



E-Review

Electronic Newsletter of the African Seed Trade Association

December 2006

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INVITATION TO AFSTA CONGRESS 2007



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

With last year's having been held in Entebbe, Uganda, the annual congress of the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) will take place from 6th to 9th March 2007 in Livingstone, Zambia – a wonderful destination that will allow delegates to enjoy both the Victoria Falls themselves as well as other sites that only this area can offer. A perfect venue to meet friends, colleagues and trade with your fellow seedsmen.

The National Organizing Committee of the congress has worked hard to ensure that all aspects of the congress meet the expectations of the participants. To strengthen the capacity of the Delegates on these important topics, a seminar on Plant Variety Protection and a conference on Seed Treatment facilitated respectively by UPOV and ISF, will take place on 6th March 2007. Livingstone as a venue, combined with your participation, makes 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, our participation is vital!

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 Livingstone, Zambia

Mark Sachs, President of AFSTA

BIRTH OF NATIONAL SEED TRADE ASSOCIATION OF SIERRA LEONE (STASL)

Some key people in the seed sector of Sierra Leone have been in contact with AFSTA Secretariat since December 2005 to discuss the setting up of a national seed trade association. After several meetings of the seed stakeholders, they decided to establish the Seed Trade Association of Sierra Leone (STASL).

The launching workshop was held on 29 November 2006 in Freetown in which about fifty seed people from several parts of Sierra Leone actively participated. The opening ceremony was graced by Honorable John Abdulai Karim-Sesay, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security who stated that in line with the ongoing privatization policy of the government, it is important that Sierra Leone puts in place a national seed trade association, which will be a platform of discussion to exchange views among themselves and will

work in partnership with the public sector. He also emphasized the crucial role of quality seeds in improving agricultural productivity and assured the participants the support of the Ministry.



Participants in the Launching workshop of STASL

The Secretary General of the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) who was also present at this workshop laid the stress on the key elements for the good functioning of seed trade association and gave practical advice for its management. He encouraged, among others, the establishment of an Executive Secretariat for the association, which is crucial for the success of the associations. He also states that the association should defend the interests of its members and they should strictly respect the Constitution and Bylaws.

This workshop was also an opportunity for the participants to ask the Secretary General of AFSTA various questions about AFSTA and about seed associations in the other African countries to which he satisfactorily answered.

The Assistant Secretary General of National Association of farmers of Sierra Leone (NAFSL), Mr. Andrew R. Conteh, presented the vision and objectives of the STASL, which can be summarized as to encourage seed actors to harmonize efforts in promoting the seed industry.

After a thorough review of the Constitution and Bylaws of STASL, they were adopted and the interim Board composed by 9 members and chaired by Mr. Alfred B. Kargbo, was elected. He presented the overall strategy of seed sector of Sierra Leone in which the private sector is

expected to play an active role since the government gradually plans to withdraw from commercial productions of seeds. He also mentioned that “until July 2006, Sierra Leone has no documented Seed Policy although several political statements exist, which impinge on the seed sector. Today, a National Seed Policy exists representing the views of all seed industry stakeholders to ensure that our seed industry efforts are adequately guided into the distant future”.

The association was created at the right time to help the harmonization process of seed policy and regulations initiated by the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) in the sub-region. It will closely collaborate with the public sector to implement the technical standards adopted by the sub-region.

The association is planning to join AFSTA to receive information on seeds and to actively participate in AFSTA activities.

The workshop was funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France through AFSTA. The Secretary General of AFSTA thanked the French support to the African seed industry during his opening speech.

By Mr. Justin Rakotoarisaona, Secretary General of AFSTA

THE CONCEPT OF SEED ENTERPRISE ENHANCEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES – SEEDS

The African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) arose among others for the need to have a regional representative body for the seed industry, which is meant to promote the development of private seed enterprises. Indeed, the limited development of commercial seed enterprises on the continent is of concern to a broad range of organizations anxious to see Africa escape from hunger and poverty caused largely as a result of low agricultural productivity. At the 2006 AFSTA congress, the concept of seed incubators was proposed by Richard Jones, the leader of the USAID-funded program for the Sustainable Commercialization of Seeds in Africa (SCOSA) that is being implemented by the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in partnership with

Iowa State University (ISU) and the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC). The positive reception received from members to support the development of private seed enterprises led to the establishment of a partnership between AFSTA and SCOSA.

Through this partnership a total of 21 countries across sub-Saharan Africa with active national seed trade associations have been introduced to the concept of Seed Enterprise Enhancement and Development Services (SEEDS) and trained in business plan development.

To do so, AFSTA, working through the national seed trade associations, invited three participants from each country, representing the private seed sector, the public breeding institute, and the seed regulatory authority, to form national teams and attend a series of two workshops.



