

The African Seed



Issue # 11 | March 2025



*Special
Edition to
commemorate
25 years*

DOWN MEMORY LANE

*AFSTA's journey,
a quarter century later*

BIG READ

*The power of agricultural
innovation*





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African Seed Trade Association (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 organisation with an office for West Africa in Dakar, Senegal. Currently, the Association has about 120 members comprising seed companies and national seed trade associations, among others.

Vision

All African farmers have access to quality seed for food security.

Mission

To create the best environment for trade & innovation in quality seed for the benefit of members & farmers in Africa.

Objectives

1. To expand market reach and transparency.
2. To develop new and innovative offerings and approaches that enhance revenue generation and diversifying revenue streams.
3. To leverage technologies to drive innovation efficiency.
4. To develop strategic partnerships with key stakeholders to broaden market access and efficiency.
5. To optimize operational excellence to improve deliveries, reporting and accountability.

Cover photos

Showcasing the power of agricultural innovation

Photos Credit:

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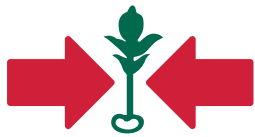


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WORD FROM PRESIDENT

Embrace the lessons of 25-years journey to illuminate a bright future

Mr. Amadou Sarr
President of the Board of Directors of AFSTA



Greetings to all our esteemed AFSTA members, partners, and friends.

It is with great pleasure that I extend a warm welcome to you for this special edition of *The African Seed Magazine*. This particular issue is significant as it commemorates the 25th Anniversary of AFSTA, a milestone we are proudly celebrating at this Congress in the vibrant city of Kigali, Rwanda.

This remarkable 25-year odyssey not only highlights our numerous achievements but also sheds light on the various challenges that visionary leaders have bravely navigated to foster the growth of our association.

Over the years, AFSTA has expanded its membership base and geographic reach, proudly representing members across all continents. We have evolved not just in numbers, but also in our mission and vision, serving as a prominent voice for the seed industry in Africa and beyond.

Kigali is the perfect setting to honour these trailblazers, pioneers and leaders of first generations of AFSTA.

While we remember some of our influential founding members who have sadly exited the scene, we are fortunate that many other former leaders and life-members remain and are, actively engaging with us here in Kigali. Their unwavering commitment continues to inspire all of us to uphold the values of AFSTA and strive for excellence in the African seed industry.

As we celebrate our 25th silver jubilee anniversary, this moment offers a unique opportunity to pause, reflect on our journey and set the stage for a bright future. The 2025 Annual General Meeting represents a pivotal transition, where we will adopt a new strategic plan under the leadership of our newly appointed Secretary General, Dr. Yacouba Diallo, who takes over from the founding Secretary General, Mr. Justin Rakotoarasaona, who successfully guided the Association for an impressive 24 years.

This new strategic plan will be a vital tool for promoting market access and trade, fostering industry innovation, developing partnerships, and advocating for supportive policies and regulations.

Furthermore, it aims to enhance the services we provide to our members and ensure the sustainability of our Association.

I firmly believe that the ever expanding AFSTA community will continue to rally behind our initiatives, enabling us to reach new heights while tackling the challenges that our industry faces today and plan to encounter in the future. United in our dedication and support, we will cultivate a competitive and resilient seed industry that plays a crucial role in transforming African agriculture.

As we gather for Congress 2025, I encourage all delegates not only to celebrate the significant contributions of the seed industry but also to take the opportunity to explore Kigali, one of Africa's most picturesque and culturally rich cities. With its stunning landscapes, vibrant culture, and incredible wildlife viewing opportunities, Kigali has much to offer for those looking to immerse themselves in the beauty of our continent.

Thank you for being an integral part of this journey, and I look forward to our shared accomplishments.



Antitrust guidelines for AFSTA's meetings



All AFSTA meetings bring together competitors in the seed trade to discuss industry concerns. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to comply with national and international antitrust laws. Whereas some activities among competitors are both legal and beneficial to the industry, such gatherings of competitors are inherently treated as suspect under most antitrust laws. Antitrust laws do not require agreements or combinations among competitors to be necessarily formal in order to raise questions. It may include any kind of formal or informal understanding, secretive or public, under which each of the participants can reasonably expect that another will follow a particular course of action.

All participants in any AFSTA meetings are responsible for ensuring that topics, which may give an appearance of an agreement that would violate any antitrust law, are not discussed. It is the responsibility of each participant to avoid raising improper subjects for discussion. These guidelines have been prepared to ensure that participants in any AFSTA meeting are aware of their obligations.

The dos and don'ts presented below highlight only the most basic antitrust principles. Each participant in any AFSTA meeting should be thoroughly familiar with his or her responsibilities under antitrust laws and should seek counsel for specific situations, interpretations or advice.

Dos & Don'ts

Dos

1. Have a written agenda and adhere to it for all meetings.
2. Prepare minutes of all meetings and object if they do not accurately reflect discussions and actions taken.
3. Consult with legal counsel on all antitrust questions relating to meetings.
4. Protest against any discussions or activities which appear to violate antitrust laws; disassociate yourself from any such discussions or activities and leave any meeting in which they persist.

Don'ts

1. Do not, in fact or appearance, discuss or exchange information regarding products or services, including.
 - (a) Individual company prices, price changes, price differentials, mark-ups, discounts, allowances, credit terms, etc., or data that bear on price, such as costs, production, capacity, inventories, sales, among others.
 - (b) Industry pricing policies, price levels, price changes, differentials, among others.
 - (c) Changes in industry production, capacity or inventories.
 - (d) Bids on contracts for particular products and services; procedures for responding to bid invitations.
 - (e) Plans by individual companies concerning design, production, distribution or marketing of particular products, including proposed territories or customers.
 - (f) Matters relating to actual or potential individual customers or suppliers that might have the effect of excluding them from any market or of influencing the business conduct of firms toward such suppliers or customers.
2. Do not discuss or exchange information regarding the above matters during social gatherings incidental to meetings, even in jest.

The transformative journey of Africa's seed industry:

A stammering, dynamic present and an inspiring future

Dr Yacouba Diallo
Secretary General



It is now one year since I was appointed the Secretary General of AFSTA by the Board of Directors. How an exciting and challenging responsibility. In addition to my daily assignment dealing with the complexity of the African seed sector, I am delighted to share my thoughts on the future of the African seed industry in the next 25 years for this special edition of the Africa Seed Magazine.

Having no experience as a soothsayer with a magic crystal ball, it is challenging to talk about a dynamic sector like the seed industry with a fascinating mix of challenges and opportunities.

Like many other industries, the seed business in Africa has changed over time. These changes stem from new farming techniques and technologies, seed market demands, finance, investments and human skills matters, agricultural policies and regulations.

Today, the seed system in most African countries is private-led. Governments and regional economic communities have established seed regulations and policies for local production and supply of quality seeds. Besides setting up national seed regulatory bodies, they have joined regional and continental efforts/initiatives like the African Seed and Biotechnology Program and the regional harmonized seed regulations (COMESA, ECOWAS, SADC, etc.).

The opening up of the sector to private players has led to more competition and easier access to better seed types, including Hybrid Seeds and Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), where regulations allow.

These changes contribute to boosting crop yields as well as help plants to fight off pests and diseases better.

The industry still faces several hurdles and challenges. Many small scale farmers struggle to access and market certified seed due to several factors such as policy barriers and weak road networks.

Add to this list illegal practices and climate change which affect farming in a big way, including more frequent extreme weather events (e.g. floods, droughts) with significant implications on diminishing soil fertility, and the emergence of new plant pests and diseases.

Consequently, the current competitiveness of Africa in the global seed industry remains low. The market value of the African seed industry is estimated at only 2% of the global market value, and the intra-regional seed trade estimated at 12-18% compared to 25% in Latin America, 50% in Asia, and 62% in Europe. The consequence is that only 20 to 25% of African farmers use certified seeds, resulting in Africa returning the lowest crop yields.

Fortunately, the future for the seed industry in the region is brightening up. It is poised for significant growth and transformation, driven by technological advancements, increasing demand for food security and adoption of modern agricultural practices.

Globally, the African seed market is estimated to be worth \$3.15 billion in 2025, with a projected growth rate of 5%, potentially reaching \$4.15 billion by 2030.

Increasingly, people are adopting resilient farming systems and their ability to sustain themselves.

This implies climate-smart farming methods, which require embracing better breeding innovations and modern biotechnology techniques that produce innovative varieties.

These varieties can withstand harsh weather conditions, serve growing population nutritional dietary requirements and meet the demand of other associated industries (animal feed, biofuel, etc.).

In addition, the future of the seed industry is poised to be significantly influenced by digital technology's transformation. This transformation encompasses precision breeding and farming practices, where advanced artificial intelligence (AI) tools will play a crucial role in decision-making and investment strategies throughout the entire seed value chain.

Finally, investment and inclusive partnership is needed for more funding in seed infrastructure, research and assistance for farmers to access good seeds.

Both the governments and the industry will have to sustainably innovate and cooperate to maintain supportive policies that assist the industry to thrive while addressing the growing demand for quality seeds and providing small farmers with more access to quality seeds from the latest technologies and innovations.

The African Seed Trade Association, as the apex continental seed industry outfit stands on the threshold of a significant collective role in technological advancements, the African seed market access and cross-border trade promotion in order to ease the process of facilitating farmer access to quality seeds.

Only then will the industry be seen to have impacted food security and raised levels of livelihoods of African populations.



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WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Premier Seed Nigeria Limited (PSNL) is the foremost Private Seed Company in Nigeria, engaged in research, production and marketing of improved seeds of fields crops and vegetables to farmers nation-wide and in the West Africa Sub region to boost agricultural productivity. The company produces high quality certified seeds of different crop varieties under the keen supervision of the National Agricultural Seed Council (NASC) for the purpose of certification in fulfillment of Nigeria Seed Law to foster quality assurance of seeds distributed to the Nigerian farmer.

GOAL:

To make the farming business profitable for all farmers by increasing productivity.

MISSION:

To provide improved seeds for the farmers through the broad application of the science of genetics and innovative technology in order to satisfy farmer's needs.

Help farmers increase productivity.

To encourage the use of improved seeds to foster sustainable food security and attainment of social and economic development,

To apply modern technology and a team of highly skilled staff combined with standard ethical practice in stimulating and motivating work environment.

VISION:

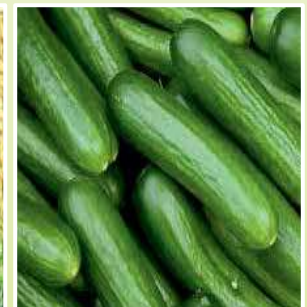
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EDITOR'S NOTE

Why farmers need correct information

Aghan Daniel
Editor



In the past few years, entomologists have been at pains to explain to farmers why the Fall armyworm continues to ravage fields, almost unchecked.

To a very large extent, this group of scientists has repeatedly warned that Fall armyworm was, from the start, a pure example of how scientists can misguide farmers. They say that the communication about the pest was and has been mismanaged. Hilariously, they say, the same scientists are looking for other pests to mismanage. If this were to be taken from its face value, then it must be said to be a very worrying situation which often leads to huge losses by farmers and perhaps seed companies.

Entomologists point fingers at other scientists like plant pathologists to be responsible for the mess. In our estimation, farmers do not care where they get information. What they want is accurate information. Scientists and seed companies for that matter have the cardinal call to ensure our farmers are adequately informed.

We do not find it hard to ask scientists, for example to facilitate and guide the process of farmers accessing the correct information about seeds and pests. That fall armyworm must be sprayed when plants or maize is 3 to 4 weeks old. If this is not done, the farmer may go on a spraying spree – all for nothing and lead to accumulation of a lot of residues in the farms. This is just one of the examples that AFSTA has had to deal with in its 25 years of existence.

In their report, Incentivizing Seed Companies to Expand Crop-Seed Portfolio: An Evaluative Learning, USAID and Catholic Relief Services dated March 30, 2022, the two organisations say that whereas Smallholder farmers in Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA) need sustainable access to high-quality seeds to not only improve their incomes, food and nutrition security, the formal seed system is often unable to meet the demand for quality seeds since seed companies face bottlenecks to introducing new seed varieties, particularly in SSA. Seed companies often consider a wide range of factors before introducing a new crop-variety into their product portfolio for commercialization.

In the 25 years that AFSTA has plied its trade in the continent, wrong or delayed information is a key factor in helping farmers make decisions. This scenario has contributed to the current apathy of many people in Africa about genetically modified organisms.

In our search for truth about the technology, AFSTA made a deliberate effort to work with farmers in Malawi, Kenya and Nigeria to share their experiences on the impact that farming in the technology has had in their lives. First, the farmers were very happy that we sought to hear from them directly and not through proxies. Secondly, they were thrilled to participate in the research as they settled down to document all the chemicals they sprayed, the seeds they planted, the number of times they weeded and the amount of harvest

they carried to the granaries and to the ginneries. This initiative resulted in a documentary called Farmers Friends, a video that showcased the farmers' experiences. This was growth. We are lucky to have this video that was recorded that showcased the farmers' experiences.

Two years back, we embarked, with support from CropLife International on a journey of meeting three National Seed Trade Associations at their points of need – sensitization on GMOs. The results have been tremendous. We have now held 10 training sessions in Malawi, Ghana and Nigeria. The enthusiasm and high level of discussions that we have witnessed during these forums were revelations we were not prepared for. The trainees, drawn from locally based seed companies or indigenous seed companies, have said in return that the initiatives provided a forum to be informed, updated on GMO issues but most importantly to fight misinformation and disinformation about biotechnologies.

As we move to the next steps, we at AFSTA call upon all our members and those in the seed sector to up their games and ensure timely and correct information is passed to farmers for proper uptake of the latest varieties as well as to take appropriate care of their fields.

A note on AFSTA@25? From my desk I say cheers to a quarter century of daily work to ensure that all African farmers have access to quality seed for food security.



Interview on Rwandan Seed Industry on the special occasion of the AFSTA Congress 2025



Innocent Namuhoranye
Chairman, National Seed Association of Rwanda

Q What are the five crucial things about Rwanda's seed system?

- a. **Government's commitment and vision** comprising a shift from being a market actor to enabler, with emphasis on private sector's involvement. A key part of its Vision 2050 views the seed sector as essential to agricultural transformation, food security, and economic growth. The efforts will be enhanced through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and collaborations with National Seed Association of Rwanda (NSAR).
- b. Rwanda is shifting from dependence on seed imports to self-sufficiency, aiming to be a regional hub that exports high-quality seeds and gives farmers reliable access.
- c. NSAR, working with key stakeholders, has developed a seven-year strategic road-map (2023-2030) to make the sector more competitive, resilient, and self-sustaining. It focuses on boosting seed production capacity, enhancing research and development, promoting private sector involvement, and ensuring efficient regulation.
- d. Rwanda is member of International Seed Testing Association (ISTA), International Seed Federation, and African Seed Trade Association, and aligns with international best practices.
- e. NSAR consistently strengthens capacities of seed value chain actors and promotes market growth through regional and international trade.

Q What is Rwanda's seed sector worth?

