

AFSTA CONGRESS 2013 ATTRACTS 225 DELEGATES

Organized by the Seed Producers and Traders Association of Mauritius (SPATA), the 13th African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) Annual Congress was held at Le Méridien Hotel, Mauritius from 3rd to 6th March 2013. The Congress was another resounding success for the African seed industry. Two hundred and twenty five (225) delegates from 39 countries actively participated in the congress which proved to be an excellent avenue to explore more seed businesses and strengthen the network among the seed stakeholders.

The Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology of The Republic of Mauritius, Honorable Dr. Rajeshwar Jeetah who graced the opening ceremony, emphasized on the importance of the seed sector in attaining food security in Africa. He called on the delegates to continue deploying their efforts to deliver quality seeds to farmers.

The AFSTA President, Mr. Jitu Shah, during his opening speech, said “the world now recognizes the vital role the seed industry plays in shaping policies that govern seed trade.” He encouraged the delegates to play a key role in influencing responsive policies, rules and regulations that govern the seed industry.

The congress was preceded by an ISTA/OECD half-day workshop, attended by over 80 participants. Mr. Eddie Goldschagg and Mrs. Grethe Tarp made presentations for OECD and for ISTA respectively.

Delegates were treated to a

welcome cocktail at the beach sponsored by Syngenta, where delegates enjoyed the exquisite Mauritian traditional sega dance.

This year's Congress saw the introduction of a Golf Tournament sponsored by Seed Co Limited which took place

on 3rd March 2013. During the gala dinner on the 6th of March 2013, The Group Chief Executive of Seed Co Limited., Mr. Morgan Nzwere, awarded a cash prize to the winner, Mr. Jitu Shah, who is also the current AFSTA President. He donated the prize to Thika School for the Blind in Kenya.

At the same gala dinner, winners of the best exhibition booths were also awarded tokens where AATF clinched the first position with East African Seed and CIMBRIA taking the 2nd and 3rd positions respectively.

At the AFSTA AGM, new AFSTA board members were elected as follows:

- Mr. Jitu Shah – Kenya, President
- Mr. Nicholas Goble – South Africa, Vice President
- Mr. Enock Chikava – Malawi, Past President
- Mr. Amadou Djigo – Senegal, Member
- Mr. Raman Sehgal – Egypt, Member
- Mr. Mubarak Elsheikh – Sudan, Member



Mauritius Minister for Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology Dr. Rajeshwar Jeetah, with the AFSTA President Mr. Jitu Shah during the AFSTA Congress 2013

- Mr. Abderraouf Ghariani – Tunisia, Member
- Mr. Denias Zaranyika – Zimbabwe, Member
- Mr. Pierre Ndour – Niger, Member
- Mr. Mamadou Kayentao – Mali, Member
- Mr. Rohit Brizmohun – Mauritius, Member
- Mr. Bill Even – USA, Associate Member
- Mr. François Burgaud – France, Associate Member

AFSTA also wishes to welcome

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cont ... AFSTA Congress 2013

new members that were approved at the AGM to the AFSTA family, namely; **NAFASO** – Burkina Faso, **Kannar Earth Science Pty Ltd** – South Africa, **AGRODIA** – Burkina Faso, **Takii & Company Limited** – Japan, **Africa Graines** – France and **REM S.R.L** – Italy.

The next AFSTA Congress will be held from March 4 to 7, 2014 in Tunis, Tunisia and you are encouraged to get updates on our website www.afsta.org

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Mauritius Minister for Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology Dr. Rajeshwar Jeetah, with the AFSTA Board of Directors at the AFSTA Congress 2013

AFSTA LAUNCHES SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS FOR VEGETABLES AND FIELD CROPS

The AFSTA initiative to form Special Interest Groups of Vegetables and Field crops was made a reality at the launch of the two groups on 4th March 2013, in Mauritius. The main objective of the two groups is to promote trade in quality seeds of the two categories of crops which are crucial to food security in Africa. To achieve their objectives each group will bring together stakeholders and strategize their operations.

The following were elected to lead the two groups;

Special Interest Group on Vegetables (SIGV)	
Chair	Mr. Guy Blaise from SEMAGRI, Cameroon
Vice Chair	Ms. Evelyn Musyoka from Amiran, Kenya
Secretary	AFSTA Secretariat
Group Technical Support	Dr. Jackline Hughes from AVRDC
	Dr. Abdou Tekauano from AVRDC, Tanzania
Special Interest Group Field Crops (SIGFC)	
Chair	Mr. Worede Woldemariam from Pioneer, Ethiopia
Vice Chair	Mr. Johan Pieterse from Klein Karoo, South Africa
Group Technical Support	Mr. Denias Zaranyika from Seed Co, Zimbabwe Dr. John MacRoberts from CIMMYT, Zimbabwe

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MALAWIAN FARMERS ASK FOR EXPANSION OF BT COTTON CONFINED FIELD TRIALS

Farmers in Malawi have called on researchers to expand trials of Bt cotton into the crop's growing areas so as to speed up its acceptance and commercialization.

