

ZAMBIAN SEED SECTOR TO CELEBRATE 25 YEARS OF SEED SECTOR LIBERALIZATION

By Aghan Daniel



A healthy maize plant in a farm

The Zambian seed sector, will next year celebrate 25 years of progressive seed sector development, the Zambian Seed Trade Association (ZASTA) has said.

According to the secretary General of ZASTA, prior to 1980/81 when Zambia Seed Company (Zamseed Co.) was formed and remained a monopoly until 1993, there was no seed company in Zambia.

“Seed growing was done by farmers themselves through Zambia Seed Producers Association (ZSPA),” says Dr Watson Mwale in an interview with AFSTA E-Review.

The 1991 economic liberalization that followed multiparty governance opened doors after 1993 for so many seed companies to be established in the country. Currently, there are about twenty formal seed

companies and over 40 community based NGOs, Associations, Training centers etc. producing seeds of varieties of various crops

How then is the seed sector governed in Zambia? According to Dr Mwale, the provision of seed in the country is guided by the Plant Variety and Seeds Act (CAP 236) and Plant Breeders’ Rights Act of 2005 which are being enforced by the Seed Control and Certification Institute (SCCI, a National Seed Authority). For the development and improvement of varieties, germ plasm is provided within the breeding programs themselves or accessed from the National Plant Genetic Resource Centre, SADC -Plant Genetic Resource Centre or International centres. Both public institutions and private companies are very active in breeding and seed multiplication.

Where the releasing of crop varieties to the market is concerned, the Variety Release Committee (VRC) is the apex body. SCCI officially tests varieties for Distinctiveness – Uniformity and Stability (DUS) and for Value for Cultivation and Use (VCU), for duration of two seasons. Value for Cultivation and Use is tested in two (2) locations per agro-ecological region and DUS only at one site. Seed Production is inspected at least three times in a season for certification purposes. This follows the registration of seed growers who must register before embarking on seed production.

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cont... ZAMBIAN SEED SECTOR TO CELEBRATE 25 YEARS OF SEED SECTOR LIBERALIZATION

On opportunities in Zambia, Dr Mwale had this to say, "The Zambian Seed sector has been very successful in the past two decades due to major factors such as competition among seed companies, the existence of Seed Control and Certification Institute, (with an ISTA accredited laboratory, one of the few in the SADC region) and the Zambia Agricultural Research Institute – ZARI (Phytosanitary and Quarantine Services). Seed exports, especially seed maize have increased rapidly.

A senior journalist who specialises on agriculture reporting, Mr Misheck Wangwe of Post Newspaper, agreed with Dr Mwale's assertion that seed production in the country was on a roll given the good climate that the country has, coupled with the

presence of an ISTA accredited laboratory at SCCI. He added that the presence of many seed companies to increase quantity and quality of seed, presence of a well-developed research system producing new varieties in the market, water and land resources, seed production in the country was on a roll.

Other factors which have boosted seed production in the country include market liberalization which has increased competition in the seed industry; harmonization of seed regulations in the two regions (SADC and COMESA); crop diversification; enactment of Plant Breeders' Rights policy; government's Farmer Input Support and food security pack programs which provide reliable markets.

Further the government also developed a biotechnology policy,

enacted a biotechnology act and regulations and has put in place a National Biosafety Board (Authority). Harmonization of seed regulations will bring advantages of quick variety introduction, provide quality assurance and avoid duplications.

The Zambia Seed Trade Association (ZASTA) was established in November, 1999 under Societies Act CAP 119 of the Laws of Zambia. It was formed out of realization of the need and mutual benefits for members and the country to be derived from exchange of information and experience and also economic and technical cooperation in the field of Seed technology, production, distribution and trade. ZASTA is affiliated to African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA). *(This article will be continued in the next E-Review).*

SUDAN SUPPORTS GM TECHNOLOGY

By Aghan Daniel

The Sudanese minister for agriculture and irrigation Hon Ibrahim M. Hamid has reiterated his support for the GMO technology being undertaken in the country. While addressing a one day workshop organised by the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) and the Sudanese Seed Trade Association (SSTA) in Khartoum last week, the minister noted that seed companies



Hon Ibrahim M. Hamid, Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation

need to work closely with his office to ensure that the country was sensitised on the benefits of the technology.

"Your members and the country at large need to embrace this technology for enhanced food security in Sudan," he added.

On his part, while addressing the same gathering, the minister for science and communication, Sadiq Fadlalla noted that time had come for balanced information dissemination to the seed companies and the general public. He added that he believed in the power of communication in ensuring the citizens embrace the technology if proper information is

disseminated to them.