A: In 2021, Rwanda's US\$1.59 billion exports made it No. 151 exporter globally. Other notable exports were worth US\$706 million in 2016, and USD\$2 billion in 2022, with \$5.12 billion total imports for last five years. Rwanda's agricultural exports doubled from US\$225 million in 2013–2014 to US\$516 million in 2017–2018 at 22% compounded annual growth rate, and was poised to hit US\$1 billion by 2024, according to National Agricultural Export Development Board.

Q What motivates Rwanda's seed sector?

- A:**
- Ensuring availability of quality seeds to improve crop yields, hence food security.
 - The sector is integral to Rwanda's economic and agricultural growth, contributing to national GDP, job creation, and poverty eradication,
 - Developing varieties that are resilient to climate change, for sustainability,
 - Public-Private Partnership that ensures sustainable growth of the sector, meeting national food security and private sector growth ambitions.

Q How has Rwanda's seed sector evolved?

A: Rwanda's formal seed sector began after the 1994 genocide. Government realized the importance of organized seed systems for agricultural recovery, and with support from international organizations like World Bank, developed structured production and distribution systems. Private seed companies, farmer cooperatives, research institutions, and government are all involved in seed production, regulation, and distribution.

Q What makes Rwanda's seed sector unique?

- A:** Rwanda's agricultural policies are aligned with seed production goals, ensuring proper coordination.
- Its high level alignment with global seed standards makes it competitive internationally,
 - It has incorporated climate-smart agriculture in its seed strategy, making it a leader in developing suited varieties,
 - A clear road-map to develop the sector defines NSAR and key stakeholders' roles in future development.

Q Please share on special programs in seed production targeting women.

A: Creating economic opportunities for women is effective in driving inclusion, productivity and sustainability. We are committed to reducing the gender productivity gap and harnessing the power and role of women in the seed value chain.

Q What are the key factors to consider in building a successful seed business?

A: Agriculture is the driving force behind the economy and food security. Quality seeds are a critical input for agricultural development. The seed sector must therefore be on sound footing to enhance agriculture's role in meeting national goals. This is what Rwanda has done:

- i. Recognized the critical role of quality seeds in agricultural development,
- ii. Invested in development of a strategic road-map through PPP approach to support its economic and food security goals,
- iii. Acknowledged that a comprehensive and effective seed industry is necessary for timely availability and use of quality seeds in the right place, quantities, and affordably,
- iv. Implemented good seed policy, as a development blue-print is required to complement the complex technological and organizational structures for an effective industry,
- v. Considered the views of all stakeholders, in line with existing regulations, and in conformity with internationally accepted practices and processes.

Q What are some of the key factors to building a successful seed business?

A: Over the years, several significant achievements have been made:

- NSAR has worked closely with the government to develop and implement strong seed policies and regulations that promote favorable business environment,
- Advocacy for international accreditation such as ISTA and OECD, making Rwanda a trusted industry player,
- Capacity building initiatives for private companies in seed business, for increased seed quality and availability,
- Partnerships with regional and international bodies, promoting knowledge exchange and expanding its market opportunities.

Q What are the seed sector's challenges and remedies?

- Limited infrastructure as seed storage and distribution infrastructure remain underdeveloped, increasing post-harvest losses risks.
- Counterfeit seed is rampant, discouraging farmers from adopting new varieties. NSAR is endeavoring to foster seed traceability through adequate labeling system and awareness campaigns.
- Farmer awareness and participation among women and youth, even though they have knowledge materials.
- Policy, legal, and regulatory environment.

Q Given opportunity, what would you change?

- a. I would strengthen inspection and certification systems to ensure that all seeds meet the highest quality standards.
- b. Expand storage and distribution networks by investing in better infrastructure to minimize post-harvest losses and ensure timely access to seeds.
- c. Boost private sector involvement to encourage innovation and investment in the sector.

Q Any comment on regional harmonization of seed regulations and how it impacts the business in Rwanda?

A: The harmonization of seed regulations in East Africa and COMESA has positively impacted Rwanda's seed sector. It simplifies seed movement across borders, opens up new markets, and promotes competitiveness. By aligning our standards with neighboring countries, Rwanda positions itself as a key player in the regional seed trade.

Q Your parting shot?

Rwanda's seed sector is poised for growth. With a strong regulatory environment, commitment to international standards, and focus on inclusivity, Rwanda is well on its way to becoming a regional leader in seed production and trade. NSAR champions these efforts, fostering innovation and ensuring the seed sector supports Rwanda's long-term national goals.

INTERVIEW: WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

The West African seed sector is taking shape with various companies sticking their necks out in a space filled with competition. In this edition, we feature an emerging leader, Oumu N'tji Coulibaly, from the region who manages Faso Kaba, a seed company registered in 2007 being one of the largest seed companies in Mali. The company focuses on field crops and vegetables. It aims to tackle low adoption of improved seed in an environment where a high percentage of seed in Mali being reused leading to low production and low yields.

A visionary at the service of Malian agriculture

Ms. Oumou N'tji Coulibaly
Managing Director of Faso Kaba, Mali



Who is Ms Oumou N'tji Coulibaly?

I am a Malian national based in Bamako. Today, Malian agriculture is undergoing a silent revolution which I am proud to be part of. Besides being the Managing Director of Faso Kaba, I am also the President of the West and Central African Network of Women Seed Entrepreneurs (ROCAFES). My contribution to the seed sector embodies a dynamic transformation essential to guarantee food security and strengthen agricultural resilience in West Africa.

Faso Kaba is a company committed to the production of certified seeds of improved varieties for the future of agriculture in Africa. Through my efforts, the company has become a model of success and with a lot of impact in our economy. Through these efforts, the company has directly contributed to Mali's food self-sufficiency while supporting small producers who are the backbone of the rural economy in this country.

Created to meet the growing need for improved seeds, Faso Kaba has established itself as a key player in Malian agriculture. The company offers solutions adapted to the realities of farmers, integrating scientific innovations to maximize agricultural yields. During the rainy season, these seeds become an essential asset for farmers, allowing for resilient harvests in the face of climate challenges.

In West Africa, what other leadership roles are you involved in?

Based in Mali, ROCAFES was born in 2022 after a training of women entrepreneurs in the seed sector by CORAF in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. At its constitutive assembly in Bamako in April 2024, I was elected regional president for a two-year term. Through my leadership, I will ensure that ROCAFES achieves what it aims to achieve which include structure seed sector stakeholders; promote the harmonisation of agricultural policies as well as encourage inclusive partnerships in West and Central Africa.

Under my presidency, this network will assert itself as a strategic lever for integrated and equitable agricultural development.

What perspectives do you have on the impact you will create as a leader?

Improved seeds are at the heart of agricultural value chains. By guaranteeing their quality and availability, Faso Kaba and ROCAFES are part of a sustainable development approach. This work, crucial in the face of climate challenges, contributes to food security and the well-being of rural communities.

My commitment goes beyond national borders. Thanks to my leadership, Mali is asserting itself as a regional hub in the seed sector, promoting local solutions with global impacts.

What inspiring female leadership do you offer?

I believe in visionary and inclusive leadership. As a female leader, I have broken barriers in a male dominated sector, offering a model of inspiration to future generations. My journey demonstrates the crucial role of women in a transformative strategic sector that agriculture is.

What is your parting shot?

By working towards sustainable and resilient agriculture, mine simply demonstrates that innovation and collaboration can transform challenges into opportunities for Africa.



AFSTA CONGRESS

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TASAI

THE AFRICAN SEED ACCESS INDEX

Data and analysis on Africa's formal seed sector

The African Seed Access Index (TASAI) is a seed industry research initiative coordinated by the nonprofit TASAI Inc. TASAI tracks 22 indicators in five categories: Research and Development, Industry Competitiveness, Policy and Regulations, Institutional Support, and Service to Smallholder Farmers. TASAI data helps key seed industry players create enabling environments for a vibrant private sector-led seed system serving smallholder farmers. By the end of 2025, TASAI will have conducted 53 studies in 25 African countries, with ongoing studies in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Tanzania and Somalia.

TASAI, in collaboration with the African Union and AGRA, has developed the Seed Sector Performance Index (<https://sspi-africa.com>). The SSPI is an analytical tool that provides seed sector data for the CAADP Biennial Reviews. The first SSPI Africa Report for 2023 covered 47 African countries.



For more info, visit:
www.tasai.org



Progress as Malawi plants first genetically modified maize under Confined Field Trials

Photo Credit: Aghan Daniel

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

As AFSTA celebrates her 25 years of existence, allow me to reminisce about the story of Biotechnology at this great association.

I joined AFSTA in July 2012 for what has now become a 13-year journey. The first document that was handed over to me by my predecessor, Mr Daniel Otunge, was a two pager labelled at the top as Croplife International/AFSTA Biotechnology Awareness Program W Plan 2011 - 2013.

My work, by then was to ensure that all National Seed Trade Associations (NSTAs) got to know about biotech and its impact in Africa – in a very balanced manner.

When I hit the road with the gospel about the pros and cons of biotechnology, I realised that a lot of the NSTAs and even members of the secretariat were uncomfortable to discuss biotech in public. I was in shock because this technology had been stigmatised to the core. The reaction and perception was informed by the fact that AFSTA has a neutral and impartial position on matters of great emotive stances such as Plant Biotech.

First things first, Plant Biotech discourse is today infiltrated by people fiercely opposed to the technology mainly the anti-science lot one side and on the other hand, people who see it as the science to beat in the long journey of achieving food security.

With the help of Croplife International (CLI), the Plant Biotech Communication and Advocacy Committee was born in 2015 to help with the sensitization on the technology. To date the Committee remains very active and meets promptly every three months to plan and take stock of work being done by AFSTA.

So from 2015, AFSTA sat down with CLI represented then by Craig Rickard who was in charge of Emerging Markets and decided to work with National Seed Trade Associations (NSTAs) who had a product in the pipeline, second they had to have an active NSTA and lastly, that country must have had a Biosafety Law.

The countries which qualified under this consideration were Malawi, Nigeria, Kenya and Ghana. And so we started to work with these four countries.



The year was marked by the planting of the first Bt Maize Confined Field Trials (CFT) in Bunda College, Lilongwe led by Dr Abel Sefasi.

To date, our work with the ever patient CLI has seen us traverse cotton and Cowpea fields in Kenya, Malawi and Nigeria to boardrooms in Ghana to ensure that there is greater understanding and appreciation of biotech among AFSTA members.

In our engagements with stakeholders in Kenya, Malawi and Nigeria farmers who had just received biotech seeds barely two seasons back, were eager to tell their own stories. With COVID-19 on one side and resources being inadequate on the other hand, we agreed with farmers in these countries in 2022 to use their phones and cameras to capture key moments of their own experiences with the technology. The result of this engagement is a ten-minute video christened The Farmers Friends which features a narration by the farmers and extension workers on the benefits of the technology.

After the production of the video, we then turned our attention to empowering members of the National Seed Trade Associations which was basically to focus on enhancing awareness efforts on technology adoption to ensure that seed companies understand adoption of crop biotech by constantly engaging and updating them, stakeholders they work with and farmers.

Our recent initiatives have been boosted by a handful of milestones which include 1/ Progress as Malawi planted First Genetically Modified (GM) Maize under Confined Field Trials led by Prof Abel Sefasi; 2/ Nigeria introduction of transgenic TELA maize; 3/ Ghana's advocacy for GM cultivation grows and Kenya continues to grow Bt Cotton.

To design the training and engagement curriculum, AFSTA held virtual meetings with all the biotech committee members in Malawi, Ghana and Nigeria. These meetings led to each committee deciding the topics they wanted to be trained on. In the end, these spokespeople will link the seed sector, government and the media in pitching for the technology.

So what did we achieve?

To enhance the pace of adoption of crop biotech in priority countries we constantly engaged and updated National Seed Trade Associations and seed company officials on the goings on in the biotech space which was supported by the milestones above.



In Nigeria, farmers continued to grow Bt Cowpea for the fourth season.

Take the case of Malawi. AFSTA in conjunction with Seed Trade Association of Malawi (STAM) undertook two (*seeing is believing*) tours to the Confined Field Trials (CFT) site in Bunda College, Lilongwe in March and May 2024. This led to a better understanding of the research process among the seed companies. It also led to the publishing articles to create awareness among the seed association's committee members and the public through the mass media.

In Nigeria, AFSTA held trainings with The Seed Entrepreneurs and Development Association of Nigeria (SEEDAN) Biotech Committee during the year. Each session was attended by 10 trainees who are composed of senior seed company officials at the level of directors and Chief Executive Officers (CEOs). Key topics covered Background and Challenges of commercialization of Biotech products in Nigeria; Update on research and commercialization in biotechnology in Nigeria; Updates on biotech in Africa.

Lessons learnt working with NSTAs

Trainings have been an eye opener on just how much information is available at the country level yet the local seed companies do not know about them. Continuing with the trainings is the bedrock to facilitating the adoption of the technology in Africa.



Nigeria introduced transgenic TELA maize under the stewardship of the African Agricultural Technology Foundation.

The meetings that we held with the Biotech Committees provided platforms to gather statements in support of the technology publicly.

Presentations and articles helped to give correct content for visibility to biotech issues in Africa and keep biotech in the conversation of the masses to create awareness aid adoption and acceptance.

Overall, for the continent to have a better understanding of plant biotech, the National Seed Trade Associations offer the most recognised and believable position to push this agenda. Working with them has proved that they are the effective neutral platform to help the seed industry to improve seed industry knowledge and support for plant biotechnology.

The AFSTA Biotech story continues.

Seed associations hold transformative training on biotechnology

Photo Credit: Aghan Daniel



A young Malawian scientist Chifuniro Kalawang'oma in a bt Maize confined field trial site.

By Aghan Daniel adaghan@afsta.org and Steve Adigun adigunoludapo@gmail.com

Three National Seed Trade Associations, The Seed Entrepreneurs Association of Nigeria (SEEDAN), The Seed Trade Association of Malawi (STAM) and National Seed Trade Association of Ghana (NaSTAG) have enhanced the capacity of their members by holding quarterly virtual trainings for their Biotechnology Committees in partnership with AFSTA and Croplife International.

“Our intervention is primarily aimed at enhancing knowledge and capacity in agricultural biotechnology particularly about the little understood Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs),” says Dr Amos Rutherford from NaSTAG.

So far, AFSTA with support from Croplife International is undertaking trainings among three NSTAs to increase understanding of biotechnology among members for acceptance of the technology. A total of 14 training sessions have been conducted for the three National Seed Trade Associations during the year under this initiative.

“At STAM we have worked closely with Prof Abel Sefasi from Luannar who has concentrated on providing updates on GM maize research in the country. The presentations were also geared toward building the trainees’ capacity to understand and interpret GMO research findings and link them with intellectual property rights,” Nessimu Nyama, secretary to the board of STAM told the African Seed Magazine.

The technical report highlights for the Confined Field Trials (CFTs) were shared during the training. For starters, the approval for Bt Maize CFT in Malawi was given on 24th July 2023 for three years. The CFT is for insect resistance and herbicide tolerance. The insect-resistance trial was harvested after 144 days on 17th May 2024.

