



# E-Review

**Electronic Newsletter of the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA)**

**December 2007**

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## **INVITATION TO AFSTA CONGRESS 2008**



**Mr. Mark Sachs, President of AFSTA**

Dear Friends and Colleagues,  
After a successful congress 2007 held in Livingstone, Zambia, the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) is planning another exciting congress 2008, which will gather delegates from Africa and the rest of the world. It will be held at Hotel Rivoli from 26 to 29<sup>th</sup> February 2008 in the beautiful town of Casablanca in Morocco. As Morocco is also a tourist destination, you will be able to combine your business trip with exploring the various beautiful tourist attractions, which has been put together by the National Organizing Committee. They have indeed worked hard to ensure that all aspects of the congress 2008 meet the expectations of the participants.  
The congress will be preceded by two interesting events aimed at strengthening the capacity of the Delegates. Indeed, in the morning of 26<sup>th</sup> February 2008, a workshop on seed certification co-facilitated by the International Seed Testing Association (ISTA) and the Organization for

Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) will be organized. This will be followed in the afternoon of the same day by a seminar on Seed Treatment facilitated by Syngenta. The venue, combined with your participation, makes, once more, an excellent platform for seed stakeholders to discuss the industry's future in Africa and align your association with the rest of the world's seed trade. With Africa having to face the challenge of food security of millions of people, your participation is vital!

The registration has been open and all the details are available at [www.afsta.org](http://www.afsta.org).

I have the honor of inviting you to this important annual event during which issues will be debated, new resolutions adopted, and a part of the future of the seed trade in Africa shaped. I look forward to welcoming you all in Casablanca, Morocco.

## **THE AFRICAN SEED TRADE ASSOCIATION SIGNS A MOU WITH THE AFRICAN UNION**

The African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) and the African Union (AU) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with a view to strengthening the cooperation between the two organizations in order to join hands to advance the cause the seed industry and biotechnology in the continent. In this regard, the AU will consult AFSTA whenever necessary on matters related to agricultural sector but in particular on matters regarding seed and biotechnology. AFSTA will also be invited to participate in ministerial meetings of the African Union and other high level meetings

at which matters related to seed and biotechnology will be discussed, or at which science-based information could help the setting of priorities and policies for seed and agricultural development on the continent.

In return, AFSTA will, among others, work with the African Union Commission to strengthen the African seed industry by giving its expertise on various policy and technical documents that aims at increasing the use of improved varieties and adoption of new agricultural technology.

It is hoped that the signing of this MoU will improve communication and cooperation between the private seed sector and the policy makers at sub-regional and continental levels as we move forward to the improvement of food security in Africa.

*By Mr. Justin Rakotoarisaona, Secretary General of AFSTA*

### **STAK CELEBRATES ITS SILVER JUBILEE: 25 YEARS OF PROVIDING QUALITY SEED TO FARMERS (1982 – 2007)**

The Seed Trade Association of Kenya (STAK) marked its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in October 2007. It proudly looks back to the milestones it has covered since its conception and eventual inception.

Formed in December 1982, STAK is a not-for-profit Association for seed companies registered in Kenya by the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) to produce, process, and distribute seeds. In essence the Association seeks to promote the development of the formal seed trade in Kenya.

The journey began in 1956 when a group of colonial settlers came together and formed Kenya Seed Company, which principally dealt with pasture seeds. With time, the firm evolved to deal in sunflower for bird feed and eventually shifted its emphasis to hybrid seeds in the early '70s.

Started by four members, the Association has over the years grown in leaps and bounds and now boasts 27 members who, combined, supply about 90 percent of the formal seeds used in Kenya.

Initially, STAK was hosted on a voluntary basis by its founder members but in 1999 the

members felt there was need for a Secretariat to coordinate its activities.

In mid '90s, the seed sector was liberalized and the market experienced a surge in companies dealing in seeds. Currently there are about 60 companies dealing in seeds though not all of them are members of STAK which denies them the advantages of trade information and collective lobbying.



*From L to R: K. Smith, N. Tum, H. Schupbach, J. Shah, R. Kiome (PS of MinAgri), J. Rakotoarisaona, O. Nyachae*

Between 2000 and 2005, between 24,000 and 32,000 metric tones of seed were produced in Kenya. However seed imports have also steadily risen. For instance, between 1999 and 2001 the imports stood at about four percent but this has been rising steadily to stand at a record of 22 percent today. The challenge for local producers now is to step up production to march the rising number of imports.

### **Membership**

STAK is run by an Executive Committee that is elected every two years. The membership is open to seed enterprises on payment of a one-time entry fee and an annual subscription fee. There are two categories of membership: Ordinary and Associate members. Ordinary members include private commercial enterprises, which have seeds as their core business and are registered nationally to produce, supply or market seed while Associate members comprise of seed enterprises registered overseas and whose substantial business is outside Kenya, enterprises that only deal partially in seed, non-governmental

organizations (NGO's), products and services providers, government agencies and departments involved in research and training.

### **Government support**

STAK has received considerable support from the Kenya government. For instance, the Association has been incorporated as a key stakeholder in the management of the seed sub-sector by the Ministry of Agriculture. STAK has also been invited along with KEPHIS and other seed stakeholders, to participate in formulating the National Seed Policy as well as in the drafting of the Seeds and Plant Varieties Bill 2007. The Bill, which has taken close to 10 years to put together, has now been forwarded to the Attorney-General by the Minister for Agriculture for action. STAK now hopes that the Bill will be given priority to enable better regulation of the seeds sector.

