

AFSTA's Plant Breeding and Innovation Committee (PBI)

Terms of Reference

1- Purpose

Plant breeding supports sustainable agriculture to meet the needs of a growing population – not only food for humans, but also feed for animals, fuel and fibers. Plant breeding helps us to produce more with less, increasing the efficiency of production and reducing pressure on the environment and helping to increase our food security.

2- Background

The planet is changing and plants have to adapt too if we are to provide enough food to feed future generations. Plant breeding is the essential platform for sustainable agriculture. Innovation is the key to food security. Through innovation we can adapt to climate change whilst improving crop yields, food quality and food safety, benefiting everyone in the food chain, from farmers to consumers.

'Plant breeding innovation' is the term we use to describe the constantly evolving ideas and practices which enhance the field of plant breeding. Today's innovations in plant breeding are developed using sophisticated science and technologies including cell biology, gene mapping and marker-assisted breeding.

New Breeding Techniques (NBTs) and Precision Breeding Techniques (PBTs) refer to the tools and methods used to develop new varieties more precisely and rapidly. These techniques reflect the scientific discoveries of the time. For example, in the twentieth century an increased understanding of plant physiology and molecular biology accelerated the development of new varieties that would probably not have been achieved by breeders using traditional selection alone. Twenty-first century innovations build on this knowledge to develop varieties in response to the environmental, agricultural and social challenges of our time. Innovations in plant breeding cannot and will not replace traditional practices; they simply increase the range of tools available to plant breeders.

Through innovation we can produce improved varieties that sustain and potentially increase yields and are better adapted to withstand disease and the effects of climate change, such as drought or floods, supporting sustainable agriculture and food security.

Solutions to global challenges in plant breeding regulation can only be found with all stakeholders working collaboratively. As the regional and global seed trade increases there is a growing need for consistent criteria that determine how the products of the latest plant breeding methods are regulated.

Countries have a range of different systems to evaluate and regulate new products entering the market which may lead to trade barriers and competitive disadvantage. To facilitate the trade and movement of seed both around the Region and world we need to start with a level playing field.

A key issue for plant breeders worldwide is ensuring that the criteria used to regulate products developed through the latest plant breeding methods are consistent across countries. Clear public policy is essential to ensure the use of these breeding methods is not stalled at the research and development stage.

- AFSTA advocates government policy that is based on sound scientific principles and very often governments are adopting regulations, which are not scientific based for plant breeding innovation.
- AFSTA believes that it is only necessary to differentiate regulations of new varieties where it makes scientific sense.

- AFSTA advocates consistent criteria for regulating the latest products of plant breeding innovation.

Consistent, science-based policy and an appropriate level of regulation enable farmers and consumers around the Region and world to enjoy the benefits of products developed through the latest breeding methods.

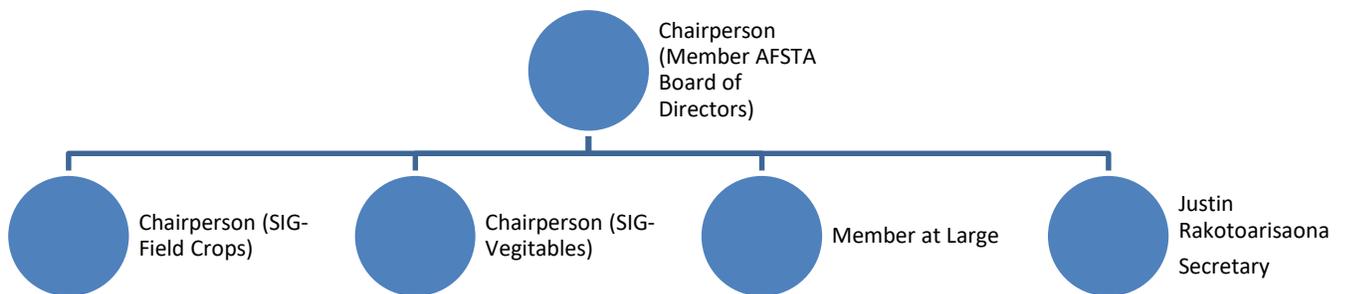
3- Functions

This committee strives to advocate for AFSTA members policy and regulatory issues in the areas of new plant breeding innovations, research and transgenic seed products. The focus is on those policy and regulatory issues that have an impact across the seed industry. Examples of topics addressed by the committee include seed Low Level Presence (LLP), regulatory policies for seed products developed through innovative breeding technologies and African Regional policies on seed breeding and research. Advocacy and development of AFSTA positions should initially be developed through topic-specific working groups (as required) that report back to the committee.

Innovation in Plant Breeding Working Group (IPBWG): Formed under the Innovation and Policy Committee the Working Group develops and recommends positions related to regulatory and policy issues for seed products developed through innovative breeding technologies. Background materials on these technologies and plant breeding are also developed by the Working Group which should meet regularly via Skype meetings and annually in person at the AFSTA Congress. It may be a little optimistic for us to think about setting up this Working Group at this time. But, we might as well start to think about what we want this entire activity to look like in the long term now so that we can plan accordingly.

The Plant Breeding Innovation Committee follows up the implementation of Crop Life International (CLI) project on sensitization on biotechnology in order to achieve its objectives.

4- Proposed Committee Structure and Membership



5- Membership

- Kulani Machaba: Chairperson and Member of the AFSTA Board; Corteva Agriscience.
- Charles Miller: Vice chairperson and Member of the Board American Seed Trade Association (ASTA) and AFSTA; Solynta.
- John McMurdy: CLI working with AFSTA on the program on biotech outreach and sensitization in Africa.
- Lukeshni Chetty: General Manager South African Seed Organization (SANSOR)

- Takemore Chagomoka: Chair of Special Interest Group (SIG) “Vegetables” and Business development Manager Seed Co., West Africa
- John Derera: Head of Research Seed Co. International
- Godwin Lemgo: Bayer Kenya
- Karim Traoré: Chair of Special Interest Group (SIG) “Field Crops” and Bayer Burkina Faso
- Calvin Fambisayi: Seed Co. International
- Daniel Aghan: AFSTA Secretariat
- Justin Rakotoarisaona: AFSTA Secretariat

6- Meetings and Communication

This committee should meet in person at least two times per year during the annual congress and the AFSTA Board meeting in Nairobi, Kenya. In general the annual calendar of activities is suggested as follows:

- During the annual AFSTA Congress
 - Closed PBI committee meeting (committee members and AFSTA Board of Directors members only)
 - Open session as needed to update members of issues / developments in the field
 - PBI committee meeting with committee members and AFSTA Board of Director members if interested.
- October Meeting
 - One day prior to AFSTA Board of Directors meeting
 - Closed PBI committee meeting (committee members and AFSTA Board of Directors members only)
 - Day of AFSTA Board of Directors meeting during which the chair reports to Board of Directors on activities of committee and as needed Board of Directors make requests of committee.

As needed the committee and Working Group will call special meetings to be held via skype. These special meetings will work on projects and specific goals of the committee.