The workshop which was attended by nearly 70 people from seed companies, regulators and government officials resolved, among other things, to launch a comprehensive, non-biased awareness campaign to clarify facts about the opportunities and hazards of using biotechnology in agriculture led by the director general of Agricultural Research Centre, Dr Ibrahim Dukheri.



Dr Ibrahim Dukheri, Director General of Agricultural Research Centre,

TOMATO DISEASE ALERT IN KENYA

By George Murage

Experts have expressed their concern over high pesticide residue in tomatoes in various parts of Kenya. The rise in the pesticide has been attributed to farmers over spraying their crop with pesticides so as to deal with the tomato leaf miner disease which has wreaked havoc in the country.

According to Teresia Karanja from state department of agriculture in the plant protection services section, the disease is spreading at an alarming rate. She identified some of the most affected counties by the disease as Kirinyaga in central Kenya, Meru, Isiolo in Eastern Kenya, Nairobi, Nakuru and in the Rift Valley.

"A pest identified as Tuta Absoluta is behind the disease which is also being felt by potato, eggplant, tobacco and pepper farmers. We have noticed that the disease has now spread to the Coastal

regions, Nyeri in central Kenya and even parts of West Pokot in the upper part of Rift Valley destroying crops worth millions of shillings," she said.

Karanja was however quick to note that no pesticide had been registered to deal with the disease which found its way into the country from neighbouring Ethiopia.

She says there is an urgent need to train farmers on ways of identifying and dealing with the disease.

"Farmers who don't know the disease are over-spraying their crop leading to high deposits of pesticides in the produce and this can be harmful to consumers," she said during a workshop in Naivasha in August on emerging pest and diseases in the country.

She termed the disease as very serious noting that 70 per cent

of produce is often lost once the produce comes under attack by the pest. She attributed the fast spread of the disease to lack of natural enemies for the pest which seems to be developing resistance to insecticides.

Karanja added that they had placed mitigation measures which include capacity building among service extension officers, noting that the government was working with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in eight counties to train farmers on how to deal with the lethal disease.

Karanja said that the ministry had submitted a cabinet memo to the president over the disease and held several farmers field days.

<http://www.the-star.co.ke/news/article-184280/tomato-disease-alert>

AFRICANS' LAND RIGHTS AT RISK AS NEW AGRICULTURAL TREND SWEEPS CONTINENT

By Janah Ncube

Agriculture in Africa is in urgent need of investment. Nearly 550 million people there are dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods, while half of the total population on the continent live in rural areas.

The adoption of a framework called the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) by Africa's leaders in 2003 confirmed that agriculture is crucial to the continent's development prospects. African governments recently reiterated this commitment at the Malabo

Summit in Guinea during June of this year.

After decades of underinvestment, African governments are now looking for new ways to mobilise funding for the sector and to deliver new technology and skills to farmers. Private sector actors are also looking for opportunities within emerging markets in Africa.

Large-scale public-private partnerships (PPPs) are an emerging trend across the continent. These so called 'mega' PPPs are agreements between national governments, aid donors,

investors and multinational companies to develop large fertile tracts of land found near to strategic infrastructure such as roads and ports.

Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Ghana and Burkina Faso all host this type of scheme. Several African countries have signed up to global initiatives such as the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, supported by the rich, industrialised economies of the G8; and GROW Africa, a PPP initiative supported by the World Economic Forum.



... cont Africans' Land Rights at Risk as New Agricultural Trend Sweeps Continent

Source: Ghana News Agency

For governments, these arrangements offer the illusion of increased capital and technology, production and productivity gains, and foreign exchange earnings.

But as Oxfam reveals, mega-PPPs present a moral hazard with serious downsides, especially for those living in areas pegged for investment.

In particular, the land rights of local communities are at risk. Within just five countries hosting mega-PPPs, the combined amount of land in target area for investment is larger than France or Ukraine.

While not all of this land will go to investors, governments have earmarked over 1.25 million hectares for transfer. This is equal to the entire amount of land in agricultural production in Zambia or Senegal.

Due to weak land tenure found in many African countries, this land transfer places local communities at significant risk of dispossession or expropriation.

These arrangements also threaten to worsen inequality, which is already severe in African countries, according to international measurements. Mega-PPP investments are likely to be delivered by – and focus on – richer, well connected companies or wealthier farmers, bypassing those who need support the most. More land will also be placed into the hands of larger players further reducing the amount available for small-scale producers.

The ability of small and medium sized enterprises to benefit from

these arrangements is also in doubt. The size of just four multinational seed and agro-chemical companies partnering with a mega-PPP in Tanzania have an annual turnover of 100 billion dollars – that's triple the size of Tanzania's economy.

These asymmetries of power could lead to anti-competitive behaviour and squeeze out smaller local and national companies from emerging domestic markets. Larger companies may also gain influence over government policies that perpetuate their control.