### **Regional partnership**

Because of its rich history in the development of the seed sector in the country, STAK was appointed to host the Secretariat of the Eastern Africa Seed Committee (EASCOM) of the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) in 2002. The regional body is made up of 10 countries – Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, Madagascar and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The mandate of STAK under this arrangement is to operationalize agreements arrived at by ASARECA.

The association also hosts the continental seeds body, African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA). As such, STAK not only serves the interests of its Kenyan members but also other members with similar interests in the region.

Among many other responsibilities, STAK provides members with information geared to help them access markets.

### **Milestones**

The Kenyan seed industry has enjoyed stable growth and it has been able to supply an average of 30,000 – 36,000 metric tons of quality seeds to farmers especially for staple foods. In conjunction with the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS), STAK

has been educating members on methods of producing quality seeds to reduce the amount of seeds rejected.

Indeed the sector has experienced great improvements in so far as seed production is concerned because on average, in the 1990s farmers used to lose about 5 %.

*By Mr. Jitu Shah, Chairman of STAK*

## **AFSTA JOINS WEST AFRICA SEED ALLIANCE (WASA)**

AFSTA is pleased to inform its members that it is now officially a WASA implementing partner together with the International Crops Research Institute (ICRISAT), CNFA, Inc., and the Seed Science Center of Iowa State University (SSC-ISU) – The WASA Team.

These partners bring to the alliance expertise in agro-dealer and agri-business development, seed quality control, seed production and marketing, and seed policy reform. AFSTA's role in advocating for commercial seed delivery at continental level, and supporting national associations is key to the future success of the alliance.

WASA's goals are ambitious - to establish a sustainable commercial seed industry capable of ensuring that small-scale farmers have affordable, timely and reliable access to adapted genetics and traits in high quality seeds and planting materials; playing a leading role in the growth and development of viable agricultural inputs systems; supporting the overall growth of the West Africa agricultural sector; and improving the agricultural enabling environment.

The need for an alliance arose since there are certain problems that neither donors nor private industry have been able to resolve alone, and an alliance allows for new ideas and expertise from both sides to work together. Since public investments in plant breeding have not led to significant increases in agricultural productivity, governments have understood the need to support public-private partnerships that will ensure that farmers have affordable, timely and reliable access to high quality seeds and planting materials. Hence, the alliance focuses on seeds.

The initial activities of the alliance will focus on five countries – Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Niger. The implementing partners will work through local teams whose task is to identify and support entrepreneurs interested in establishing commercial seed companies and agro-dealerships, by providing technical support in seed production, business development services, and marketing.

USAID is providing \$6.125 million over five years towards the alliance that also includes the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa/Program for Africa's Seed Systems (AGRA/PASS), Monsanto, Pioneer Hi-Bred International Inc., and Kemseed Agri-Services as resource partners.

The WASA Team has now embarked on the development of the Eastern and Southern Africa Seed Alliance (ESASA) and will be soliciting the interest of seed stakeholders to join both ESASA and WASA.

*By Mr. Justin Rakotoarisaona, Secretary General of AFSTA*

### **SADC PERMANENT SECRETARIES FINALIZE MoU ON SADC HARMONIZED SEED REGULATORY SYSTEM**

Southern African Development Community (SADC) Secretariat through Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR) Directorate presented draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the SADC Harmonized Seed Regulatory System to SADC Permanent Secretaries of Agriculture at a workshop held in Johannesburg, South Africa, 3–4 September 2007. The workshop was attended by Permanent Secretaries and legal experts from 14 Member States. Southern African Development Community (SADC) Secretariat through Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR) Directorate presented the SADC Harmonized Seed Regulatory System to SADC FANR Ministers at a meeting held on 29th June 2007 in Lusaka, Zambia.

The objective of the workshop was to review and finalize the draft MOU, which will be presented to the Ministers of Agriculture and

Natural Resources at their meeting scheduled for April 2008.

The purpose of this MOU is to provide Member States with a legal framework to coordinate their actions in the implementation of the SADC Harmonized Seed Regulatory System.

The objectives of this MOU are to:

- (a) Facilitate the availability of high quality seeds to farmers within the SADC region;
- (b) Make it easier and cheaper for new and existing varieties to gain access to SADC markets;
- (c) Stimulate the availability of more varieties of seed and encourage more investment in the seed sector;
- (d) Encourage faster and safer movement of seeds and reduce costs related to seed trade; and
- (e) Establish a sustainable funding mechanism for supporting the SADC Harmonized Seed Regulatory System.

**Source: SADC Seed Update, September 2007**

#### **Upcoming events:**

- **22 to 25<sup>th</sup> January 2008:** OECD extended advisory group meeting in Paris, France.
- **25 and 29<sup>th</sup> February 2008:** AFSTA Board meetings, Casablanca, Morocco.
- **26 to 29<sup>th</sup> February 2008:** The Eighth African Seed Trade Association annual Congress in Casablanca, Morocco.
- **26 to 28<sup>th</sup> May 2008:** International Seed Federation annual Congress 2008 in Prague, Czech Republic.

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#### **Disclaimer:**

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