



AFSTA E-Review

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AFSTA CONGRESS 2018 REGISTRATION SET TO OPEN IN NOVEMBER

By Daniel Aghan, Communication Officer, AFSTA | daghan@afsta.org

Preparations for the 19th AFSTA Congress to be held in Cairo, Egypt from 27th February to 1st March 2018 are on high gear.

“We have identified a befitting venue for the Congress at Conrad Hotel and we are optimistic that Cairo will be a historical congress in terms of numbers and content,” said Mr Justin Rakotoarisaona, Secretary General of AFSTA. He added that the local organizing committee led by Dr Abdrabou Ismail, is making very good progress with a target of hosting over 500 delegates at the annual event.

Set on the magnificent River Nile, the Conrad Cairo hotel is a stunning landmark in the heart of bustling downtown, offering 614 elegant guest rooms overlooking the Nile from their private balconies. With extensive range of distinctive event spaces, Conrad is one of the most prestigious business hotels in Cairo. The award-winning hotel is a preferred meeting venue for international corporations and diplomatic organizations.

According to the Communication Department, articles and advertisements have also started trickling in with key pages of the AFSTA magazine 2018 already booked for advertisement. “There is need to ensure that our writers



Venue for the AFSTA Congress 2018 in Cairo, Egypt

and advertisers send their articles and artworks by early November to avoid missing out on our fourth African Seed Magazine,” added the Secretary General.

The congress registration is due by end of November 2017.

Agriculture is a major component of the Egyptian economy, contributing up to 14.5 percent of GDP and 28 percent of all jobs. Agriculture employs almost 45 percent of all women in the workforce.

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INCLUSIVE APPROACHES HOLD KEY TO AFRICA'S AGRICULTURAL GROWTH

By Daniel Aghan, Communication Officer, AFSTA | daghan@afsta.org

Have you taken time and flipped through the recently released African Agriculture Status Report (AASR) 2017? If you are yet to do so, please spare a moment and read the well documented study which gives hope to African agriculture.

The report argues for an inclusive approach to transforming Africa's agriculture sector and food systems more widely. Chapters in this report describe the ongoing changes in Africa's food systems, and the opportunities and challenges that an inclusive transformation approach would involve. They explore the rationale for the approach, and the kinds of policy, public investment, and governance issues that would be required.

Africa, notes the research authors, still has the resource base that if more intensively farmed could easily produce another 100 million tons of grain equivalents each year, to adding another US corn belt to the global supply and turning Africa into a net agricultural exporter. This potential is evidenced by the low yields Africa currently achieves

compared with those of similar agro-ecological zones (FAO & World Bank, 2009), experimental trials, and best farmer practices. There is also considerable untapped irrigation potential and remaining uncultivated land that could be brought into production.

Although Africa's agricultural growth rate improved after 2005, averaging about 7% per annum, this was driven more by a commodity price boom and expansion of the cropped area rather than by improvements in the underlying fundamentals, adds the report, quoting several authorities.

Africa's cereal yields started to grow after 2000, but still remain low compared to other countries, and the gaps are widening. Moreover, the gap in land and labour productivity between Africa and Asia also widened rather than closed over 2000 – 2014. Within Africa, labour and land productivity improved the least in Southern Africa (excluding the Republic of South Africa), and improved the most in Eastern and Western Africa. Far from exploiting its potential of becoming a major

breadbasket region, Africa continues to become more dependent on food imports. The aggregate annual food import bill is currently about US\$35 billion, and is estimated to rise to US\$110 billion by 2025 (Adesina, 2017).

Many estimates of past rates of agricultural growth seem too high, capturing the impact of real price increases and production increases. For example, NinPratt, Johnson and Yu (2012) estimate that African agriculture grew by only 3.6% per year in constant prices during 2001–2010, but by 7.7% per year if the deflated increase in agricultural prices is included.

Some experts attribute this growth to the spread of improved seeds, thanks in part to the growing role of small and medium-sized seed companies. Others look to a more complex set of factors, including prices, seeds, fertilizer use (and subsidies), mechanization, improved roads, etc.

Please read the full report at <https://agra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Final-AASR-2017-Aug-28.pdf>



GMO TECHNOLOGY CAN TURN AROUND GHANA'S FOOD SECURITY FORTUNES – SEED TRADERS

By Daniel Aghan and Joseph Opokwu

The National Seed Trade Association of Ghana (NASTAG) has thrown its weight behind ongoing plans by government to commercialize Genetically Modified Foods in the country.

They say the technology is crucial to help farmers deal effectively with pest attacks and the impact of climate change which will help accelerate the development of the agricultural sector.

