

## Dakar set to host AFSTA Congress in March 2023

By Aghan Daniel I AFSTA Communication Officer



the association hoped to host 350 delegates and hence surpass 250 delegates that they hosted in 2017 when the Congress was last held in Dakar. An attractive and innovated program will be lined up to make the congress 2023 more productive and beneficial for all the delegates.

The National Organizing Committee is working tirelessly to ensure that it meets the expectations of the delegates.

### Seed sector in Senegal

Senegal's Institute *Sénégalais de Recherches Agricoles (ISRA)*, which produces breeder and foundation seeds for all main field crops is the body responsible for plant research and varietal improvement.

For more about the country's seed system, one needs to know that the **Division de Production de Semences** is responsible for seed quality control.

The country has a legal and regulatory framework, governed by law, that relates to variety registration, production and certification of seeds and plants. The country established the National Advisory Committee for Seeds and Plants, which

oversees regulation of the production, certification and trade of seeds and plants, and it has also implemented related decrees for establishing a directory of species and plant varieties cultivated in Senegal. The national framework has been reinforced by the implementation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) harmonized seeds regulations.

For all those who love seed matters in Africa and globally, Dakar will be the place to be as the Senegalese Seed Association (UNIS) host the 23<sup>rd</sup> AFSTA Annual Congress from March 6 to 8, 2023 at King Fahd Palace Hotel in Dakar. The online registration of the Congress will open at the end of November 2022.

The National Organising Committee's Chairman, Mr Modou Thiam, called on stakeholders to turn up in large numbers at the Congress to extend their business portfolios with players from all parts of the world.

Speaking in Dakar, Mr Thiam expressed confidence that with the fears of COVID-19 minimal,

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# GMOs now legal in Kenya after Cabinet lifts ban

By Aghan Daniel | AFSTA Communication Officer | [daghan@afsta.org](mailto:daghan@afsta.org)

Plant scientists have today welcomed the lifting of the ban on genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in Kenya terming in a breakthrough for commerce.

According to Dr Mwimali Murenga of KALRO, the move will definitely translate into commercialization of plant biotechnology crop products such as maize and cassava. He added that scholars have something to celebrate since research in biotech would definitely be funded. He added that Kenya will now be in a position to attract more funding for investments and research as the ban had created an impression that the country is not even the place to invest in terms of crop research. In the end, this will boost productivity among farmers the end user of biotech seed.

Besides, he noted, this will translate into training opportunities for students at the universities who had long given up the course due to disillusionment caused by the ban effected in 2012.

**"This decision is a great signal to Africa and opens more opportunities for Kenya people"**, said Dr Jeremy Ouedraogo, head of African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD) African Biosafety Network of Expertise (ABNE) program upon



*Kenyan Cabinet meeting that lifted the GMO ban*

receiving news on the new development in Kenya.

Experts hold that the ban had caused the country to lose nearly 400,000 metric tonnes of maize annually costed at USD 9 billion per year.

While announcing the lifting of the ban, Kenya's cabinet noted in part, "As part of the medium to long term responses to the ongoing drought, and as a progressive step towards significantly redefining agriculture in Kenya by adopting crops that are resistant to pests and disease, Cabinet also considered various expert and technical reports on adoption of biotechnology; including reports of the Kenya's National Biosafety Authority (NBA), World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United States of America's Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the European Food

Safety Authority (EFSA)."

The statement added that in accordance with the recommendation of the *Task Force to Review Matters Relating to Genetically Modified Foods and Food Safety*, and in fidelity with the guidelines of the National Biosafety Authority on all applicable international treaties including the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB), Cabinet vacated its earlier decision of 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2012 prohibiting the open cultivation of genetically modified crops and the importation of food crops and animal feeds produced through biotechnology innovations; effectively lifting the ban on Genetically Modified Crops.

# More Nigerian farmers opt for cotton as price hits n550,000 per ton

By Vincent Yusuf | [vincentayusuf@gmail.com](mailto:vincentayusuf@gmail.com)

**N**igerian farmers are increasingly taking up cultivation of cotton in comparison to two years ago when the technology was introduced in the country.

Most of them, however, planted the Bt cotton varieties, which yield more than two tons per hectare on the average as against the traditional seed that rarely yields up to 800 grams per hectare.

So, production this year has significantly increased, thanks to the price of the produce, which shot to a record high.

Since December 2021, the price of cotton per ton rose from N350 per kg (USD 0.8) (N350,000 per ton) (USD 800) to close to N550 per kg (USD 1.3) (N550,000 per ton) (USD 1300) a few months ago, which saw more farmers going into production this year, according to Alhaji Danjuma Ibrahim, a cotton farmer who also trades in cotton in Adamawa State.

Alhaji Danjuma said more farmers opted for the Bollgard II varieties this year because of better yield, superiority in quality and resistance to cotton pests—especially pink bollworms.

Speaking with **Daily Trust on Sunday** in Abuja, the National President of Cotton Association of Nigeria (NACOTAN), Mr Anibe Achimugu, said farmers under the association planted 1,849 hectares this year.