According to Dr Sefasi, the Principal Investigator in the project, the herbicide-tolerance trial was harvested after 141 days on 7th June 2024. GM maize had significantly ($P \leq .05$) lower leaf damage by fall armyworm and stalk borer larva compared to the conventional control both at vegetative and reproductive stage of the crop.

Ear damage by Fall armyworm was significantly ($P \leq .05$) lower in GM maize than the conventional control throughout the reproductive phase. The trainees were told that weed control efficiency (comparing with untreated plots), was highest in plots treated with Roundup Power Max at 1.67 l/ha and 2.00 l/ha, achieving efficiencies of 54.9% and 56.3% for the GM maize.

While speaking to the trainees in Malawi on Intellectual Property (IPR) and GM Crops: Possible Collaboration Options for Local Seed Companies, Prof James Bokosi urged the learners to look at IPR issues positively because they enhance performance of institutions by giving recognition and financial benefits to the efforts for creativity.

He added that IPR creates competition among the researchers and institutions on the quality of research, have a return on research investment and fosters the technology transfer through licensing and other means.

In Nigeria, the trainees have undergone insightful sessions on plant breeding and hybridisation techniques, genetic engineering in crop improvement, bioethics in agricultural biotechnology, policy development and advocacy in biotechnology, the future of agricultural biotechnology and genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and risk assessment.

Using case studies, Prof. Samuel Olakojo, a university don, highlighted successful projects where genetic engineering has revolutionised agricultural practices in addressing food security challenges. He also tackled the ethical dimensions of agricultural biotechnology.

Take the case of Prof. Johnson Onyibe who has led an informative session on policy development and advocacy in biotechnology for the Nigerian association.

Prof. Onyibe discussed the critical role of policies in fostering innovation while safeguarding public interests. He emphasised the importance of advocacy efforts in educating stakeholders, including policymakers, farmers, and the general public, on the benefits and risks associated with biotechnology.

Insights into the future of agricultural biotechnology, emerging trends such as CRISPR gene-editing technologies, synthetic biology, and the integration of artificial intelligence in biotechnology research have also featured in the discussions.

The engagements have encouraged participants to remain adaptable and innovative as they navigate the rapidly evolving field.

The sessions, usually thought-provoking, explore moral considerations of genetic modification, including concerns about biodiversity, equity in access to biotechnology, and societal acceptance.

The trainings bring together the associations biotech committee members who are drawn from locally owned seed companies. Discussions usually revolve around advancements, challenges, and opportunities in agricultural plant biotechnology.

Study: Maize remains dominant crop among varieties released in Africa

Photo Credit: TASAI



Participants at the Somalia seed stakeholders workshop to launch the TASAI Somalia country study.

Most African countries (30 out of 47) have seed policy instruments that are complete and up to date. However, in some of these countries, these instruments are under review. Examples include Tanzania's Seed Regulations, 2007, the Nigeria Plant Variety Protection Act (2021), or the draft National Seed Policy for Sierra Leone, which is expected to be approved by the cabinet in early 2025. On the other hand, seven countries don't have any seed policy instruments: Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Guinea Bissau, Seychelles, and South Sudan.

Although most countries rely on public seed inspection services for national seed quality assurance, some countries have also instituted private inspection services. Of the 47 surveyed countries in 2023, only ten have adopted systems for private seed inspection: Burundi, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Several countries are in the process of developing frameworks to authorize private seed inspectors, including Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda. In Tanzania, the Ministry of Agriculture is amending the Tanzania Seed Regulations of 2007 to, in part, allow for private actors in seed quality control services. Overall, across Africa, the countries with the highest number of seed inspectors (public or private) are Egypt (900), South Africa (320), Benin (254), Nigeria (152), and Senegal (120).

A robust private sector is central to the development of a functional seed industry. The volume of seed traded is a small percentage of overall national seed output. Maize is still the most dominant crop among variety releases across most African countries.

These are some of the lessons contained in the recently published Seed Sector Performance Index (SSPI) Africa Report for 2023.

Maize is a dominant crop in the variety release processes in many countries, accounting for most of the varieties being developed and released. Of the 16 countries that released at least 20 varieties of the four crops over the three-year period 2020-2022, maize accounted for at least 50% of these varieties in 11 countries (Figure 1). Only four countries released more than 50 varieties over this period: South Africa (286), Zambia (88), Burundi (55), and Mali (52). A total of 13 countries did not release any varieties for the four crops.

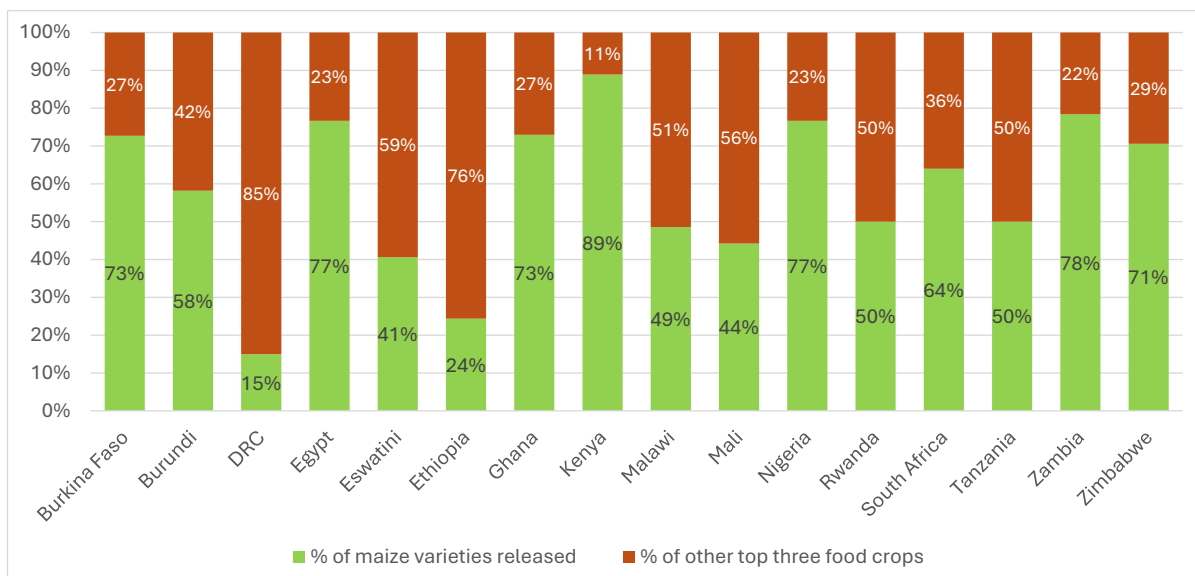


Figure 1: Proportion of maize variety releases versus other three top crops

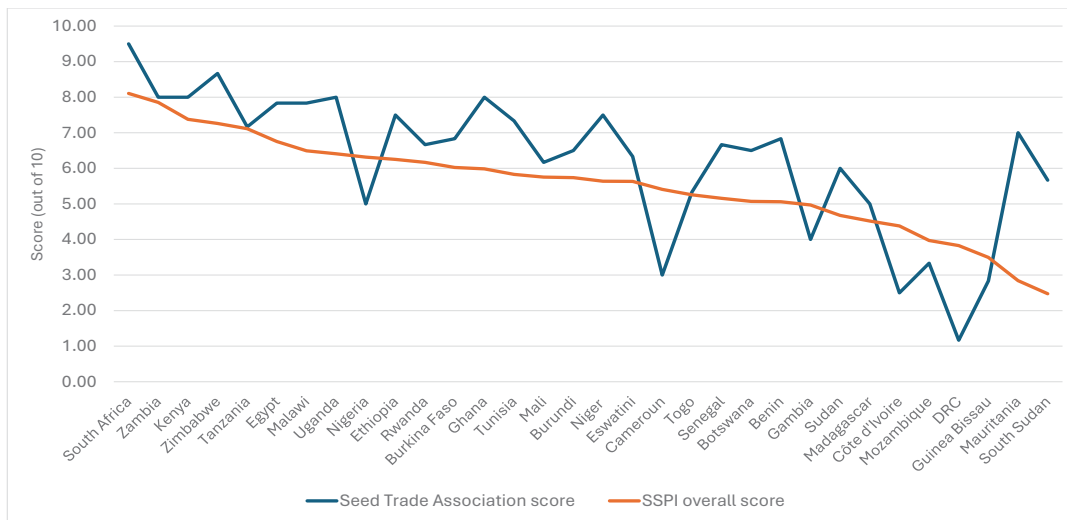


Figure 2: Comparison of national seed trade association score with the overall country score

Of the 47 countries surveyed for the SSPI report, a majority (33) have national seed associations. These associations, when vibrant and functional, are a good indicator for seed industry health. Figure 2 compares the overall seed trade association score with the overall SSPI score. The chart shows that two scores are correlated, implying that countries that have an active national seed trade association are also likely to have a vibrant seed industry.

Examples of such associations include the South African National Seed Organization (SANSOR), which had the highest seed association score (9.5 out of 10), the Zimbabwe Seed Association (8.7), the National Seed Trade Association of Ghana (8.0), the Seed Trade Association of Kenya (8.0), the Uganda Seed Trade Association (8.0), among others. The vibrancy of these associations is mostly explained by their membership. Overall, this lesson supports the theory that competitive seed systems need to be driven by the private sector.

The volume of seed trade in Africa, for the key food crops, is low. In 2022, 34 out of the 47 countries imported seed of at least one of the four priority crops. Figure 3 shows the top ten leading maize seed importing countries. The chart compares the aggregate volumes of maize seed imports with the aggregate volumes of maize seed production. The imports are significantly lower than local seed production. This implies that for most countries, for which maize is a key staple, maize seed requirement is met by local production and not imports.

Most farmers in Africa operate on a small scale, so making seed available in small - and therefore more affordable - packages is a good way to increase adoption rates of certified seed by this group.

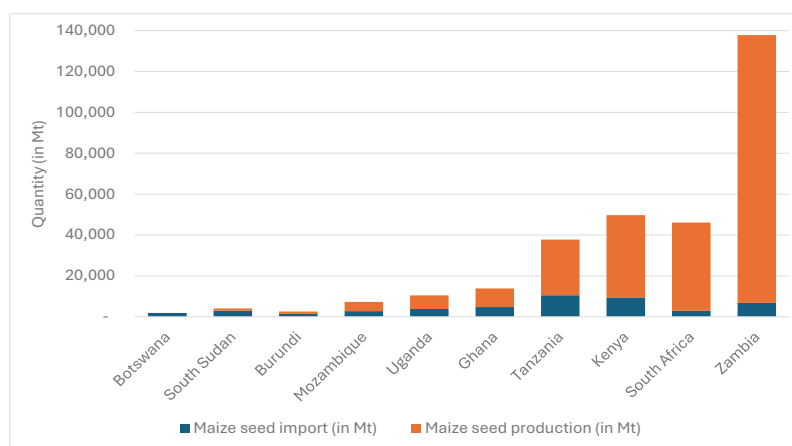


Figure 3: Maize seed imports versus seed production in top ten maize importing countries.

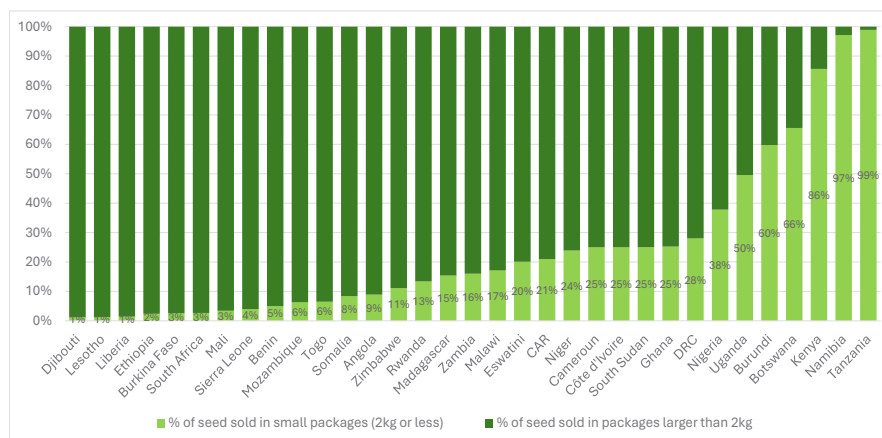


Figure 4: Percentage of seed sold in small packages of 2 kg or less

However, across Africa, most certified seeds are not sold in small packages.

In 25 out of 47 countries, less than 30% of the seed for the key priority crops is sold in small packages of 2 kg or less (Figure 4). Furthermore, 30% of the countries (15 out of 47) scored 0, implying that no seed, for the four crops, was sold in small packages of 2 kg or less in 2023.

In some countries, this is due to government rules for package sizes, such as in Egypt, Ethiopia, and Senegal.

In Egypt, the minimum allowed package size is 5 kg. In Ethiopia, the government sets standard package sizes for crops, namely, 12.5 kg for maize, 50 kg for wheat, 15 kg for teff, and 10 kg for sorghum, although some project initiatives are promoting smaller packages.

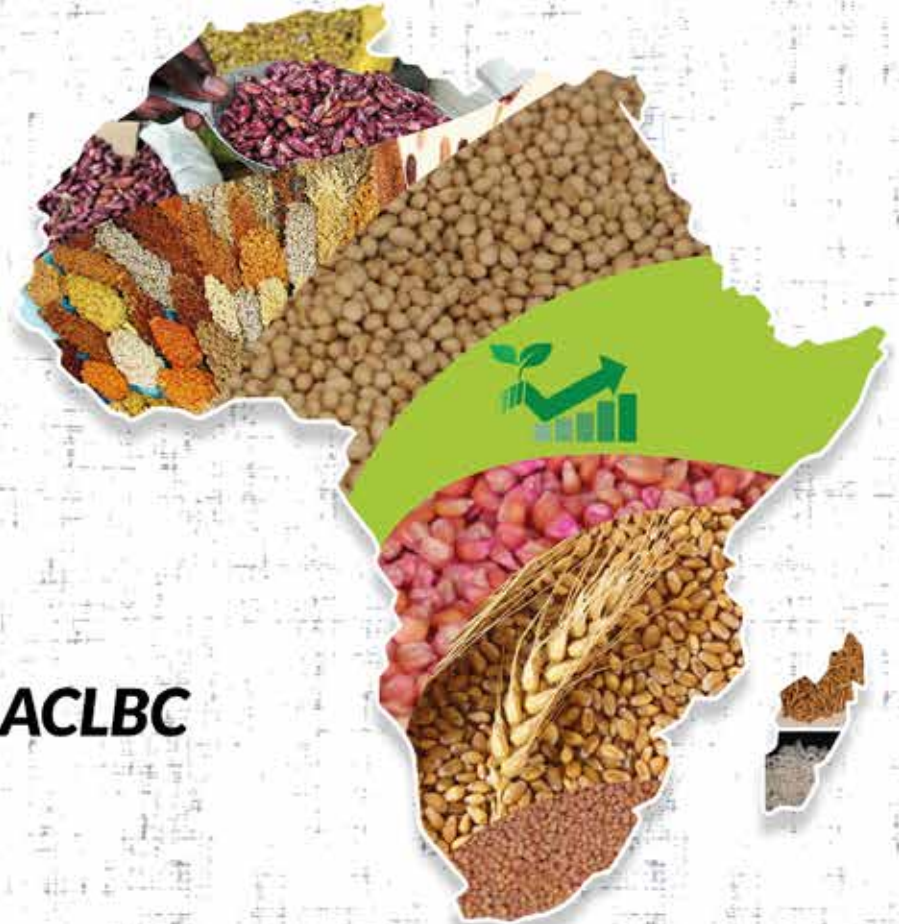
The SSPI report is the outcome of a partnership between the African Union Commission and The African Seed Access Index (TASAI) Inc., with funding from AGRA. The full report, which covers 47 African countries, can be accessed on

<https://sspi-africa.com>



African Cereal and Legume Breeding Consortium (ACLBC)

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TACKLING ILLEGAL SEED

AFSTA, 12 others sign historic agreement to tackle illegal seed

By Yacouba Diallo | yacouba@afsta.org

Photo Credit: ISF

Illegal seed practices which include counterfeit seed trade in Africa and globally have significant impacts on the performance of the agricultural sector, food security, and farmer livelihoods.