"The GMOs have come to stay. With cowpea, farmers spray five times before harvest. With the Maruca resistant GMO Cowpea, you only spray twice. And the production of cowpea is higher because the GMO has brought down the destruction of cowpea pods," President of the Seed Producers Association of Ghana Patrick Osofo Apullah told *Joy News* in an interview. "It has reduced the hazardous way farmers work. The GMOs reduce the burden of farmers. They are no longer going to spend so much on chemicals," he explained.

GMOs are crops produced from seeds which have been altered genetically to introduce desired traits like pest resistance and drought tolerance from other living organisms. Following passage of the Biosafety Act 2011 by Parliament, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has been undertaking field trials for GM cotton, cowpea and rice as part of regulatory procedures before they are introduced onto the market. The researchers have announced the GMO cowpea will be ready for release onto the market next year following successful field trials.

Ghana loses \$2.6 billion annually due to problems associated with poor nutrition in children, a United Nations report revealed in 2016.

With improved seeds, therefore, Ghana can confront this dire situation and turn round the fortunes of

nutrition among her people. Good seed, as it were, has been touted as the number solution to improved production.

The President of the National Seed Trade Association of Ghana (NASTAG), Thomas Havor dismissed concerns that the GMO products are harmful and could damage the health of consumers. "The hesitance about GMOs is only because people do not understand it. But there is nothing unsafe about it," he noted.

NASTAG official launch

Speaking on the sidelines of the launch of the association on July 24, Mr Havor noted that their wishes resonate with the government's commitment to introduce the technology in the country. At the launch, the Minister for Food and Agriculture, Dr Owusu Afriyie Akoto, in a speech read on his behalf by his deputy, Dr Sagre Bambi noted that the government is promoting biotechnology usage in order to enhance the development and commercialization of improved quality seeds to enhance farm yields and make Ghana's seed industry more viable, competitive and profitable for the private sector in the country.

Meanwhile, NASTAG, is demanding

more support from the government for the local seed industry to ensure food security.

In his inaugural speech as the first President of the nascent association on August 24, 2017 in Accra, Thomas Havor said that better-resourced seed companies will supply improved seed varieties to farmers and this will result in higher crop yields to meet the increasing demand for food.

He specifically asked the government to implement provisions in the Plants and Fertiliser Act 2010 requiring that a fund is established to support the seed industry. "More funds are needed to support research, maintain laboratories, train young scientists and help with the development of new seed varieties," he noted.

"Right now, all the old people are going on retirement. That is why the human resource is such a major issue in the research stations and universities because there is no money. But if funds are available, it will bring in enough money to take care of that," he told the gathering at the launch graced by the deputy minister for Food and Agriculture, Dr Sagre Bambi.



ZIMBABWE IN TALKS ON \$100 MILLION FINANCING FOR OILSEEDS FARMERS

By Desmond Kumbuka and Brian Latham

Zimbabwe is in talks about a potential \$100 million loan facility to support oilseeds farmers in the southern African country and boost production, especially of soy.

Sakunda Energy, a closely held Zimbabwean energy and logistics company, has agreed to contribute \$48.7 million of the funds, and the rest would be provided by the government, according to Zimbabwe Oil Seed Producers' Association President Busisa Moyo. Sakunda didn't respond to multiple requests for comment.

Zimbabwe is seeking to expand its Command Agriculture program, which provides financing and subsidized materials to corn farmers, into other sectors and include private-sector funds, Finance Minister Patrick Chinamasa said in an interview. The added support for oilseed farmers would help reduce Zimbabwe's dependence on imports of the seeds and edible oils, he said.

About half of the proposed funding would be used for irrigation infrastructure and the rest would be used to buy seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, Moyo said. The association has identified farmers to sow about 60,000 hectares (148,000 acres) of oilseed crops at the start of the season in November and estimates production could reach 150 million metric tons a year as a result of the additional funding.

Source: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-07-07/zimbabwe-in-talks-on-100-million-financing-for-oil-seeds-farmers>

MODERN TECHNOLOGIES WILL TACKLE FOOD INSECURITY IN MALAWI

By Akimu Kaingana

Malawi has been a predominantly agro-based economy and this trend is likely to continue, as government emphasizes that it is one of its top priority agenda to make this Southern African nation food sufficient and move on to become a bread basket for the Region.

However, according to the Director of Agricultural Extension Services, Jerome Nkhoma, for Malawi to achieve food security, several issues need to be addressed. Among them is the issue of modern technologies that can boost efficiency at farm level and that include availability of quality seed.

"One of the most pressing issues in Malawi's agricultural sector is low yielding crops - the result of technological inefficiency and low performing seeds at farm level. This fundamental challenge to Malawi's food security can only be addressed by the focused efforts of the country's seed sector," said Jerome Nkhoma.