According to Mr. Mphatso Dakamau of the Farmers Union of Malawi (FUM), and who is also the treasurer of the Seed Trade

Association of Malawi (STAM), more farmers in the country were willing to adopt technologies which will increase their production and cut production costs of their agricultural produce.

He noted that the adoption of Genetically Modified crops can solve the problems which farmers face and increase their income earnings.

Mr Dakamau was speaking during a workshop organized by STAM and AFSTA on February 28, 2013 in Lilongwe to sensitize members of STAM on local and global biotechnology practice. The workshop was attended by AFSTA representative, members of STAM, journalists, farmer representatives and government officials from Environmental



cont... MALAWIAN FARMERS ASK FOR EXPANSION OF BT COTTON CONFINED FIELD TRIALS



Mr. Mphatso Dakamau of the Farmers Union of Malawi (FUM) making a presentation

Affairs Department and Ministry of Agriculture among others.

Making a presentation during the workshop, a university don, Dr Weston Mwase said successful commercialization of GM cotton will provide farmers with an opportunity to join other farmers from South Africa and Burkina Faso who are benefiting from commercial growing of cotton. He urged seed companies to embrace biotechnology and actively participate in the debates surrounding the technology and its development.

He reiterated that technology development is the most important factor for Malawi to achieve an agricultural revolution as has been the case with China, India, Argentina and Brazil.

Citing Bt cotton, Dr Mwase said the benefits of the crop were many and included increased resistance to insect pests (Bt maize, Bt cotton), reduced use of chemical pesticides and reduced environmental pollution. (Globally, cotton is responsible

for 25 per cent of chemical use in agriculture). Other benefits include reduced losses from pests (yield increase to bollworm control range from 25 per cent to 60 per cent) and reduced costs on production of cotton.

He told the participants that for a successful process it was vital to draw a roadmap for the commercialization of Bt cotton technology to enable introduction of suitable transgenic cotton varieties for profitable cotton production & generation of foreign exchange.

In Malawi, the University of Malawi and Monsanto launched confined trials on Bt Cotton recently.

Commenting on the workshop, the participants, while appreciating that the AFSTA/STAM workshop with seed companies was a first engagement of its kind, the participants noted that the workshop had set a positive precedent in the direction of biotech acceptance among seed companies and should be

used to achieve many things if members engaged each other professionally. They said that the workshop had instilled in them a need to work together through a formal platform so that they could produce champions of biotechnology among themselves.

Among other things, the participants, as a way forward, agreed that there is need to bring the seed industry players together with the Ministry of Agriculture to discuss how they can work together.

Secondly, it was agreed that STAM should work in close collaboration with Bunda and Monsanto to organize a “seeing is believing” tour to the Confined Field Trials site for the Bt Cotton.

Besides, there is need for the seed players to set up a mechanism which will strategically bring various stakeholders together so that they can design and operate targeted advocacy campaigns on biotechnology and GMOs in particular.

Finally, the participants called for greater involvement of the media as the technology was being developed. They proposed creation of a platform where STAM members and stakeholders would come up with a design to efficiently engage with the media to promote informed and balanced reporting of biotechnology. The draft COMESA Seed Trade Harmonization Regulations which were reviewed and endorsed by the COMESA 10th Legal Drafting Sub-committee last September are now ready for endorsement by the COMESA Ministers of



DRAFT COMESA SEED TRADE HARMONISATION REGULATIONS READY

Agriculture and environment in June this year.

According to Dr John Mukuka, the ACTESA/COMESA seed development expert, the regional block through ACTESA has gone a step further to develop the ACTESA Seed Harmonization and Trade Regulation Implementation Program (ASHTRIP).

Dr Mukuka noted that the main thrust of ASHTRIP is to domesticate the harmonized seed regulations in the 19 COMESA member states in the SADC, EAC and COMESA tripartite arrangement. However, before final approval of COMESA Seed Trade Harmonization Regulations, it is imperative that Member States deliberate on the ASHTRIP at a regional consultative meeting planned for March 27th to 28th, 2013 in Lusaka and give feedback on practical implementation at country specific level.

Proposed in ASHTRIP is an awareness creation campaign

that will include dialogue with COMESA member states for the alignment of their national seed regulations to the COMESA Seed Trade Harmonization Regulations. Furthermore, capacity building for all the stakeholders in the seed value chain will be critical for the domestication of the COMESA Seed Trade Harmonization Regulations as COMESA Member States are at different seed development levels.

With these strategies in place and in order to achieve an African Green Revolution and the goal of 6% growth in agriculture under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP), national governments supported by development partners must create an enabling environment and enterprise driven stimulus that will strengthen African seed companies and their distribution chains. In addition, the intervention at national level will be within the national CAADP investment plans and ASHTRIP will be a

programme implemented with the CAADP regional compact.

The development of the draft Seed Trade harmonization Regulations was triggered by the declaration COMESA Council Ministers that COMESA should rationalize and harmonize seed regulations and policies in its 19 member States within two years. The declaration was made in March 2008.

