web-based seed catalogue and database.

The training workshop was conducted by the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and is facilitating development of the Web-based regional Seed catalogue and database.

ILRI has been asked to finalise the Web-based Seed Catalogue and Database and implementation is scheduled to start in September, 2007 with Southern African Development Community with other RECs in December 2007.

The training workshop was organized by ILRI and Sustainable Commercialisation of Seeds in Africa (SCOSA) with financial support from SCOSA.

Establishment of SADC Seed Centre on the Cards

***Mr. Thabo Ramashala, Director of Plant Production,
Department of Agriculture, South Africa***

Mr. Thabo Ramashala, Director of Plant Production in the Department of Agriculture, South Africa opened the Consultative Meeting on Formulation of Second Phase of the SADC Seed Security Network held from 28 to 29 May 2007 in Pretoria, South Africa.

He said it was crucial to spell out next phase of the SSSN to build on achievements of the network made so far. He said South Africa is committed to the network and pledged support and gave total blessings to the continuation of the SSSN and hoped other Member States would support the formulation of the second phase. He said it was difficult to talk about harmonization previously but last year Permanent Secretaries of Agriculture approved harmonization of seed regulations and this was a big milestone and they recommended that the harmonized system be presented to Ministers of Agriculture for approval.

He acknowledged that challenges of implementation of the harmonized system exist but while we need to highlight these challenges, encouraged the meeting to concentrate on common understanding so that we could move ahead. He urged the meeting to prepare Ministers for their meeting by stressing the importance of harmonization as the region is faced with challenges of food insecurity and poverty.

Speaking at the same function on behalf of the Executive Secretary of SADC, the Senior Programme Manager, Crop Development Unit addressed delegates in the opening remarks. He said that the project has achieved a number of

milestones for the past three years it has been in operation. He informed delegates that financial support by Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (SDC) came to an end on 31 December 2006. It was for this reason that the SDC and Steering Committee of the project approved a No-cost Extension of the project to 31 March 2008 so that the momentum of the project should not be lost hence the need for the second phase of the project. He said that without second phase of the project, what has been achieved in the past three years would be of no value and a waste. He asked the delegates to spell out what they want the network to accomplish in the next phase without being limited with what was in the draft document that was going to be discussed.



Group Discussing Draft Second Phase of the SSSN Document, Pretoria, South Africa

The meeting endorsed what was proposed in the document and made improvements to it and stressed the need to prioritise implementation of the activities starting with implementation of the harmonized seed system. One of the key recommendations of meeting was that they wanted the Project Management Unit of the SSSN be transformed into SADC Seed Centre, an autonomous organisation in terms of operations while still under direction of the SADC Secretariat on issues of policy.

The meeting was well attended by the public and private sectors from the South African Development Community Member States.

The meeting was facilitated with the financial support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.