All the components along the seed value chain are negatively impacted by the illegal seed practices including the farms.

In Africa, the economic impact of the use of counterfeit or low-quality seeds is huge and costs farmers hundreds of millions of dollars annually because of failure to meet expected yields.

The massive use of illegal and fake seeds can introduce invasive species or seed-borne diseases and pests which can endanger agricultural sustainability and disrupt the ecosystems. At the industry level, it is also evident that these practices undermine investments by seed breeders and producers, discouraging innovation and unfair competition in the seed market. With this comes the reduction of availability of high-quality.

Today, in many African countries, illegal seed markets are considered as a criminal economic activity such as fraud, tax evasion, etc. and governments have developed setting policies to get rid of them. However, to efficiently address and overcome illegal seed practices, there is a need to adopt multi approaches.

Such measures encompass putting in place robust regulatory frameworks, mounting strong public and farmer awareness campaigns focusing on risks of using counterfeit seeds and the benefits of certified seeds.

Given that the problem is global and intercontinental nature of the problem, it requires a strong multi partnership approach within an international collaboration framework to expand and sustain awareness raising.

This will give room for advocating for stronger legal systems and enforcement mechanisms. For this reason, the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) together with 12 organisations have teamed up together with the International Seed Federation (ISF) to paralyse and dim illegal seed practices (ISP). This was done through a historic memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed at in May 2024 at the ISF World Seed Congress in Amsterdam.



African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) together with 12 organisations have teamed up with the International Seed Federation (ISF) in the fight against illegal seed practices.

The outfits have been drawn from those who represent and defend the interests of plant breeders worldwide.

The other organisations board include the Asia and Pacific Seed Alliance (APSA), Euroseeds, the Seed Association of the Americas (SAA), the Anti-Infringement Bureau for Intellectual Property Rights on Plant Material (AIB), the Breeders Trust, CIOPORA (International Community of Breeders of Asexually Reproduced Horticultural Plants), CropLife International, Gestión de Licencias Vegetables (GESLIVE), SICASOV, the Seed Innovation Protection Alliance (SIPA), and the Seeds Innovation and Protection Initiative (SIPI).

Through this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), these organisations aim to enhance awareness of and promote the implementation of Legal Seed and Plant Practices globally. These practices support value creation in the agricultural and horticultural sectors and drive innovation for farmers and growers. Such innovation is vital for developing plant varieties that address the current and future needs of plant breeders, including adaptation to climate change and resistance to various pests and diseases.

“It is time that we act together to raise awareness about not only the magnitude but also the serious consequences that illegal activities in seeds may have not only economically to seed companies and farmers but also to consumers,” said Marco van Leeuwen, former President of ISF.

According to Michael Keller, Secretary General of ISF they signed the MoU to send a clear message that events like the ISF World Seed Congress must not become a platform for infringers to trade in illegal seeds.

“In fact, ISF has put in place a procedure to exclude entities and individuals who are proven to commit illegal seed practices from future congresses,” he added.

As part of the engagement under that international alliance, ISF is leading the process of strengthening advocacy with all relevant stakeholders including governments, ministries, agencies, judicial systems and international organizations to improve legal systems and enforcement conditions, capacity and capabilities that will limit the proliferation of illegal seed and plant practices.

To efficiently frame the advocacy content with science-based evidence, an international study has been initiated to collect and analyse accurate data that will illustrate the negative impact of such practices on society and the industry.

AFRICAN CEREAL AND LEGUME BREEDING CONSORTIUM (ACLBC)

High yields amidst climate resilience in view as new consortium sets sail

By Atayi Opaluwah | a.opaluwah@cgiar.org

Photo Credit: TAAT/ Atayi Opaluwah

It was a cool and breezy evening in Koba. Abou Camara sat in his reclining chair, with the gentle breeze caressing his bearded face and unveiling the palpable feeling of satisfaction and happiness emanating from his being.

Abou, a renowned rice farmer in Koba, a town in the Téli-mélé Prefecture in the Kindia Region of western-central Guinea, is in high spirits following a recent discovery on his farm. This discovery will change his socio-economic status forever!

With experience in rice farming from 1998, Abou has planted several rice seed varieties on his farm. Each year, his hope for a bumper harvest gets shattered by flooding occasioned by fluctuating weather patterns in his region. In 2016, Abou acquired and planted the NERICA L19 variety, but little did he know that the variety does not have the flood-tolerant submergence gene, and when the floods came, he lost nearly all he planted that season.

In 2019, Abou participated in a farmer field school organised by Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT) in collaboration with the AfricaRice Centre and some seed enterprises. He was introduced to new climate-smart varieties: NERICA L19sub1, WITA 4sub1, Mbapeya, and ROK5.

Upon planting the new NERICA L19sub1 and WITA 4sub1 seeds in the subsequent season with strict observance of good agronomic practices, Abou discovered that the seeds he planted had a flood-tolerant gene. He noticed that these varieties could tolerate flooding when it occurred at the vegetative stage on his farm for a period of 10 days, and yet the crop was able to show normal growth.

“Both NERICA L19sub1 and WITA 4sub1 showed high promise of a very good harvest despite the flooding in my farm. Accessing these varieties has made a huge difference in my life, and I am happy because this year’s harvest will be my biggest one so far,” Abou said.

“This is something I have never experienced with other varieties. I am proud of this scientific achievement. Indeed, with science, we can overcome,” he added.

To reduce the negative effects of climate change on rice production and paddy quality, the African Development Bank, through the TAAT programme, is scaling the adoption of improved climate-resilient rice varieties across Africa. This will ensure that seed enterprises and farmers can access elite rice varieties adapted to adverse weather conditions like erratic rainfall, flooding, and droughts.



Mr Faustin Atomabe, president of the Rice Farmers Union in Central Benin, West Africa. To reduce negative effects of climate change on rice production and paddy quality, the African Development Bank, through the TAAT programme, is scaling up the adoption of improved climate-resilient rice varieties across Africa.

In this regard, TAAT and AfricaRice, working with the Africa-wide Rice Breeding Task Force, have developed varieties tolerant to key biotic and abiotic stresses. NERICA L19sub1 (submergence/flood-tolerant at the vegetative stage), aromatic ORYLUX 6 (Basmati group of rice), which are recognized for their excellent grain quality, taste, and early maturing, and hybrid ISRIZ 09 (AR051H) with excellent grain quality (long grain with firm texture) and good taste form part of the latest generation of rice varieties for Africa.

These new mega varieties are suitable for rainfed lowland ecology where there is limited or no water control and irrigated ecology where water control is practiced. Yields of up to 7 tons per hectare have been obtained with the inbred, while the hybrid recorded 9.9 t/h under farmer conditions in the Senegal River Valley.

To further scale these varieties across Africa and reach millions of farmers using the time-tested private sector-led and profit-oriented pathway, TAAT, in partnership with the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA), has established the African Cereal and Legume Breeding Consortium (ACLBC).

Launched in Mombassa, Kenya, during the 2024 AFSTA Congress, ACLBC represents a contemporary step towards an integrated approach that builds on years of experience in plant breeding, agronomic research, and seed system development in Africa.

Within months, the consortium is already facilitating the sharing of genetic resources and breeding techniques for superior crop varieties with private seed companies while serving as an incubator for innovation in plant breeding technologies.

The cereal and legume-based consortium provides seed companies with high-yielding and climate-resilient seeds and access to three exclusive varieties/hybrids of Rice, Maize, Wheat, Sorghum, Millet, Soybean, and particular crops, including the High-Iron Beans (HIB).

Consortium members will have a Lead Access Period of 24 months exclusivity, subject to the technology provider’s material transfer arrangements to commercialise these varieties/hybrids.

To achieve its objectives in a transformative way, ACLBC prioritises assisting the seed companies in developing their varieties/hybrids, providing technical assistance to seed companies to conduct multi-location adaptability tests of new varieties/hybrids, and strengthening the capacity of seed companies in hands-on seed production and maintenance techniques with an emphasis on hybrids to be well-positioned to reach farmers like Abou Camara all over Africa.

Indeed, farmers are not averse to the uptake of new rice varieties. They require access to these varieties facilitated on the wheels of affordability, availability, and profitability, which is represented by the private sector interface of the African Cereal and Legume Breeding Consortium.

AFRICA VEGETABLE BREEDING CONSORTIUM (AVBC)

Success as 60 companies adopt consortium's resources and access to exclusive breeding lines

Photo Credit: Aghan Daniel



An exhibition by East West Seed at the SeedConnect Expo 2024 in Abuja, Nigeria. AVBC enhances food security, boosting the profitability of African seed companies and contributing to the continent's agricultural transformation.

By Mwasilwa Ambali
mwasilwa.ambali@worldveg.org.

The Africa Vegetable Breeding Consortium (AVBC), a dynamic partnership between World Vegetable Center (WorldVeg) and the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA), has been driving innovation in the seed sector across Africa.

Launched to support seed companies in acquiring high-quality, specially developed vegetables genetic materials, the AVBC has become a crucial platform for collaboration, capacity building, and the introduction of cutting-edge varieties that respond to the unique challenges of the continent's agricultural landscape.

A hub for cutting-edge vegetables genetics

AVBC brings together seed companies from across Africa, providing them with exclusive access to germplasm developed by WorldVeg's advanced breeding programs. Each year, member companies participate in an annual workshop where they can see new vegetable lines demonstrated in the field. This hands-on experience allows companies to observe the behavior of the germplasm under various conditions and engage directly with breeders, discussing challenges such as pest and disease resistance, climate adaptation, nutritional content and yield improvements.



AVBC supports seed companies to acquire high-quality, specially developed vegetables genetic materials.

To date, AVBC members have successfully registered over 15 varieties across multiple African countries, including tomatoes, peppers, okra, and mung beans. In addition, several companies are using AVBC genetics as a source of resistance traits, critical for improving resilience against diseases like bacterial wilt and fusarium. Many other lines are still in development or registration, with companies collaborating to test, adapt, and improve them for local markets.

Capacity building: Hybrid seed production

This year marked a significant milestone for AVBC with the launch of its first hybrid seed production training program. Recognizing the need to enhance the seed production capacities of its members, the consortium organized a comprehensive training course for 20 participants from different seed companies. The program combined theoretical and practical sessions on hybridization techniques, empowering participants to produce hybrid varieties in tomatoes, okra, pumpkins, and peppers.

The course included hands-on training in making crosses, which enabled participants to develop practical skills in hybrid seed production. One highlight was the opportunity to work with cytoplasmic male sterility (CMS) lines for peppers, a powerful tool for producing hybrids without the need for manual emasculation. This initiative has greatly enhanced the technical know-how of African seed companies, enabling them to better compete in the global market.

Broad crop focus and varietal innovation

The AVBC offers a wide range of vegetable lines tailored to meet the needs of African farmers and consumers. For example, this year a new tomato line was introduced, building on the success of the popular Tengeru 97 variety by incorporating additional resistance to bacterial wilt and fusarium, addressing critical disease challenges that have plagued East African tomato production. This innovation not only strengthens local farming but also ensures farmers can rely on higher yields and better quality produce.

In addition to tomatoes, AVBC is developing new lines of peppers, including long, round, and habanero types, all of which are stable and suitable for use as open-pollinated varieties (OPVs). Some pepper lines, while stable, have been recognized for their exceptional performance as combiners in hybrid production, further adding to the consortium's breeding toolbox.

Other crops in the AVBC portfolio include pumpkins, okra, mung beans, and onions. This diversity ensures that seed companies can access a broad spectrum of high-performing vegetable genetics, offering the opportunity to quickly build a robust portfolio of vegetable varieties suited to local markets.



A photo taken at the SeedConnect Expo 2024 in Abuja, Nigeria. The African Vegetable Breeding Consortium offers a wide range of vegetable lines tailored to meet the needs of African farmers and consumers. Today, AVBC members have successfully registered over 15 varieties across multiple African countries, including tomatoes, peppers, okra and mung beans.

A growing network of success

The AVBC's impact continues to grow. More than 60 companies active across Africa have benefited from the consortium's resources, training, and access to exclusive breeding lines.

Notably, this year saw the addition of new members from Somalia and South Africa, underscoring the consortium's appeal and relevance across the continent.

By facilitating collaboration between seed companies and world-class breeders, AVBC is fostering the development of varieties that are not only high-yielding but also resilient to the diverse challenges African farmers face.

With a combination of superior genetics, hands-on training, and a spirit of collaboration, AVBC is playing a pivotal role in enhancing food security, boosting the profitability of African seed companies, and contributing to the continent's agricultural transformation.

As the consortium grows, it continues to drive innovation and capacity-building across Africa's seed sector, positioning the region as a leader in vegetable breeding and production for years to come.

Photo Credit: Mwasilwa Ambali



Recognising the need to enhance the seed production capacities of its members, the consortium organized a comprehensive training course for 20 participants from different seed companies.

How farmers are reaping from digital transformation in the seed sector



Photo Credit: Freepik

Traditionally, breeding new seed varieties took years, sometimes even decades. However, with AI and big data, the seed industry can now predict desirable traits—such as pest resistance, drought tolerance, and higher yields—with a level of accuracy previously unattainable. The use of genomics and DNA markers has streamlined the breeding process, allowing breeders to pinpoint the best-performing plants early in the development phase, speeding up the release of new, improved seeds.

Addressing farmers' needs with digital solutions

One of the most significant benefits of digital transformation in the seed industry is the ability to customize solutions based on farmers' specific conditions. By analyzing regional weather patterns, soil types, and common pest issues, seed companies can create seed varieties tailored to different climates and regions. This personalization helps boost productivity while minimizing the risks posed by pests, diseases, and unpredictable weather conditions.

Integration of digital technology into seed development and distribution is revolutionizing how farmers across Africa grow their crops, improving yields and ensuring better livelihoods.