Nkhoma was speaking at an International Seed Symposium which took place in Malawi's capital Lilongwe last August where researchers, academicians, the private sector and agricultural experts both from the host Malawi and other countries brainstormed on how the seed industry can boost the country's agricultural productivity.

The theme of the symposium was "Addressing Systematic Constraints in the Malawi seed system" and organized by Feed the Future which is the United States government's Global Hunger and Food Security initiative.

Chief of Party for the USAID funded Scaling Seeds and Technologies Partnership (SSTP) in Africa, Richard Jones said that despite the emergence of

Agro-dealers in some trading centres, majority of small holder farmers still did not have access to quality seed in Malawi.

He said another factor affecting the seed industry in the country is that it takes a long time for breeders to release a variety and farmers do not really have much choice.

"It takes 36 months to release a variety. Malawi has to look into this issue. Agro-dealers are concentrated along the road but not in the country side," said Jones.

Participants at the symposium further acknowledged that the main challenges facing the seed industry in Malawi include counterfeit seed and poor germination rate. The symposium noted that these challenges demanded a wide consultative approach to surmount them.

The Deputy Chief of Party – FEED the FUTURE - Malawi Agriculture Diversification Activity, Rachel Sibande noted that for Malawi to address the fundamental issue of food security, there is need to tackle the challenges facing the country's seed sector. She added that lack of access to quality seed is to blame for robbing farmers as much as 50% of their yield.

Some of the topics covered at the symposium included: Commercialization of seed in the African context – How research feeds into the overall commercialization of improved seed, access and utilization by farmers.

Source: <https://www.mbc.mw/index.php/radio-2/item/4916-malawi-hosts-seed-symposium>



ETHIOPIAN SEED ASSOCIATION: STRIVING TO MEET PROMISES TO MEMBERS

By AFSTA Secretariat afsta@afsta.org

The development of Information, Education and Communication materials have improved the effectiveness of the Ethiopia Seed Association (ESA).

According to a statement from the association's Board, with the development and distribution of practical hybrid maize seed production manual, booklets of company profiles, practical business plan model manual and promotional leaflet, there has been an increase of the supply of high quality certified seed to small holder farmers. Other factors include training and experience exchange forum held by the association.

Besides, the annual forum has also been very useful for members and relevant stakeholders to join hands and share national seed sector development experiences in production, processing and marketing and distribution including policy and related issues and set future strategy focus.

Further, the association is today highly regarded as it strives to meet the interest of the member companies by providing them with necessary technical skills as well as build the capacity of small seed companies to remain competitive in the market. "Combined efforts by our team and partners have seen the number of private companies participating in the seed business increase," says Melaku Admassu, chairman of the association in an interview with E-Review in October 2017.

In a country where the seed sector is dominated by public enterprises, there are many challenges that could be addressed to strengthen

and capacitate the private seed sector in the development of the national seed industry.

As strategic focus, ESA already has plans to undertake advocacy stints, attract more members to the association, strengthen the secretariat, upscale capacity building of seed companies and establish partnerships with relevant bodies to enhance their competitiveness in the seed business.

The Ethiopia Seed Association (ESA), legally established in 2006, has lately revitalized in 2008 with clear mandate and objectives with the support of AFSTA. The association aims to support the interest of its members, private (domestic and international) and public seed enterprises, to join hands in supply of high quality certified seed to small holder farmers in collaboration with different national and international institutions.

Since its establishment, the network has undertaken various measures mainly in strengthening the capacity of ESA and supporting seed companies. Recently the number of its members has increased from 8 to 31, that included private (80%) (domestic & international), public seed enterprises (13%) and cooperative unions (7%). The private companies produce mainly hybrid maize seed, very small amount of cereals and forage crops and a few of them are involved in the importation and distribution of vegetable seeds.

In order to achieve its mandate, the Association has established strong partnership with donors (The Royal Netherlands Embassy, ISSD Ethiopia Program, AGRA, FAO)

technical support from AFSTA, ASARECA, CYMMIT, ICARDA and national institutions (Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, National Research Institute, Agriculture Transformation Agency (ATA) among others.

To date MIRA-AGRA support project is under way to identify evidence based priority policy and regulatory problems that improve private sector investment in supply of certified seed of improved varieties to smallholder farmers in Ethiopia.

With the support and contribution of members, the association improved the capacity of its members by responding to their training needs in seed business management, seed production and inspection of cross and self-pollinated crops, certified seed production of hybrid maize, seed quality control and certification, seed marketing and distribution, awareness creation in the national seed laws and regulations as well as harmonization of seed trade regulations and sustainable seed pest management.

In addition, the seed companies participated in the development of the new draft national seed policy which reflects the interest of the private seed sector. The association has also been involved in advocacy of critical challenges facing seed companies in Ethiopia. Some members participated in international experiences sharing visits (India, Kenya, Netherlands, USA and Turkey) that contributed to the progress and success of some companies.



