



THE AFRICAN SEED TRADE ASSOCIATION

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Major regional seed industry alliance to be launched in Nairobi

MAY 15, 2012, NAIROBI : An alliance aimed at strengthening capacities of the seed industry in Eastern and Southern Africa will be officially launched at Hilton Hotel in Nairobi, Kenya, on Thursday 17th May 2012, from 9.00 am.

The Alliance for the Seed Industry in Eastern and Southern Africa (ASIESA) will be launched by Kenya's agriculture minister Dr. Sally Kosgei, in a ceremony that has attracted representatives of several international, regional and national organizations and seed associations.

According to the AFSTA Secretary General Justin Rakotoarisaona, agricultural performance in Africa is still poor compared to the rest of the world because of low uptake and use of certified seeds. He noted that access to quality seeds by farmers is paramount in enabling Africa to produce enough food to feed its growing population and to be food secure.

This, he said, would only be possible if an enabling environment to foster the emergence of profitable and competitive African seed companies is created to provide a steadily improving, reliable and lasting supply of locally-tested, high quality seed for farmers.

For African seed companies to be successful in meeting customer and stakeholders' need, gain improved access to regional markets, and to be able to compete nationally, regionally and even internationally, they must have better access to services and technical support, and be supported by an effective seed industry voice in policy, regulatory, and trade dialogue, the Secretary General said.

Currently, investment in the seed sector in Africa is pretty low. The global seed business is roughly worth about USD 30 billion. Out of this sub-Saharan Africa's share is only worth 800 million dollars representing three per cent.

There are many challenges impeding rapid growth of the seed sector in Africa. These include low adoption of seed technologies by farmers, weak seed and enforcement of regulations, restricted cross-border seed movement and technologies, poor infrastructure,

and lack of reliable data on seed trade to make informed decision. Other challenges include expensive financial services, lack of suitable land to produce, counterfeiting of seeds, inadequate protection of intellectual property rights and the list is long.

ASIESA, which is an innovative public-private partnership between AFSTA and COMESA (Common Markets for Eastern and Southern Africa), is expected to find solutions to some of the challenges that were identified through open, participatory workshops by the seed industry in eastern and southern Africa.

The five-year project, partly funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), will be implemented in Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Madagascar.

It is hoped that successful implementation in the eight countries would lead to improved access to affordable, reliable and timely supply of adapted genetics and traits in high-quality seeds and planting materials; self-supporting and profit-making seed distribution chains that are supplying quality seeds and other inputs to farmers in the region; improved and harmonized seed regulatory and policy environment to facilitate access and trade in grain and seed throughout the region; and Effective representation of seed industry voice in policy related dialogue at all levels.

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About AFSTA

AFSTA is a not-for-profit membership association formed in 2000 to champion interests of private seed companies in Africa. It is registered in Kenya as an International Organization with an office for West Africa in Bamako, Mali. Currently, the Association has about 92 members comprising of 62 seed companies and 24 National Seed Trade Associations, among others.