By Sanjaykumar Vasoya | sanjay.vasoya@etgworld.com

The integration of digital technology into seed development and distribution is revolutionizing how farmers across Africa grow their crops, improving yields and ensuring better livelihoods. The promise of digital transformation lies in its ability to fast-track the development of high-yield, pest- and disease-resistant varieties, which, in turn, enhances productivity and boosts farmer happiness.

Digital tools such as data analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and remote sensing are now at the forefront of breeding and agronomic advancements. By leveraging these technologies, seed companies can significantly accelerate the process of developing and introducing new crop varieties that meet the evolving needs of farmers.

Photo Credit: ETG

An advertisement for the 'ETG One Stop Solution' app. The central focus is a smartphone displaying the app's interface, which includes sections for 'AGRONOMY', 'ETG NEWS', 'CONTACTS US', 'CROP PROTECTION', 'FERTILIZER', and 'SEEDS'. The app is set against a background of a vibrant sunset over a green field. At the top, it says 'ONE STOP SOLUTION' and 'ZAMBIA FERTILIZERS'. At the bottom, there are logos for 'ETG', 'GET IT ON Google Play', 'DOWNLOAD ETG APP', and 'FOLLOW US' with social media icons. A tagline at the bottom right reads 'If farmers Grow, we Grow too'.

ETG One Stop Solution App offers numerous functions to farmers such as Agri Inputs Calculator which helps farmers to calculate their needs for seeds, fertilizers, and other inputs.

Moreover, digital tools can provide farmers with timely information, such as planting dates, pest control strategies, and optimal fertilization schedules. Mobile apps, digital advisory platforms, and even simple SMS alerts are proving to be vital in providing farmers with real-time insights that help them make informed decisions. These technologies help ensure that seeds are not just better but also used effectively in the right environment.

Empowering farmers at their fingertips

A prime example of digital innovation supporting farmers is the ETG One Stop Solution App, a comprehensive platform designed to bring farm management into the palms of farmers. This app is data-driven and technology-enabled, providing farmers with critical decision-making tools to advance their daily farming practices.

The ETG One Stop Solution App offers numerous functions to aid farmers. Such include Agri Inputs Calculator: Helping farmers calculate their needs for seeds, fertilizers, and other inputs; Soil testing, Seed/Agri Inputs Trials Management, Season Planning and AI-driven crop diagnosis. Others include offering expert agronomic advice at farmers' fingertips; guiding farmers on the optimal nutrition and crop protection measures; and providing educational materials to improve farming knowledge and skills.

For agro-dealers, the app also includes specialized features such as agribusiness centre management, microfinance services, crop insurance, falcon wallets, and a rewards system that encourages regular usage and offers benefits based on app interaction.

Boosting farmers' satisfaction

The introduction of high-yield, pest-resistant seed varieties ensures that farmers can achieve higher outputs with fewer inputs. This translates to increased profitability, which directly correlates with improved livelihoods. With more income, farmers can invest in better equipment, education for their children, and improved quality of life, leading to greater overall happiness.



Agro-dealers can benefit from the app's also specialised features such as agribusiness centre management, microfinance services, crop insurance, falcon wallets, and a rewards system that encourages regular usage and offers benefits based on app interaction.

Additionally, as farmers experience the reliability of these new seed varieties, they gain confidence in the value of investing in quality inputs. This trust is further reinforced by the availability of digital platforms our One Stop Solution App that allow farmers to access information, markets, and financial services, providing them with the tools they need to succeed.

A pathway to prosperity

The digital transformation of the seed industry is a pathway to prosperity for millions of African farmers. By accelerating the development of high-yield, pest- and disease-resistant varieties and providing them with advanced digital tools like the ETG One Stop Solution App, we are helping to bridge the gap between potential and reality, driving higher agricultural productivity and improving the overall well-being of farming communities.

The author is leading Digital Transformation and Falcon Vegetable Seed and Agronomy for ETG Agri Inputs & Chemical vertical of ETG.

LETTER FROM WEST AFRICA

Lessons from the Honda, Nissan, Mitsubishi merger for the global seed industry

Photo Credit: SeedConnect Expo, Nigeria



Celebrating partnerships: Success in seed industry consolidation requires meticulous attention to pre-merger planning and integration management.

By Amos Rutherford |
amos.rutherford@legacycrop.com

The recent merger of three Japanese automotive giants - Honda, Nissan, and Mitsubishi - presents a compelling case study for strategic consolidation in the global seed industry. As the agricultural input sector faces increasing consolidation pressures, valuable insights can be drawn from this landmark automotive merger. This article analyses the merger's framework and extracts key lessons applicable to seed companies contemplating similar strategic moves in an increasingly competitive landscape.

The seed industry faces unprecedented challenges, including adapting to climate change, meeting evolving farmer needs, and navigating intensifying global competition. The Honda-Nissan-Mitsubishi merger demonstrates how strategic consolidation can enhance competitiveness while preserving brand equity and maintaining robust innovation capabilities.

One of the most significant insights from the automotive merger is the importance of strategic resource pooling in research and development.

For seed companies, this translates into opportunities for combining breeding programs, sharing genetic resources, and unifying research infrastructure. Integrating R&D capabilities can lead to accelerated innovation and improved efficiency in developing new varieties.

Successful R&D integration requires careful consideration of several key elements. Companies must strategically consolidate breeding stations based on geographical locations and crop specialization while ensuring optimal resource utilization. The integration of biotechnology platforms and high-throughput phenotyping facilities can significantly enhance research capabilities. Furthermore, implementing unified data management systems can dramatically improve breeding efficiency, while combined trait development programs can focus more effectively on critical challenges like climate resilience.

A crucial lesson from the automotive merger is the successful maintenance of distinct brand identities while leveraging combined market strength.

Seed companies can adopt similar approaches by maintaining coordinated but distinct market presences.

This strategy allows companies to preserve brand loyalty while benefiting from combined distribution networks and shared resources.

The implementation of unified digital platforms for farmer engagement and shared agronomic support services can create additional value while maintaining brand differentiation. This balanced approach ensures that established market relationships remain intact while achieving operational efficiencies.

Significant operational efficiencies can be achieved through careful integration of key functions. Seed companies should focus on consolidating seed production in optimal regions, implementing integrated quality control systems, and combining contract grower networks. The establishment of unified seed treatment and storage facilities can further enhance operational efficiency while maintaining product quality.



AfricaRice and TAAT experts conducting an outcome case study on the development of climate resilient rice varieties in Cote D'Ivoire. Seed companies face unprecedented challenges brought about by climate change calling for mergers to help them stay afloat.

Success in seed industry consolidation requires meticulous attention to pre-merger planning and integration management. Key considerations include cultural alignment assessment, identification of functional overlaps, technology integration planning, regulatory compliance strategy, and comprehensive stakeholder communication planning.

Integration management should be driven by dedicated teams with clear milestone setting and progress monitoring systems. Particular attention must be paid to business continuity and employee retention strategies during the transition period.

The merger framework demonstrates how consolidation can accelerate innovation through combined capabilities.

In the seed industry context, this translates to enhanced trait development capabilities, shared digital agriculture solutions, joint climate adaptation strategies, and improved disease resistance research. These combined efforts can lead to breakthrough innovations that benefit farmers and the broader agricultural sector.

Strategic benefits of consolidation include strengthened industry position, enhanced negotiating power, and improved capability to serve large-scale farming operations. The combined entity can better compete against global players while maintaining local market relationships and understanding.

The merger model emphasizes the importance of sustainability integration and stakeholder management.

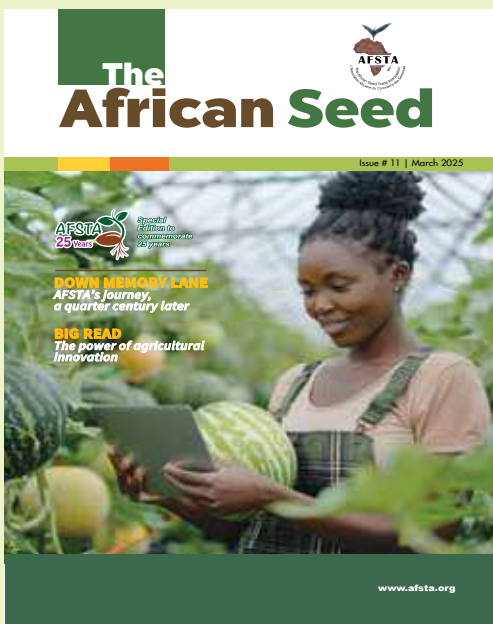
Seed companies pursuing consolidation should focus on combined efforts in carbon footprint reduction, biodiversity preservation, and sustainable agriculture promotion. Comprehensive farmer education programs can help ensure successful market adoption of new technologies and practices.

Successful integration requires clear governance structures, well-defined decision-making processes, and regular communication channels. Cultural integration should remain a key focus throughout the consolidation process. Stakeholder management must include transparent communication with farmers, engagement with dealer networks, employee involvement programs, and careful management of regulatory compliance.

The Honda-Nissan-Mitsubishi merger provides a valuable template for seed industry consolidation. Success in such ventures depends on careful attention to strategic fit, operational integration, and stakeholder management. Companies must strike a delicate balance between achieving efficiency gains and preserving innovative capacity and market relationships.

Further research could explore several important aspects of seed industry consolidation:

- Quantitative analysis of merger synergies specific to the seed industry context;
- Impact assessment on farmer choice and seed prices;
- Effects on industry innovation rates;
- Regulatory implications and compliance requirements for seed industry consolidation.



CALL FOR ARTICLES

The African Seed Traders Association (AFSTA) invites articles from seed people for its 12th edition of The African Seed Magazine due to be published in March 2026.

AFSTA calls for in-depth pieces on any initiative or news in your country on seed trade and seed production initiatives, policy, projects that have a direct impact on the African seed sector.

Kindly note that AFSTA being a neutral body, only publishes articles which do not promote one company's work. However joint efforts by a consortium of companies will be published.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF ARTICLES

January 10, 2026.

Please send your articles to our communication officer, Aghan Daniel, Communication & Advocacy Officer, Whatsapp +254775327635. He can also be reached on email at daghan@afsta.org, or afsta@afsta.org.

THE BIG READ

The power of agricultural advisory innovation

Photo Credit: Freepik



Drones are becoming common on both large and small farms. In many areas, drone use is already essential for large-scale precision farming operations. Data collected by drones help farmers optimize planting and treatments, potentially increasing yields by up to 5 per cent. Small scale farmers, however still struggle to adopt such high tech services.

This was the promise of digital technology - that these challenges in information and services access could be addressed by leveraging the simple cell phone. This was the ICT revolution in agriculture that would help you decide what to plant, when to plant it, where to obtain finance, how to insure your crop against disaster and how and where to market and sell your product. This digital agriculture revolution has certainly increased productivity in high income countries such as the USA and has driven over \$40B in investments by Ag-Tech globally – just about \$5.5B of that in Africa.

We should admit that smallholder farmers have struggled to fully access and leverage digital services. This is mostly due to language barriers, digital literacy, awareness, cost, relevance and timeliness of the information delivered by traditional Information Communication Technology (ICT) services (SMS, IVR, video, call centers and Apps). While some ICT services have scaled, many digital agriculture services and ag-tech companies struggle to fully sustainably replicate at scale what in-person advisors (like the one in my village) and services can provide.

Only 10% of the 500M smallholder farmers globally actively use ag-tech services. Such services too often try to predict what a farmer needs and when they need it and have thus struggled to gain trust and widespread inclusive adoption by farmers.

We have now entered the next evolution of digital technology - Artificial Intelligence (AI). There is currently over \$25B per year being invested in AI startups in the US alone and we have already seen the enormous impact ChatGPT, and others are having on productivity.

AI has many applications in agriculture. From data analysis to help improve crop and livestock breeding, to better predictions of weather and pest outbreaks, to deeper and richer engagements in natural language for advisory and fully autonomous robotics.

By Enock Chikava

Enock.Chikava@gatesfoundation.org

Today it is natural and easy, if anyone has a question to simply “Google It”, and increasingly you “ChatGPT” it. We easily and quickly forget that before the internet and search algorithms, people would obtain knowledge about farming (agricultural advisory) from their fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts or other enlightened lead farmers – when I was growing up, we called them “master farmers”. There was even recognition of these master farmers, and they would be certified. I know because my father and mother were master farmers, in the 80s and early 90s!

When the green revolution (in the 60s) and large government extension programs came along - experts whose role was to disseminate knowledge - about farming, financing, crop management, marketing and storage. In China, between 1980 and 1995, when China experienced agricultural output growth of 12% pa, 108,000 demonstration centres were established and 827,000 extension technicians employed, each making daily village visits to teach farmers on better farming practices.

Most recently, 10-15 years ago, Ethiopia invested in 60,000 DAs, a national ratio of 1:472 farmers. The productivity growth experienced in Ethiopia is in part due to extension or ag advisory.

In May this year, I visited the village I grew up in Zimbabwe and spent some time with the extension officer who advises my mother. He is responsible for 600 farmers and equipped with a motor bike and a cell phone. So, things are changing even in my own village.

However, as smallholder farmer populations have grown to over 500M globally, **most governments and private sector aggregators have struggled to maintain quality and volume of knowledge dissemination.** Many countries’ extension to farmer ratios range from 1:2,000 to as high as 1:10,000, like in Nigeria - the biggest I have heard.

Changing climate requires that farmers must absorb new knowledge about better adapted crop varieties, hardier livestock breeds, new financial services and practices that are climate resilient, like intercropping, and conversation tillage.



ChatGPT image of smallholder farmer using virtual AI assist for advice

Imagine speaking to a device such as a phone, asking questions in your native language, and receiving advice from a personal AI advisor you trust that is tailoring its responses just for you, individually. It considers your demographic, your finances, your farm size and location, your personal priorities, such as your children's education, to come up with the best plan for your upcoming season based on an accurate forecast, then it coaches and supports you throughout. Early experiments with AI advisors show more than 60% increases in incomes. Engagement is much higher, with farmers able to ask AI assistants what they want to know, when they need to know it. This is the promise of AI that it can benefit both the wealthy and the poor – it's an equalizer. It can democratize knowledge, as the internet was always intended to do, and distribute wealth and opportunity globally.

However, as with all new technologies this will not automatically happen.

And as the last digital agriculture revolution demonstrated, we should be careful of the hype. It's not guaranteed AI will be accessible and distributed or delivered as per its promise. AI technology needs to be intentionally designed to work for all, to be ethically applied and inclusive and work for men and women equally. Which is why we need organizations such as AFSTA to actively engage on AI now, to ensure it works for all farmer customers, small and large, and that we all benefit from the next evolution of human ingenuity to improve productivity, incomes, farmer livelihoods and help mitigate and adapt to a changing climate.

I am as excited as ever to see AFSTA continuing to make a unique contribution to Africa's rapidly evolving agrifood system. Advisory seed varieties with the exact targeted product profiles (TPPs) defined by the farmers themselves will be a big deal and surest way to drive adoption at scale. A very happy 25th anniversary!