These types of partnership also carry serious environmental risks. An example of this is the development of large irrigation schemes for new plantations. They can reduce water availability for other users, such as local communities, smaller farmers and important other rural groups like pastoralists.

The need for private sector investment in Africa is manifest, but the quality of those inflows of capital is vital if it is to enhance the livelihoods of millions of food producers in Africa. The current mega-PPP model is unproven and risky, especially for smallholder farmers and the poor.

At the very heart of the agenda to enhance rural livelihoods and eradicate deep-seated poverty in rural areas should be a clear commitment towards approaches that are pro-smallholder, pro-women and can develop local and regional markets. The protection of land rights for local communities is also – and equally – paramount.

Oxfam's experience of working with smallholder farmers shows that

private sector investment in staple food crops, and the development of rural infrastructure such as storage facilities, combined with public sector investment in support services such as agricultural research and development, extension services and subsidies for seeds and credit, can kick-start the rural economy.

Robust regulation is also vital, to ensure that private sector investment can 'do no harm' and also 'do more good' by targeting the areas of the rural economy that can have the most impact on poverty reduction. African governments should put themselves at the forefront of this vision for agriculture.

These represent tried and tested policies towards rural development in other contexts. This approach, rather than one that subsidises the entrance of large players into African agriculture, would truly represent a new alliance to benefit all.

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GHANAIAN BREEDERS BILL WILL PROTECT LOCAL PLANT BREEDERS - SCIENTIST

By Janah Ncube

Dr Stephen Amoah, a Research Scientist of the Crop Research Institute of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), has described the Plant Breeders Bill currently before Cabinet as a positive development.

He said the Bill will help address the interests of plant breeders as well as promote agricultural productivity.

Debunking the allegations from certain quarters that the Breeders Bill, when passed, would give the giant seed companies' monopoly over seeds and denying farmers of affordable seeds, Dr Amoah explained that the Bill would provide the legal framework for breeders' investment and efforts to be recognised and necessary royalties paid to breeders.

"The Bill when passed into law will provide an incentive to stimulate new breeding initiatives that will focus on national development, provide a basis for innovative and effective breeding work at domestic level and foster partnerships between the private and public breeding sectors".

Dr Amoah said this when he made a presentation on the Breeders Bill to 26 selected journalists attending a three-day training workshop. The journalists were selected from Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions.

Organised by the Program Biosafety Systems, in collaboration with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, The International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), Africa Biosafety Network of Expertise of NEPAD and Africa Harvest, the training is aimed at equipping journalists with right information on biosafety and biotechnology issues.

Dr Amoah explained that the bill will also unveil the potential for market demands to be met where the development of new varieties are commercially viable and provide benefits at international level by removing barriers to trade in varieties, thereby increasing both domestic and international market scope.

Dr Hans Adu-Dapaah, Director of CRI, in a speech read for him explained that the main objective of the bill was to establish a legal framework to acknowledge the achievements of breeders of new varieties.

"CRI stands to benefit, and have demonstrated their potential to benefit from the system, adding that, "The same can be said for other agricultural research institutes both in the private and public sectors".

He explained that many works had gone on with plant breeders developing many varieties of crops being used by many countries like Cote d'Ivoire

and others in East Africa but no royalties have been paid to them.

"If we do not have this law passed and the countries using our varieties patent them, our labour for all these years from the laboratory to the field will be in total vain".

Dr Adu-Dapaah noted that "The bill promotes the breeding of new varieties of plants, aimed at improving the quantity, quality and cost of food, fuel, fibre and raw materials for industry and will encourage investment in plant breeding and promote the seed industry".

Dr Marian Quain a Biotechnologist with CRI stressed that Ghana at the moment did not have any genetically modified crops released unto the Ghanaian market and urged Ghanaians to for once trust the Ghanaian scientists of something good.

Professor Walter Alhassan, a Biotechnology Consultant, appealed to the media to help bridge the gap that has been created and always engage the scientists in their discussions to get the true facts to the public domain.

Ghana News Agency (GNA)



The AFSTA Congress 2015 will be held from 3-5 March 2015 at Elephant Hills Hotel in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe



Don't miss it! Check our site www.afsta.org for regular updates on the Congress

COMING SOON AFRICAN SEED MAGAZINE

The African Seed Traders Association (AFSTA) will be launching its first magazine called AFRICAN SEED in March 2015. We will call for articles for this magazine and there will be a good opportunity to advertise. Please contact AFSTA Secretariat at afsta@afsta.org for more details

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\$ 250 for a period of one year.

UPCOMING EVENTS

1. APSA Congress 2014: 10-14 Nov. 2014, Macau, China
2. AFSTA Congress 2015: 3-5 March 2015, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe
3. World Seed Congress 2015 25-27 May 2015, Kraków, Poland

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