He added that they also supported other farmers with inputs to cultivate over 3,000 hectares in the 2022 planting season.

Although some farmers said the current price of N18,000 (USD 42) per kg of the certified seed was high, others acknowledged that the benefits outweighed the cost.

“But when you look at the price issue, we also look at the benefit and why you’re paying higher. Why you’re paying higher is because at least you get 90 per

cent germination assurance. Why you are paying higher is also because of the yield.

“If you utilise best agronomy practices, you will be getting nothing less than two metric tons per hectare. Compare that to the conventional seeds from which you get less than one ton”.

“There is also the advantage of you spending less in terms of pest management because you won’t be utilising many chemicals to fight bollworms”.

“In addition, these seeds are short-duration and drought resistant,” the NACOTAN president stated”.

Achimugu, who is also the Managing Director/CEO of Arewa Cotton and Allied Products (ArewaCotton), said farmers in states in the North West, North East and North Central planted the Bt cotton because they were assured of good germination; and even with less fertiliser, growers can still get something good.

Dr Amos Phiri, who worked with farmers as extension agent in Adamawa last

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# Embrace new breeding technologies to enhance food production, African countries urged

By Njeri Murigi ([healthjournalist@gmail.com](mailto:healthjournalist@gmail.com))

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season, said over 300 cartons of the Bt cotton seeds have been procured by farmers' associations and distributed to their members this season alone in the state.

This is higher than what the farmers bought last year.

Each carton contains 16kg of seeds and farmers are expected to use at least 4kg per hectare.

He said the number of farmers this year was massive in the state because prices have been good in the last two years.

For farmers under the Anchor Borrower Programme, the market is already guaranteed according to the president of NACOTAN.

The Deputy Director, National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA), Dr Rose Gidado, who emphasised the advantage of the seeds, said Bt cotton is extremely resistant to the pink bollworm complex, which constantly ravaged and tore cotton and



prevented it from having high yield. For farmers, BT cotton is a lifesaver.

Dr Gidado, who is also the country's coordinator, Open Forum for Biotechnology, said in Nigeria, farmers stopped growing cotton because the low yield made the industry unattractive. But this new seed has suddenly revived the cotton industry.

The textile sector will soon undergo a transformation and contribute to the nation's GDP.

Mahyco and Shiram are the two companies marketing the seeds in the country and sources said they have provided over 100 tons for Nigerian farmers this planting season.

Meanwhile, stakeholders are worried that while farmers are gradually returning to cotton production, the textile industry is still in comatose despite the N100 billion revival funds managed by the Bank of Industry.

Source: <https://dailytrust.com/more-farmers-opt-for-cotton-as-price-hits-n550000-per-ton>

# EAC's New bill set to improve Seed Trade

By Aghan Daniel | AFSTA Communication Officer | [daghan@afsta.org](mailto:daghan@afsta.org)

**P**roduction and trade in certified seed in East Africa will get a boost once a new legislation is enacted.

The Bill is currently being finalized by legal drafters before it is tabled in the regional parliament for enactment.

"The overall goal is to improve access of farmers to improved seeds," said Mr Fahari Marwa, the principal agricultural economist with the East African Community (EAC).

He noted this last week during a virtual workshop on new guidelines by the African Union (AU) on seed regulatory framework in the continent.

Drafting of the EAC Seed and Plant Varieties Bill dates back to June 2018 when technical and legal experts convened for the purpose.

The draft bill was adopted in December 2018 and was brought to the EAC Council of Ministers for consideration a year later.

Ever since, the legal document has been forwarded to the EAC Sectoral Council of Legal and Judicial Affairs for finalization.

The objective of the Bill is to promote production and trade in certified seed "within the Community and with other trading partners".

The proposed law will open room for the implementation of the harmonized procedures for plant variety registration.

This will see improved seed certification, phytosanitary measures on seeds, import and export documentation and plant

variety protection systems. According to Mr Marwa, the new legislation is set to be approved by the Council of Ministers in November this year. It will later be forwarded to the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) for enactment as 'EAC Seed Act'.

Cooperation seed multiplication and distribution is one of the hallmarks of the EAC Treaty in a bid to attain food and nutrition security.

The virtual meeting was organized by the Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers Forum (ESAFF), a regional lobby based in Morogoro, Tanzania.

## Tanzania - Netherlands ties will help improve potato production in Tanzania

By Aghan Daniel | AFSTA Communication Officer | [daghan@afsta.org](mailto:daghan@afsta.org)

**I**n Tanzania, The Netherlands has been an important stakeholder in promoting and developing the production and use of the potato crop.

Speaking during the commemoration of the World Potato Day, which was held at the Dutch Embassy in Tanzania on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2022, the Ambassador of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Tanzania, Wiebe de Boer said that the day was designated to draw attention to the importance of the potato crop and bring out critical issues in the production and supply chain, while ensuring the potato's contribution to sustainable agriculture and achieving the

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially goals relative to hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

He added that in Tanzania, potato crop is predominantly smallholders in a low input-output farming system. As a crop, the potato has the potential to make a significant contribution to food and nutrition security because it is a nutrient-dense food and can be well suited to the local farming systems.