Digital Green/Microsoft paper: Scaling AI powered ag advice for smallholders



Innovative System for Decision Agriculture (ISDA) report



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2022 - 2024
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2000 - 2001 President
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AFSTA BOARD MEMBERS AT ITS FORMATIVE STAGE



*Standing: Dr. Wynand van der Walt, Dr. Vincent Gwarazimba, Mr. Charles Price, Mr. Getahun Alemu, Mr. Obong'o Nyachae
Seated: Francois Burgaud, Justin Rakotoarasaona, Dr Nathaniel Tum, Guy Blaise Satsa, Mark Condon*

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*Ms. Catherine Langat (Technical Manager), Dr. Yacouba Diallo (Secretary General), Mrs. Mercy Bor (Finance Manager),
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From Lilongwe to Lilongwe: The birth of African Seed Trade Association

By Dr. Bernard Le Buanec | AFSTA Life Member | b.lebuanec@orange.fr



A section of members at the AFSTA annual congress 2001

The International Seed Federation (ISF) offered the support of its secretariat, and it was decided that an exploratory meeting in Africa be organized on the desirability and feasibility of an African seed association.

For USDA administrative reasons, it was decided that we plan the meeting in Malawi. All the necessary contacts had been made within six months, and with the support of Dave Westphal, the Charles Price logistical back-up of the Seed Company of Malawi, and with support from the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation of Malawi, through Jeffrey Luhanga, I called for a meeting in Lilongwe that ran from April 8 to 10, 1999.

Details of the meeting in 1999 in Lilongwe, Malawi, the warm heart of Africa

Given that this was an exploratory meeting, it was open to all interested parties, national seed associations, public and private seed companies, non-governmental organizations, research institutes and international organizations.

At least 74 participants took part in the discussions, among which were 39 representatives of national associations and seed trade enterprises from 16 African countries.

When the meeting began, ISF stated that it had no preconceived ideas about the outcome of the meeting, but reiterated its readiness to provide support until an organization was formally formed, if that be the decision of the participants. The following list summarizes the purpose of the meeting:

1. What would be the mission of an African Seed Trade Association?
2. Does the African seed industry see value in such an association?
3. What would the geographical coverage for the seed association be?
4. Who would the members be?
5. What funds would be needed; and where would they come from?
6. Appointment of an ad hoc committee post Lilongwe to continue the work.
7. Timing of post Lilongwe work.
8. Founding Assembly.



Dr. Bernard Le Buanec

I was interested in the development of the seed industry at the global level and Africa, the continent where I spent the first 10 years of my professional life.

The main objective was to facilitate African farmers' access to quality seeds of improved varieties. This necessitated facilitation of the development of a private seed industry that could harmonize the many preexisting independent seed programs, and work in African markets. It was evident to us that the solution would be to create an African seed association with clearly defined aims and structure.

To actualize the vision, David and I had many exchanges, with the World Bank having agreed to provide \$100,000 for the project. Twice in 1998, after months of endless waiting and unfulfilled promises, I went to Washington to follow up, but still to no avail. I opted to seek other funding solutions.

I contacted Mark Condon, who was in charge of international relations at the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA), and François Burgaud, in charge of the international relations of the Groupement National Interprofessionnelle des Semences (GNIS) in France. We soon secured funding from the USDA through ASTA and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs through GNIS.

The idea of creating an African seed association was born on an autumn evening in 1997, during an informal discussion with David Gisselquist at a World Bank event in Bucharest, where I had been invited to make a presentation.

At that time, the World Bank was interested in the subject as a result of a Steven Jaffee and Jitendra Srivastava report published in 1992, which focused on development of seed systems and appropriate roles of private and public sectors.

After a lively discussion, the possible mission and objectives of an association were adopted as follows:

a) Mission

- Provide a forum for interaction and information exchange among African seed companies.
- Represent the interests of the African seed industry in Africa and the world.
- Promote the development of the seed industry, to improve crop production in Africa.

b) Objectives

1. Improve communication between African seed by dissemination of information and annual meetings.
2. Improve communication between the African seed industry and the rest of the world.
3. Assist African countries to create national associations.
4. Provide information to national associations.
5. Promote activities designed to harmonize regulations across Africa to facilitate seed trade.
6. Develop a statistical database on seed production and trade in Africa.
7. Promote the use of quality seeds in Africa.

The participants unanimously decided to establish an African Seed Trade Association on the basis of the mission and objectives so defined. To ensure a good dialogue between African countries, it was decided that the association's official languages would be French and English.

Geographical coverage of the association

All participants felt that the African seed market was too small to be shared between two or more sub-regions. This was also based on the experience of the Asia-Pacific region, where, despite a large number of agro-ecological conditions, there is only one association, APSA. However, it was agreed that the seed industry of a sub-region might meet whenever necessary, to address regional problems.

Which members?

This question became the subject of a lively debate. It was recommended that ordinary members with voting rights be the national seed associations and the public and private seed enterprises headquartered in Africa.

There was room for associate members without voting rights, such as government

agencies, seeds focused NGOs, suppliers of products and services, as well as companies and institutions located outside the region.

Funding and sustainability

For sustainability of an association, participants opined that the main source of income be membership fees or contracts on projects, while recognizing that an external financial support in the form of subsidy would help in the first two or three years.

Appointment of an ad hoc committee

An agreement in principle having been reached on the substantive issues, it was decided that an ad hoc committee to continue the work be appointed, to, among other duties, propose solutions to administrative matters and location of the secretariat, and prepare the holding of a founding congress scheduled for March or April 2000.

The ad hoc committee would be composed of representatives of countries from the west and north-south axes of Africa. The following countries were selected: South Africa, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal and Zimbabwe.

The ad hoc committee scheduled its first meeting for September or December 1999.

At the end of the meeting in Lilongwe, the main guidelines for the creation of an African Seed Trade Association were in place.

The ad hoc committee, chaired by Nathaniel arap Tum, then president of the Seed Trade Association of Kenya (STAK), prepared the necessary documents and accepted the offer of the South African Association to organize the founding congress in Pretoria in March 2000.

The founding congress, Pretoria, 20-21 March 2000

Thanks to the tireless work of Wynand van der Walt, whose role was also crucial in the creation of the association, the founding congress accommodated 120 delegates from 21 African countries. This meant 76 above the number that attended the Lilongwe meeting, and an additional seven countries.

"The first board of directors, composed of members of the ad hoc committee, plus two additional members of Tunisia and Ivory Coast, was elected."

At this convention we adopted statutes, rules, and the first year's budget, amounting to \$105,000, including the secretary general and his assistant's

salaries. The financial goal was to cover most of the budget by membership fees and to ensure that the association became self-financing within three years of establishment. The representatives of the embassies of the United States and France vowed that their countries would continue to support AFSTA in its formative stages.

The founding assembly elected 42 members, including nine associations and 25 African seed companies. The 34 confirmed their membership after the congress.

The first board of directors, composed of members of the ad hoc committee, plus two additional members of Tunisia and Ivory Coast, was elected. The executive committee of three members was formed as follows: President arap Nathaniel Tum, Vice President Guy Blaise Satsa and acting past-president Samir El-Naggar.

The headquarters of the secretariat was established in Nairobi and STAK agreed to manage the association until the general secretary was recruited to work under the supervision of Nathaniel arap Tum and Obong'o Nyachae (both deceased).

Justin Rakotoarisaona, the first general secretary hired by the Board in August 2000, took office on September 15. The mission and objectives agreed upon in Lilongwe were confirmed, with an additional one focusing on facilitating the exchange of germplasm within the continent, in accordance with national laws and international conventions.

The first AFSTA congress was successful, thanks to the work done in Lilongwe and effective action of the ad hoc committee.

Gaining acceptance among members

Despite a difficult 2004 and 2005, during which time AFSTA struggled to be accepted as a representative of the African seed industry, and where it was not easy to secure sound and sufficient budget for financing the operations of the association, significant progress was still realized through the unwavering member support.

The membership steadily increased, to the benefit of the association's survival. By 2013, AFSTA had 94 members, up from 34 in 2000.

DOWN MEMORY LANE

The saying, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step" is a Chinese proverb from the Tao te Ching people. It emphasizes that even the longest and most difficult ventures have a specific starting point, and daunting tasks can often be initiated by taking a simple action. Join us as we share with you graphically how AFSTA's journey looks like. From the African Seed Magazine, we wish AFSTA a thousand years of life and ten thousand bags of diamond.

AFSTA's journey, a quarter century later

By Justin Rakotoarisaona
rasaona@yahoo.com

AFSTA was launched in March 2000 in Pretoria, South Africa. When I came to AFSTA as the first Secretary General in September 2000, it only had 34 members from 11 countries.

There was nothing, not even an office, when I arrived, as AFSTA was being hosted by the Seed Trade Association of Kenya (STAK), whose Executive Officer then was Obongo Nyachae, and chair Dr. Nathaniel Tum (both deceased).

Through their unwavering support, the two played critical roles in AFSTA's early life, especially logistical and administrative establishment of its offices in Nairobi.

The Association was registered as an international organization with a diplomatic status in 2009, but bought its own office in 2014. There were a few challenges during these 25 years of AFSTA's existence, but due to unfailing support of its loyal members and development partners, it reached its current status, becoming a key seed organization.

AFSTA has been working in close collaboration with Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the African Union (AU) to advance the African seed industry cause. To this end, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed to define a clear road-map to develop a fruitful private public partnership on the seed sector development. Among others, AFSTA played a key role in the harmonization process of the seed regulations of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), which came into effect in 2017 and continues to be implemented by member States.

Seed projects were implemented, with clear objectives to address a few bottlenecks in the African seed sector.

There are currently more than 100 members from 35 countries, of which 29 are from Africa. Most importantly, AFSTA has become financially independent, funding its operational expenses from annual membership fees and net proceeds from its annual congresses.

Periodic five-year strategic plans produced by the AFSTA board and often evaluated by the experts have guided the association's activities and helped achieve set goals.

AFSTA should continue to focus on its mission and core values to effectively serve its members and the African seed industry, bolstered by its collaboration with national, regional, continental and international seed organizations to address sector challenges.

The African seed industry must keep tabs with relevant emerging and existing seed technologies to boost yields and help tackle the escalating food insecurity worsened by climate shocks.

I thank the almighty God plus each and everyone who has contributed in the growth of AFSTA since its inception. This goes to the current and former board members, lifetime members, sponsors of the 25 AFSTA annual congresses, members and all the seed stakeholders, without whose kind support and belief in the Association, this 25-year journey would not be a reality.

Finally, I congratulate AFSTA on its 25th anniversary, hoping that it will continue to improve the African seed sector for a better livelihood of the continent's population.

The author is the first AFSTA Secretary General

How the seed was planted

By Francois Burgaud | fb2392@icloud.com

In November 1998, representatives from 40 African countries met in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, under the aegis of FAO, to work on seed policies and programs in sub-Saharan Africa.

One of their main concerns was that the importance given to the seed sector in the sub-Saharan Africa in international discussions on national policies was limited, as evidenced in the industry's stagnation.

In their recommendations, one emphasized the growing role of international seed associations and considered it necessary to assess the need for an association in Africa.

It was at this time that the General Secretary of ISF, with the national associations of Kenya and South Africa, took the attachment of the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA), and the French Organization for Seeds (GNIS), to create a continental association.

The objective was in particular to end the isolation of the few African seed companies and acquire a collective representation to push international organizations, governments and donors to recognize the importance of the seed sector, specifically plant breeding, to influence public policies and regulations.

After a first meeting in Malawi in 1999, which allowed the few French-speaking seed companies of West and Central Africa to join the initiative, the first congress in South Africa, which had already taken the lead as the main African country for seeds, launched the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) with its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya on a bilingual basis. This move quickly opened up the network to North African seed associations.

The state of the sector at the time of AFSTA's creation can be reflected in a few figures:

Less than 50 companies concentrated in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Kenya;

Less than 2% of the world trade for the entire continent;

54 million Euros of seed importations for all sub-Saharan Africa;

6 member countries of the OECD seed scheme,

4 member countries of the International Seed Testing Association

2 member countries of the International convention for Breeders Rights (UPOV).

AFSTA's priority was to allow seed companies working on the continent to network, exchange ideas, and increase their capacity to meet the challenge of supplying farmers with

quality seeds and varieties. The close second priority was to call on States to harmonize their regulations and ensure that they are no longer obstacles to the development of the sector. The governments were to be called upon to promote these regulations.

There are great results 25 years on: The continent still accounts for less than 5% of world trade, but imports from sub-Saharan Africa have reached 400 million Euros, and the continent as a whole nearly 1 billion Euros; ECOWAS, SADC, COMESA, EAC, have harmonized regulations; 7 new African countries have joined the OECD seed system; 10 countries have joined ISTA; and 22 have become members of UPOV.

Though the reality of public policies is still far from written regulations, there is hope that governments and public authorities' reluctance to let farmers and their networks to breed and produce seeds as they have done for thousands of years persists.

Today, 25 years on, AFSTA is strong and its impact through International Seed Federation (ISF) in major world debates is enriched by all the new seed men and women from the five continents that finally look up to the association's capacity to help its members to address the challenges of food sovereignty and security.

We look forward to telling AFSTA's 50th anniversary story.

Key milestones in the formation of AFSTA

The saying, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step" is a Chinese proverb from the Tao te Ching people. It emphasizes that even the longest and most difficult ventures have a specific starting point, and daunting tasks can often be initiated by taking a simple action. Join us as we share with you graphically how AFSTA's journey looks like. From the African Seed Magazine, we wish AFSTA a thousand years of life and ten thousand bags of diamond.



QUALITY SEEDS WHERE YOU ARE

Sakata's founder, Takeo Sakata, established the Sakata Seed Corporation of Yokohama, Japan, in 1913.

Sakata is currently one of the largest horticultural seed groups in the world, with extensive global research programmes in vegetable and flower seed and their values of Quality, Reliability, and Service have not changed in more than 100 years!