Participants in the first workshop at Hilton Hotel in Nairobi, Kenya – September 2006

At the first workshop national teams were trained in business plan development and then asked to organize an in-country consultation to share the concept of SEEDS and to solicit support for the idea of establishing an independent foundation seed enterprise (FSE) to facilitate the access of emerging seed companies to publicly developed varieties.

The unavailability of foundation seed of publicly developed varieties has been identified as a major constraint to the dissemination of improved varieties. AFSTA and SCOSA have proposed the establishment of independent FSEs that can not only supply interested seed companies (particularly small and medium sized companies without their own breeding

programs) with foundation seed of improved varieties for further multiplication, but can also provide seed storage and processing facilities. Based on the financial projections being prepared by national teams the expectation is that after initial period revenue from seed sales, it is expected that contract storage and seed processing will sustain the operations of the FSEs.

What is next? AFSTA and SCOSA are assisting national teams to complete their business plans, and are simultaneously establishing contacts with interested development investors to solicit their support for this innovative initiative. The strong backing this initiative has received to date both from national governments and from the private sector suggests that Africa is ready to embrace novel solutions to a seemingly intractable problem. Come and find out how you can be involved at the 2007 Congress in Livingstone.

Dr. Richard Jones
Leader of SCOSA Program

AFRICAN GREEN REVOLUTION

On August 31st 2006, concerned corporations, organizations from the private and public sectors held a 3 day conference in Oslo Norway to boost the development of Africa's Green Revolution. The conference hosted by NORAD, NORFUND, YARA International and Rabobank acknowledged the following goals within the African Agriculture Sector:

- Release from Poverty
- Sustainable Agricultural Growth
- Financially Secure Self sustaining Development

Norway's Minister of International Development Erik Solheim gave the formal welcoming address and described Norway's focus in supporting African countries to achieve sustainable progress. He underlined the current grave reality: *African farmers live on the edge – in a normal year they survive and when intermittent disaster strikes, they don't.*

Key conference speakers on day two included Director of the UN Millennium Project, Jeffrey

Sachs, World Bank Executive Director Paolo Gomez, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Norman Borlaug, Pedro Sanchez and Cherly Palm from the Earths Institute and Josephine Okot, CEO of Victoria Seeds Ltd.

Jeffrey Sachs encouraged all present to look beyond our ideologies in working to end poverty and Hunger. He reminded all that agriculture cannot be the end of the story in the development of Africa but must be the start.

Josephine Okot presented a paper on the role of Public-Private partnership in bringing seed technologies to farmers. She underlined the essential need for policy and business frameworks that promotes African entrepreneurship at all levels. She recommended that such frameworks should enhance Agricultural Credit and financing schemes through improvement of access to credit by small holder farmers. Develop sound agricultural policies that are integrated into poverty eradication strategies. Support investment in research in areas of high yielding crops and build capacity for integration of African agriculture in the global market. It should also promote and develop the capacity of women to engage in the agricultural entrepreneurial process.

The following themes emerged as supportive of achieving the three goals within the African Agriculture Sector:

- Public-Private Partnership as a key to self sustaining development.
- Targeted research and transfer of science and technologies to farmers.
- Access to finance to allow the development of farming and the surrounding infrastructure.
- Linkage of production and output markets to facilitate appropriate production choices.
- Development of and participation in new markets such as bio fuels.
- The inclusion of aspects of health and Education in the development agenda
- The importance and extension of the role of women in agriculture.
- The encouragement of entrepreneurship in seeking positive growth in the sector.
- The value of crop diversification in optimising farmer returns and the

understanding of principles of risk management to protect those returns.

- The value of sustainable Partnerships based upon mutual benefits for all stakeholders.

The 3-day conference ended on a high note when Ms Celina Cossa and Ms Fidelis Wainaina were awarded the 2006 YARA prize for their remarkable grass root work with small scale farmers in Mozambique and Kenya respectively. 92 year old Norman Borlaug at the award ceremony excited the audience when he stated "*I hope to live long enough to see the green revolution reach full flower in Africa*"

By Josephine Okot, CEO of Victoria Seeds, Uganda

Upcoming events:

- **22nd to 23rd January 2007:** OECD Extended Advisory Group in Paris, France.
- **5th and 9th March 2007:** AFSTA Board meeting, Livingstone, Zambia.
- **26th to 30th March 2007:** UPOV meetings in Geneva, Switzerland.
- **6 to 9th March 2007:** The Seventh African Seed Trade Association annual Congress in Livingstone, Zambia.
- **5th to 11th May 2007:** ISTA congress in Iguaçu Falls, Brazil.
- **21st to 23rd May 2007:** International Seed Federation annual Congress 2007 in Christchurch, New Zealand.

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Disclaimer:

The African Seed Trade Association takes every precaution in verifying the accuracy of information supplied by its Secretariat, but does not accept liability for errors, which may nevertheless appear in this newsletter. Submissions by contributors to the newsletter may not necessarily reflect the views of the AFSTA Secretariat, the Board or its members.

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