It is hoped that once the draft COMESA Seed Trade harmonization Regulations are finally approved by Council of Ministers and domesticated thereof, there shall be improvement of quality seed available to small-holder farmers, saving time and resources in the seed traded around COMESA and also improving household food.

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CROPLIFE SOUTH AFRICA LAUNCHES AGRICULTURE INTELLIGENCE (AGRIINTEL)

On 13th February 2013, CropLife South Africa launched Agrilintel. Agrilintel is a unique South African crop management tool tailored to the needs of modern crop production. It has comprehensive information on plant pests, diseases and weeds that threaten crops and offers information on registered agricultural remedies, application windows, withholding periods, maximum residue limits

and export requirements through a web-based search engine to assist producers to select crop management systems that will afford them a competitive edge in the local and export markets.

It is a smooth communication of reliable information that creates a strong foundation for the professionalism in the crop protection trade. A strong point emphasized is that it is free to

vetted users and that ownership is vested in CropLife South Africa. A lot more development is needed to turn this tool into a world-class apparatus but there are a number of initiatives now ready in this direction making this indispensable to South African agriculture.

Source: www.croplife.org



TANZANIA DEVELOPS 22 NEW HYBRID VARIETIES

Tanzania's seed multiplication centres have developed 22 new hybrid seed varieties, which promise higher productivity and are reportedly more resistant to drought and diseases.

Addressing journalists last month, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives, Dr Mohamed Muya said most of the seeds have been developed to cope with effects of changing climatic patterns.

The PS reported that the National Seed Committee has approved the use of the 22 hybrid seed varieties.

The newly developed seeds included varieties of maize, sorghum, beans, cow peas, Irish potatoes, rice and barley.

The endorsement of the seed varieties follows recommendations made by the National Variety Release Committee which met earlier in March in Arusha

Apart from having high productivity, the developed seeds have also proved to be drought and disease resistant. They also reach early maturity, a plus, given the unpredictable weather changes.

The seed varieties have been developed through public assistance, the private research centres of Uyole (Mbeya), Ilonga (Kilosa), KATRIN (Ifakara), HORTI-Tengeru (Arusha) and private companies of Aminata Quality Seeds and Consultancy Limited, Tanzania Breweries Limited, Pannar Seeds (T) Company,

Namburi Seed Company, East African Seed (T) and Bajuta International (T) Limited.

Mass production of the approved varieties of seeds is scheduled to commence soon though no specifications were offered by the Agricultural Seeds Agency (ASA), who explained that their target is to ensure that the seed is delivered to farmers ahead of the planting season.



Dr Mohamed Muya, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives,

According to the PS, the new technology is meant to enhance food security through conventional breeding and biotechnology tools and drought resistant maize varieties to be offered farmers on royalty free basis.

While this would be a boost to national food security, it is also expected to be good news to farmers in Tanzania who have for many years raised concern over few improved seed varieties in the market.

“As a result of climate change, rainfall patterns have changed considerably in recent years and drought has become more frequent and severe...” he said.

Drought is one of the leading factors behind low investment in improved farming practices because farmers are scared of

losing their investments in the event a drought, mostly unpredictable and hence not covered by most insurance companies.

“The reality of climate change therefore calls for urgent action to develop appropriate coping mechanisms...”

One of such mechanism, according to the ministry researcher is to develop and introduce improved crop varieties that can grow well even in poor rains. His statement comes at a time when reports have it that one of the crops that have been severely affected by drought is maize, the most important food security crop in many sub-Saharan African countries.

Access to seeds that produce well on a consistent basis during moderate drought stress is expected to reduce the risk of crop failure and break the cycle of food insecurity.

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ISAAA 2012 REPORT: GROWTH OF BIOTECH ON THE RISE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA) released its annual global biotech crop acreage report, which found that global adoption of plant biotechnology continues has increased. In 2012, biotech crops were planted on 170 million hectares in 28 countries and were grown by 17.3 million farmers. Last year marked a significant



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and unprecedented milestone for agricultural technology adoption as developing country hectareage of biotech crops exceeded the area planted with biotech crops in developed nations for the first time.

Two new developing countries grew biotech crops for the first time last year (Sudan and Cuba), helping increase biotech adoption in developing nations by over

nine million hectares in 2012 over 2011. ISAAA's report also highlighted the incredible growth biotechnology has experienced over the past sixteen years of commercialization. From 1996 to 2012, biotech crops have grown from 1.7 million hectares to 170 million hectares, a 100-fold increase. No other farm technology in history has been adopted this quickly.

Source: www.isaaa.org.



PICTURE SPEAK



UPCOMING EVENTS

1. Sansor Annual Congress: 8 - 9 May 2013, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
2. ISF World Seed Congress 2013: 27 - 29 May 2013 - Athens, Greece
3. OECD: Annual Meeting of the Seed Schemes: 3 - 6 Jun 2013, Paris, France
4. ISTA Congress 2013: 12 - 18 June 2013, Antalya, Turkey
5. ASTA's 129th Annual Convention: 15 - 19 June 2013, Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center - Nashville, USA.
6. European Seed Association Annual Meeting: 13 - 15 Oct. 2013 - Warsaw, Poland

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Disclaimer:

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