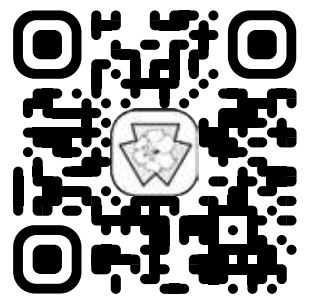
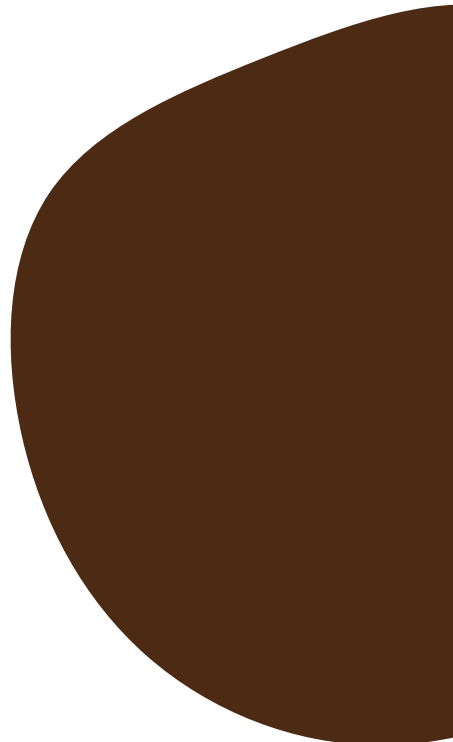


SAKATA[®]

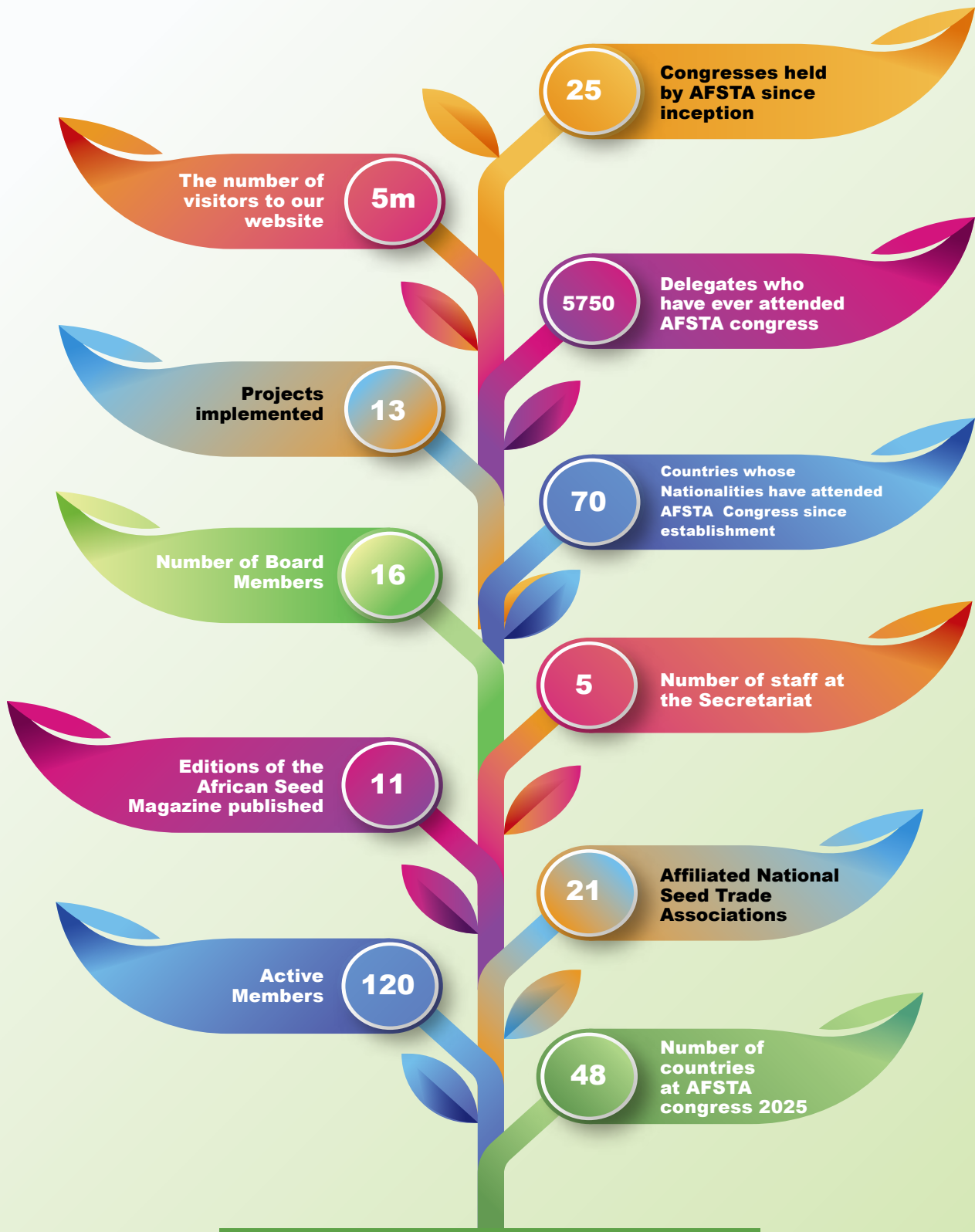
PASSI^{ON} in Seed

Sakata's brand has expanded to over 170 countries across the world providing groundbreaking seed varieties for the global market. Sakata works globally but meets local demands having 18 strategically located research stations, developing varieties to address regional requirements with regards to climate, growing conditions, disease pressure, as well as other attributes such as taste, colour and nutritional value.

Sakata supports AFSTA in its mission to create the best environment for trade and innovation in quality seed for the benefit of members and farmers in Africa.



AFSTA STORY IN FIGURES



National Seed Trade Associations: AFSTA celebrates the bedrock on which it survives

The heartbeat of a federation of seed companies like AFSTA, has long been proved to be the National Seed Trade Associations. They play a critical role in advocating for issues affecting seed businesses and, by extension, farmer rights, agricultural production and food security. Strong seed trade associations are central to national seed quality assurance. They are therefore the cog on which countries rely on for overall functioning of their seed systems.

AFSTA recognizes and salutes the 26 associations which belong to the association. As we mark our 25 years of existence, we are proud to share goodwill messages and updates on activities being carried out by some of our member NSTAs.

Tanzania Seed Trade Association: We congratulate AFSTA for reaching 25 years of consistency



A group photo at the AFSTA Congress 2012 in Zanzibar which was opened by H.E. President Ali Mohamed Shein

By Baldwin E. Shuma
Executive Director and Founder of TASTA

The journey to register Tanzania Seed Trade Association (TASTA) started just after trade liberation 1999 and was granted 2002. TASTA has therefore grown alongside AFSTA and enjoyed 25 years of growth and excellence from the efforts of consistence and loyal team which started with the late Obongo Nyachae to Justin Rakotoarasaona and now to Yacouba Diallo.

TASTA is AFSTA member who has successfully operated under Public Private Partnership spirit with the Government of Tanzania to address food security agenda. With assistance from AFSTA, TASTA jointly with the Government hosted the 2012 AFSTA Congress in the United Republic of Tanzania – Zanzibar.

The Congress which also marked 10 years of TASTA was opened by H.E President Ali Mohamed Shein and closed by the Vice President Hon. Seif Ali Iddi among other top officials led by then Agriculture Minister Prof. Jumanne Maghembe making it one of the most successful Congresses.

Over time, food security has been a concern for all countries in Africa, hence, an important agenda for AFSTA to guide seed associations on how to work with their Governments for increased productivity.

With such challenge, for 25 years TASTA under Public Private Partnership spirit, has successfully worked with the Government of Tanzania especially Ministry of Agriculture and development partners to address ways for increased agricultural productivity for seed and food security.

As of 2025 Tanzania is blessed with surplus food. The road has been long, from making commitments in G8 and fulfilling them. Some of the benefits that we have enjoyed from our relationship with the government include making public land available for increased local seed production, removing import and export barriers and ensuring availability and access of affordable quality seed including fertilizer.

Great efforts have been directed to policies which focus on the avenues of establishing laws and regulations, harmonizing regional protocols, creating incentives to investments, increasing improved technology to farmers and access to quality seed and nutritional values, women and youth development

Reflecting on Africa's agenda of Green Revolution, it is fair to mention that AFSTA as umbrella organization has successfully guided Seed Trade Associations for 25 years on importance of 'public-private – partnership' which achieved measurable successes, TASTA being one of them.

To conclude, the Africa Seed Access Index (TASAI) in their 2021 Report rated TASTA second just behind SANSOR of South Africa among selected Seed Associations in Africa for the development and deliveries in seed industry. This trend is being cultivated under AFSTA of which current position include TASTA being represented at the AFSTA board of management by Mr. Clive Mugadza (Seedco) the current AFSTA Vice President.

AFSTA is our flagship organization which needs a lot of support from all partners technically and financially. The association is moving forward in a world with challenges like climate change which calls for all and sundry, and in particular, peasant farmers who need knowledge and sufficient income to undertake smart agriculture.

Even though the journey is long we need to remember that this land is lent to us by our children and we have a duty to take care of it well before passing it over to the next generation.

We congratulate AFSTA for reaching 25 years full of team dedication, growth, excellence and consistent efforts of helping Seed Trade Associations in Africa to contribute to attaining certified seed and hence food security.

The writer, who is a senior citizen has served the seed industry for 37 years in Tanzania Seed industry. The African Seed Magazine celebrates him for this wonderful achievement

Ethiopia: National forum seeks to strengthening the country's seed sector



*National Seed Forum, Ethiopia 2024:
The meeting voiced concerns on widespread selling of illegal and counterfeit seeds.*

By Melaku Admasu | kmadmasu@gmail.com

The Ethiopian Seed Association (ESA) is a pivotal organization in the realm of seed production and marketing in Ethiopia. Since its establishment, ESA has been dedicated to fostering collaboration and communication among stakeholders, with a steadfast commitment to representing the interests of its members and driving the transformation of the Ethiopian seed system.

ESA's objectives are multifaceted, with a key focus on advocating for the enhancement of the country's seed system. This is achieved through active engagement with various stakeholders, including government bodies, regulatory agencies, and esteemed development partners such as ENSP, AGRA, CRS, SNV, and GIZ. By working closely with these entities, ESA attempts to bolster the capacity and capabilities of the seed sector in Ethiopia, paving the way for sustainable agricultural development.

An annual highlight on ESA's calendar is the National Seed Forum, a significant platform for stakeholders to address pertinent issues within the seed sector. The most recent forum, held on May 16th, 2024, delved into a range of critical topics impacting the industry, reflecting the dynamism and depth of discussions that took place.

The forum commenced with an insightful overview of ESA's activities and progress report, providing stakeholders with valuable insight into the association's ongoing initiatives. Subsequently, discussions centered on the new seed proclamation and its current implementation status, shedding light on the regulatory framework governing the sector and its implications for all involved parties.

Furthermore, the forum delved into the status of Early Generation Seed (EGS) production and distribution, acknowledging its pivotal role in ensuring that quality seeds reach farmers. This underscores the importance of addressing challenges in this area to maintain the integrity of the seed sector.

A crucial aspect highlighted during the forum was the financing opportunities offered by the Development Bank of Ethiopia (DBE) for the agriculture sector. Accessible funding is imperative for driving forward seed-related endeavours and supporting the growth of the agricultural landscape in Ethiopia.

One pressing concern that garnered significant attention during the forum was the issue of selling illegal and counterfeit seeds. Stakeholders emphasized the detrimental impact of such practices on the formal seed sector and agricultural productivity as a whole, emphasizing the need for concerted efforts to combat this challenge effectively.

Deliberations at the forum led to the production of a position paper was produced at the forum. The position paper encapsulates emerging trends in illegal seed practices, emphasizing the need for wider awareness creation, relevant and enforceable measures, and building required human capacity and infrastructure to combat illegal seed sales effectively.

Varietal and quantity mismatch of EGS was also addressed, with recommendations put forth to further develop the system to ensure adequate volume of EGS produced for demanded crop varieties with standard quality.

Transparency and contractual binding in EGS planning, production, and allocation were emphasized as essential components for addressing this challenge effectively.

Furthermore, stakeholders recognized the significance of an internationally recognized Plant Variety Protection (PVP) system in driving a thriving seed sector. Establishing an office with responsibility for PVP was recommended to ensure clarity and implementation of PVP provisions, thereby incentivizing enhanced investment in research and development within the sector.

Access to finance for seed sector actors emerged as a critical area requiring attention. It was discussed that improved access to finance is essential, especially given the expansion of contract seed production and the substantial financial requirements involved.

The forum also shed light on the need for immediate national deployment of the EthioSeed Digital Platform. Recognizing the challenges posed by inadequate seed information systems, stakeholders emphasized the importance of implementing this platform nationally to address this crucial gap effectively.

As ESA continues to spearhead advocacy efforts and facilitate collaboration, it is poised to drive meaningful impact within the Ethiopian seed system, ultimately contributing to enhanced productivity and livelihoods for farmers across the country.

Teff farming: Accessible funding is imperative for driving forward seed-related endeavours and supporting the growth of the agricultural landscape in Ethiopia.



Ghana: Our activities are aligned to AFSTA strategic plan



In Ghana the Annual Seed Business Forum, also known as SeedLink, brings together seed companies, farmers, and policymakers to exchange ideas, tackle challenges, and foster collaboration.

By Amos Rutherford
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As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA), it's a time to reflect on the journey of providing African farmers with access to quality seeds and improved livelihoods. For the National Seed Trade Association of Ghana (NaSTAG), this is also a celebration of past achievements and the progress that will shape the future of agriculture in Africa.

NaSTAG, founded in 2016 with a membership of 53 companies, is dedicated to growing Ghana's seed industry. Our work promotes a competitive seed value chain and ensures that farmers nationwide have access to high-quality, certified seeds, driving productivity and food security. We collaborate with the government, development partners, and the private sector to promote innovation, investment, cooperation and sustainability, within the seed sector.

Our focus remains on empowering both seed producers and farmers. We are committed to ensuring that the seed industry flourishes, supporting Ghana's broader goals of food security, and economic growth, and contributing to the sustainable development goals (SDG 2) attainment.

The impact

NaSTAG's accomplishments have had a broad impact across Ghana's seed sector.

Our training programs for seed production have equipped seed companies and farmers with essential skills, improving both the quality and availability of certified seeds.

The association is now recognized by the government of Ghana, NGOs/INGOs, and the private sector as a credible partner and collaborator in driving Ghana's seed policies, investments, and innovations. Of significant highlight is our contributions to the development of Ghana's National Seed Strategic Plan, the West Africa Rice Observatory Agenda, and the revolutionization of agricultural biotechnology in Ghana. NaSTAG has also been a strong advocate for policy reviews that support the seed industry's growth.

The annual Seed Business Forum, also known as SeedLink, brings together seed companies, farmers, and policymakers to exchange ideas, tackle challenges, and foster collaboration. It plays a key role in driving growth and innovation in Ghana's seed sector. Also, our district-level Seed and Inputs Fairs have been transformative in making certified seeds and inputs more accessible to farmers, particularly in remote areas reaching an estimated 2400 farmers in 2024, contributing to increased certified seed adoption, higher yields, and enhanced food security.

We are also leading the way with a seed traceability system aimed at curbing the sale of fake and adulterated seeds. In partnership with three seed companies, NaSTAG introduced a pilot program using traceability stickers to track seeds from production to the farmer.

This secures the integrity of certified seeds and helps protect seed companies against counterfeit products. With plans to expand this system, we aim for total adoption by 2025, safeguarding the integrity of Ghana's seed market.

Additionally, our sensitization on seed reform documents ensures all stakeholders stay informed about laws and policies governing the seed sector, improving compliance and transparency.

Despite these successes, NaSTAG members are still faced with a myriad of challenges. While we look forward to the future of the African seed industry, challenges such as market access, brand development, a fragmented seed sector, a fragile investment climate, and climate change persist. It is expected that ongoing farmer education, led by AFSTA and organizations like NaSTAG working tirelessly, will shape the next 25 years.

AFSTA's 25th anniversary celebrates and honours collaboration, shared vision, and the relentless pursuit of progress in agriculture. NaSTAG's partnership with AFSTA has allowed us to connect with seed trade associations across Africa, sharing knowledge and learning from each other. AFSTA's work in harmonizing seed policies has improved trade opportunities and the quality of seeds available to farmers.