With the availability of improved Dutch potato seed varieties, farmers have an opportunity to

increase efficiency in farming which will trigger more investments and trade within and across the sector creating an immediate and long-term impact on income generation, employment and entrepreneurship, food insecurity, and climate change resilience, especially for the participation of small-holder farmers.

Given that, de Boer has urged youth to prioritize and take up potato farming due to its numerous benefits as well as the growing demand for the product locally and in the international market.

# Africa Vegetable Breeding Consortium (AVBC) holds annual workshop in Benin

By the African Vegetable Breeding Consortium (AVBC)

The Africa Vegetable Breeding Consortium (AVBC) held its annual workshop from 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022 at the IITA campus in Benin, which hosts the World Vegetable Center's regional office for West and Central Africa.

Present at the event were 45 people who were mainly WorldVeg scientists and 17 seed companies mainly from West, Central and East Africa as well as from Europe. Speakers at the opening session included Malick Ba, Regional Director of World Vegetable Center-West and Central Africa, Justin Rakotoarisaona, Secretary General of AFSTA and Roland Schafleitner, Flagship Program Leader - Vegetable Diversity and Improvement of WorldVeg.

During the annual gathering, the importance of continuing to work for the development of the consortium was emphasized. Crops addressed included mungbean, pumpkin and tomato with presentations on the first day dedicated to the breeding lines and research directions for each crop. Also addressed were habanero peppers, sweet peppers, chillies, amaranth and eggplant.

A visit to the demo field was also undertaken to see the lines in the demonstration field.

The second day was devoted to habanero peppers, sweet



*The annual workshop is a privileged moment to evaluate the breeding lines in the field*

peppers, chillies, amaranth and eggplant. The day concluded with a visit to a producer in the Seme-Podji area.

The crops that showed the most interest were tomato and okra. 93% of the respondents said they planned to order some of the exclusive breeding lines.

2022 was a year marked by a growth in the consortium to 44 members. Consortium members ordered more than 200 WorldVeg breeding lines. The consortium has also been very active in sharing information through 5 online webinars with an average

participation of 35 people per webinar.

Next year's AVBC annual workshop is planned for Arusha, Tanzania in September. Details will be announced in due course. Membership renewal will start in November 2022.

AFSTA members are encouraged to join the African Vegetable Breeding Consortium (AVBC) to enrich their portfolio as they supply superior vegetable varieties to farmers.



*A producer in the Seme-Podji area whose farm was visited during the event*

# Kenya's National Biosafety Authority (NBA) appoints Dr. Roy Mugiira as new CEO



*Dr Roy B. Mugiira giving a speech at a past event.*

**D**r Roy B. Mugiira is the Chief Executive Officer at the National Biosafety Authority. His appointment was made formal on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022 by the body's Board.

Dr Mugiira who has been acting CEO from February, joined Authority in August 2021 as the Director of Technical Services (DTS). Previously, he served as the Director of Research, Ministry of Education.

In the formative stages of NBA, he was involved in building organizational, institutional and human resource capacity for effectively enforcing the

Biosafety Act, 2009.

The new CEO holds a PhD in diagnostics of plant viral infections based on the alignment of their DNA sequences. In addition, he has research experience in cloning viral DNA genomes into gene silencing vectors for application in functional genomics. He holds a Master of Science Degree in Plant Pathology and a Bachelor of Education Science Degree from Egerton University.

With more than fifteen years of experience in science and technology, Dr Mugiira has played a key role in developing Kenya's Biotechnology

Development Policy and the Biosafety regulatory framework for Genetically Modified Organisms.

Dr Mugiira brings unique skills, perspectives, and relationships to lead NBA into the future. Building on what NBA has already accomplished, he is expected to hone the NBA's strategic direction, grow and develop the organization, strengthen its partnerships, and enable NBA to build new relationships.

# PICTORIAL



*Participants pose for a photograph during a 3-day training by the National Seed Council in Nigeria for 25 actors including farmers, extension agents, researchers from NCRI and IAR on Quality Seed Production funded by the PAIRED project of CORAF.*



*AFSTA Board members at the just concluded meeting in Nairobi Kenya held from 12<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> October 2022 at the Radisson Blu hotel, Nairobi, Kenya.*



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

1. 22<sup>nd</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> October 2022: Euroseeds Congress 2022, Berlin, Germany
2. 24<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> October 2022: UPOV annual meetings, Geneva, Switzerland
3. 30<sup>th</sup> Oct. - 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov 2022: ISF Mid-term meetings: Rome, Italy
4. 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> Nov 2022: Global Conference on Sustainable Plant Production ([Register Virtually](#))
5. 14<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> November 2022: APSA Congress, Bangkok, Thailand
6. 14<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> November 2022: Triennial Symposium of ICRT, Nairobi, Kenya
7. 6<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023: AFSTA Congress 2023, Dakar, Senegal
8. 5<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> June 2023: ISF World Seed Congress 2023, Cape Town, South Africa

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