KENYA INTRODUCES NEW POTATO VARIETIES SUITABLE FOR FRENCH FRIES AND CRISPS

By Agatha Ngotho

The government of Kenya has released 52 new potato varieties that are specifically suited for making French fries and crisps.

According to the Managing Director of the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (Kephis) Dr Esther Kimani, this is in response to a growing demand for chips or French fries in the country, driven by a growing middle class with disposable incomes.

“This ever-rising demand has attracted many international hotel chains and restaurants to

set up shop in the country. This has created an opportunity for farmers, hence the need for suitable potato varieties,” Dr Kimani said in a statement released in August.

She said besides the cooking trait, the new potato varieties are resistant to diseases such as the bacterial wilt.

At the moment, over 800,000 Kenyans are directly engaged in potato production, according to statistics from KALRO; with a total of over 2.5 million people directly involved in the potato value chain in the country. The country produces 2.06 metric

tonnes of potato worth Sh10 billion (USD100m) at farm gate and Sh28 billion (USD280m) at consumer level annually.



STAK CONGRESS, EXPO AND MAZAO FORUM

By STAK Secretariat (stak@stak.or.ke) and Charles Nyachae (charles@afsta.org)

The Seed Trade Association of Kenya (STAK)'s “**STAK Congress, Expo and Mazao forum**” is an annual event organized to reaffirm the successes and key issues within the Kenyan Seed industry; and also helps identify areas of future focus for stakeholders. It provides a platform for experience sharing and is a way of spurring growth and development, as well as addressing any pertinent issues

affecting the seed value chain.

The congress brings together delegates including government officials, development partners, research institutions, universities, agrochemical industry, processors, machinery suppliers, farmers and media and for the very first time, agro dealers.

The theme this year is “**Increased Seed Production, Processing and**

Distribution through Agriculture Innovation for Food Security”

The event will be held on 23rd and 24th November 2017 in Nairobi, Kenya at the Kenya School of Government”.

For more information contact:

stak@stak.or.ke or visit the website www.stak.or.ke

STAK CONGRESS, EXPO & MAZAO FORUM 2017

23rd & 24th November

Kenya School of Government - Nairobi

“Increased seed production, processing and distribution through agriculture innovation for food security”

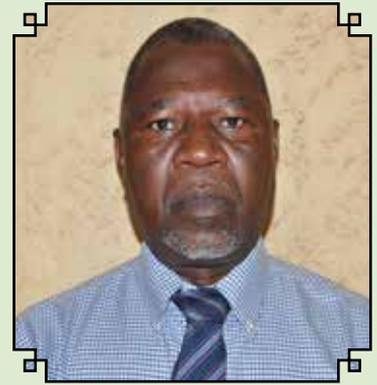


OBITUARY

By AFSTA Secretariat afsta@afsta.org

Following the death of the late Mr. Salifou Mahaman, President of the National Seed Trade Association of Niger (APPSN), the AFSTA Board and AFSTA membership would like to express their sincere condolences to his family and the Seed Trade Association of Niger (APPSN) respectively.

and the AFSTA family at large are with the seed industry of Niger during this difficult time. The APPSN Board members will continue working hard to see that what this great man stood for is upheld and escalated to levels he desired to see in improving the seed industry in Niger.



The Late Mr. Salifou Mahaman

AFSTA would like to assure APPSN that the AFSTA board

AFRICAN SEED MAGAZINE

AFSTA is sending out calls for articles for the fourth edition of its flagship magazine – the **African Seed Magazine** due in March 2018. Please send all your articles to our Communication Officer – Daniel Aghan – daghan@afsta.org

AFSTA WEB ADVERTISEMENT

This is a reminder that AFSTA Secretariat is offering online an advertising opportunity for all members on a first-come first-served basis as the advertisement slots are limited. Your logo will be placed at the top right hand side and will flash alternately as it currently is currently on the AFSTA website (www.afsta.org)

Your logo will be linked to your website or if you want to advertise a particular product you can send us artwork to be linked to your logo. The cost of the website advert is US\$ 300 for a period of one year.

Contact : charles@afsta.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

1. STAK Congress and Mazao Forum, 23-24 Nov 2017, Nairobi, Kenya
2. 24th APSA Congress: 14-17 Nov 2017; Manila, Philippines
3. AFSTA Congress 2018: 27-02 - 01-03 2018, Cairo, Egypt
4. Sorghum in the 21st Century- "Food, Feed and Fuel in a Rapidly Changing World" - 9-12 April 2018 Cape Town, South Africa

EDITORIAL:

- Aghan Daniel, Communication and Advocacy Officer
- Charles Nyachae, IT and Logistics Officer

Disclaimer:

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