Kudos to AFSTA for this remarkable achievement. NaSTAG is proud to have been part of this journey and looks forward to continued collaboration in the years to come.

The author is the President of the National Seed Trade Association of Ghana (NaSTAG)

Kenya: Proudly impacting the seed industry since 1982

By Wellington Wasike, STAK Chairman

The Seed Trade Association of Kenya (STAK) contributes strongly in shaping the dynamics of the international certified seed space through its membership to the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) the International Seed Federation (ISF) and the International Breeders Committee (IBC). This representation has positioned Kenya right in the middle of influence at the international seed stage.

Under the guidance of the Board of Directors drawn from seed companies, elected by members during the Annual General Meeting (AGM), STAK has continued to influence and shape ideas actualised by board positions at AFSTA, ISF and IBC. The Board is headed by an Executive Committee comprised of the chairman, vice chairman and treasurer. The Committee offers guidance and oversight to the Secretariat that executes day-to-day activities of STAK.

We are one of the leading national seed associations in East Africa and COMESA regions. Due to its apex role in the region, Kenya, with support from the Government, hosts AFSTA. STAK was very pivotal in the establishment of AFSTA and continues to be a benchmark for other seed associations in Africa. Its thrust in promoting seed industry is through enforcement of ethics, promotion of seed trade dynamics, emulating technology and working closely with the regulator and government to facilitate seed trade.

Public-Private Partnerships

STAK has embraced public and private sector partnerships (PPP) to enable a vibrant seed sector. We continuously engage with the government through the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture and lead regulator Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS), to highlight challenges faced by the seed sector players. Success in the Kenya Seed Framework led by STAK is a testament of the goodwill from these institutions. We thank them as we continue to hold conversations about making Kenya great in matters seed – a thrust within the Bottom-up Economic Transformation Agenda.

Our secretariat

STAK is the national umbrella body of companies registered by KEPHIS to produce, distribute, and market quality certified seeds, as well as those that play supportive roles in agriculture. Our vision is to champion a competitive seed sector for food security. We engage all actors along the seed value chain to move technologies from shelves to farmers.

Our members work to ensure every Kenyan farmer can access high quality seed. They offer a wide crop portfolio, and provide solutions to climate change challenges.



By Wellington Wasike, STAK Chairman

Seed legislation and certification

We assist the government in amending and implementing the National Seed Policy, as well as Seed and Plant Varieties Act. Also, through the advocacy efforts of STAK, KEPHIS has now opened up space for responsible self-regulation among private players, leaving the government to handle regulatory and quality control roles. STAK members are at the forefront of this, with five companies having accredited laboratories and 32 inspectors gazetted to practice private inspection.

Regional trade facilitation

The association is active in ensuring free movement of seed in the region. Because of its central strategic location, it hosts the headquarters of most seed companies in East Africa. STAK played a pivotal role in the development of the COMESA seed catalogue. Besides, we handle international, regional and national enquiries and extends its active role in liaison through its membership to the ISF and AFSTA.

Curbing fake seeds

STAK championed the introduction of seed sticker labels, a tool used to arrest counterfeit seed. The sticker labels enable farmers to know if the seed bought is genuine or not. The message comes at no cost to the farmer.

Other engagements by STAK to improve Kenya's seed trading landscape include addressing matters of land curved out for seed production as well as engaging with the government to address the matter of value added tax (VAT) on vegetable seed as it has a negating cost impact, affecting the farmer.

STAK has also worked with regulators/stakeholders to fight fake/adulterated seed, and lobbied all players in the seed sub sector to become members of an association to improve compliance. Additionally, the organization has relooked the EAC HS code together with government to bolster seed trade.

We are committing to continue engaging with the government to ensure enough supply of certified and affordable seeds in the country.

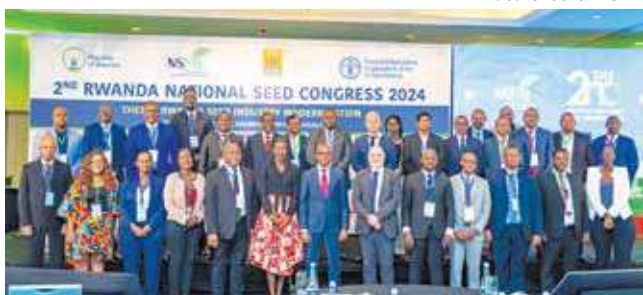
Photo Credit: Betty Kosgei



Exhibitors at a recent STAK congress held in Nairobi

Rwanda: Thanks to AFSTA for uniting seed stakeholders across Africa

Photo Credit: NSAR



Opening of the 2nd Rwanda National Seed Congress 2024



Official publication of the Private Sector's Strategic Roadmap for Rwandan Seed Industry 2030



Dr Keshavulu Kunusoth the president of ISTA and Innocent Namuhoranye the Chairperson of NSAR, holding a Letter of Cooperation between NSAR and ISTA signed at the ISTA Annual meeting 2024.

By Innocent Namuhoranye innocent@nsar.rw

The National Seed Association of Rwanda (NSAR) is honoured to join the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) in celebrating 25 years of groundbreaking work in the seed sector across Africa. This milestone comes at a time when seed systems are increasingly recognized as vital drivers of agricultural development, food security and economic transformation. NSAR, as a key player in Rwanda's seed industry and an active AFSTA member, is proud to contribute to this important moment of reflection.

Founded in 2015 to foster collaboration among seed industry stakeholders in Rwanda, NSAR has made significant strides in advancing seed systems, promoting international standards, and advocating for policy reforms that align with national and regional agricultural priorities. The association strives to strengthen the capacity of local seed producers, traders, and regulators, ensuring that Rwanda's seed sector not only meets domestic needs but also positions itself as a future exporter within the region. NSAR is committed to promoting the development and distribution of high-quality, certified seeds, which are critical for enhancing agricultural productivity and building resilient farming systems.

Recent developments include the launch of the seven-year Strategic Roadmap for the Private Seed Industry 2030 in July 2023 and subsequently launching its implementation plan during the 2nd Rwanda National Seed Congress in July 2024. NSAR is proud of ongoing public-private partnerships bridging gaps and sharing best practices. Some of our key collaborating institutions, include:

- i. The Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI), a key partner with its contributions to modernizing the seed industry, promoting seed quality, and enhancing international standards.
- ii. MoU with Rwanda Inspectorate, Competition and Consumer Protection Authority (RICA) where both parties aim to foster sustainable growth and innovation in Rwandan seed industry through enhanced regulatory compliance, capacity building and the promotion of high-quality seed access.
- iii. Financial Institutions, particularly Bank of Kigali, with whom we have a MoU on enhancing the financial capacity of NSAR association members and seed actors through their products and services.

- iv. International Seed Testing Association (ISTA) through a letter of cooperation is developing the seed sector of Rwanda through enhancing quality in the areas of Seed testing and Quality Assurance.

As we celebrate AFSTA's 25th anniversary, we reflect on the challenges and opportunities ahead. AFSTA has united seed traders, producers, and regulators across Africa, fostering knowledge exchange, advocacy, and collaboration. This network has been key in promoting harmonized seed policies, improving seed quality, and supporting sustainable agriculture. Continued partnerships with associations like NSAR will be vital in addressing challenges like climate change, infrastructure gaps, and the need for innovative technologies to strengthen seed system resilience and boost production and trade.

For NSAR, AFSTA's 25th anniversary highlights the power of collective action. Together, as an African seed community, we are building a resilient, inclusive system that will feed the continent and position Africa as a global seed industry leader. We congratulate AFSTA on this milestone and look forward to continued collaboration, growth, and success in promoting food security, economic development, and sustainability through seeds.

The author is the Chairperson, National Seed Association of Rwanda (NSAR)

South Africa: Congratulations to AFSTA on 25 years of progressive work in the seed sector

Photo Credit: ISF

By Lukeshni Chetty | lukeshni@sansor.co.za

At the heart of South African agriculture lies The South African National Seed Organisation who is a critical partner in the food value chain.

Together with its members, SANSOR is dedicated to producing top-quality seed and pioneering new varieties with enhanced genetics, all while ensuring that these new innovations reach farmers everywhere.

Despite various challenges over the years, the South African seed industry could still ensure the availability of high-quality seed to farmers in South Africa and other African countries.

Without high-quality seed successful harvest is impossible. The importance of quality seed, however, extends beyond food production; it is also essential for land restoration, rehabilitation, reclamation, and conservation efforts.

On one side, the industry is dedicated to developing improved varieties and implementing programmes to ensure farmers have access to these enhanced seeds. On the other side, the broader agricultural sector is working on strategies to secure food for a growing population amidst challenging climate conditions.

SANSOR believes that the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA), with its 130+ members, can significantly advocate for seed, healthy soils and sustainable soil management, by emphasizing the importance of quality seeds, crop diversity, and sustainable practices.

Although soil health and quality are crucial for crop yields and sustainable agriculture, the degradation of soils in large parts of Sub-Saharan Africa's crop production area, are perhaps one of the biggest challenges facing global sustainable food production.



Delegates at the ISF congress 2023 hosted by SANSOR.

SANSOR has consistently supported AFSTA, and we believe that the strengthening and harmonisation of seed policies will boost seed trade across Africa. As in the past, AFSTA will continue to play a critical role in ensuring that governments across Africa base their seed regulatory decisions on sound scientific principles and in removing unnecessary operational barriers, making it easier for global investors to contribute to the industry.

Africa has for the longest time faced critical challenges in developing a resilient and sustainable seed sector and food system, feeling the brunt of climate change, extreme weather events and the prevalence of pests and diseases. A cornerstone of introducing new varieties and ensuring a continuous investment in research and breeding are international frameworks such as UPOV. The protection of plant varieties is key to a sustainable seed sector.

SANSOR congratulates AFSTA on 25 years of progressive work in the seed sector. The progress so far is commendable, and it is important to keep the momentum going. With more than 60 countries attending the 2023 International Seed Federation congress hosted by SANSOR in Cape Town, it is clear that the world is looking to Africa's readiness to do business, and we believe that AFSTA is well-positioned to build on this milestone by proactively safeguarding and enhancing our continent's resources.

Let us embrace this opportunity to drive the continued success.

The author is the General Manager, SANSOR

Uganda: Our relationship with AFSTA has led to increased trade in certified seed

By Narcis Tumushabe | narcis2005@gmail.com

The Uganda Seed Trade Association (USTA) congratulates The African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) on commemoration of its 25th anniversary.

During the last 25 years of AFSTA's existence, USTA has been an active participant in AFSTA programs and has seen Uganda make great strides in accessing opportunities for networking, business development, and its commitment to advance certified seed production and trade in Africa.

USTA brings together seed companies that produce, process and/or market seed as well as organisations who play other supportive roles to the seed sector. We are committed to enhance a vibrant seed sector in Uganda by advocating for the interests of the seed industry players with great passion to conduct business with expertise and integrity.

Efforts to increase smallholder access to improved varieties and quality seed is often central to agricultural development, economic growth, and poverty reduction in low-income countries. Uganda stands out for its recent policy innovations, regulatory reforms, and market experiments for seed and for the extensive analysis of its experience.

AFSTA has been part of the changing landscape of country's seed system. Although there is still low uptake of improved varieties and quality seed in Uganda, there has been increased innovation and active participation in the seed sector by the private sector. The initiatives include advocacy for regulatory changes to enhance space to the private seed sector players to participate in production value chain operations, labeling to allow text message verification of seed; and crowd-sourcing information on seed quality by farmers.

All these initiatives have a promise, but it remains to be seen just how effective they will be. Uganda has a policy framework that could make a real difference to farmer access to better varieties and seed. There are areas that still need regional, continental and global support for Uganda to benefit the global seed industry.

While the laws, regulations and commercial practices vary from country to country, there are broad conditions that seed companies need to comply with in order to succeed in these markets. Areas that need to be prioritized include enforcement of regulations and policies that are transparent and science-based in accordance with the global seed industry requirements. USTA looks to continue working with AFSTA to address some of these requirements.

The author is the Chairperson of Uganda Seed Trade Association (USTA).

Malawi: We train seed transporters and agrodealers

Photo Credit: Freepik



Maize is a staple crop in Malawi and farmers in the country welcome the planting of the first confined field trials at Bunda College

By Supply Chisi | staminformation@gmail.com

Formed in 2004 for a collective private seed sector voice, STAM has significantly contributed to the improved agricultural productivity and ensuring food and nutrition security of farmers in Malawi.

Over time, we have steadily delivered new seed varieties to farmers at affordable prices through expanded network of agrodealers.

In liaison with Malawi government through ministry of agriculture, it has enhanced farmer knowledge on significance of using improved certified seed. From only four seed suppliers in 2004 mainly focusing on maize, the association has now twenty-six seed suppliers delivering seed for almost all major crops being cultivated. Malawi has wide range of varieties including nutrient dense crop varieties meeting farmer needs and choices. Seed production has moved from less 3000mt in 2004 to average 23,000mt.

To ensure that its members operate in a conducive business environment it has worked with government of Malawi and development partners to ensure that seed policies favour all stakeholders for the growth and development of agriculture sector in recognition that use of certified seed is the key driver determining the performance of agriculture sector.

Through the association's efforts and indeed all stakeholders, Malawi has updated seed legislation giving birth to Seed Policy of 2018 and Seed Act of 2022.

Seed regulations are under review to ensure alignment to the national and regional seed sector developments.

Further the association has been carrying out member capacity building to ensure compliance to both national and regional harmonised seed regulations.

Apart from reaching out to seed companies, STAM with support from development partners has been able to train Customs officers and clearing agents to ensure smooth follow of certified seed in and out of the country with emphasis on safe trade.

The officers are now able to know critical documents that accompany seed as it moves out and into the country. To ease farmer search cost of the seed and maintaining the quality of seed at the point of sale STAM trains seed transporters and agrodealers. This has contributed significantly to farmers confidence with respect to the quality of seed and has reduced germination failure complaints because of poor handling of the seed.

To protect farmers from accessing STAM register all seed outlets, monitor markets and in 2020 introduced scratch seed labels where farmers can authenticate the seed using mobile phone.

Our core existence is to ensure the farming community access high quality certified seed. Seed certification services are therefore key.

In partnership with Seed Services unit the official

seed-certifying agency in 2019 trained and recruited 27 para seed inspectors to ensure seed field are timely and adequately inspected.

In 2025/26 farming season at least 30 private seed inspectors will be trained to support government seed inspectors as we eye more seed exports in African region.

To keep our members and seed sector players in general about scientific breakthrough especially in areas of Biotechnology STAM in the past eight years with support from AFSTA has been conducting awareness workshops for sector players to separate myths and facts regarding biotechnology and other technologies being applied in the seed sector.

In 2024, Malawi established Seed sector Biotech committee with mandate of providing unbiased science based information to Malawi public on biotechnology. To ensure members are capacitated series of trainings were conducted for members to familiarise with terms used in biotechnology, currently developments in Malawi on the subject and Malawi policies on biotechnology.

As a parting short, we are happy to let you know that we are open to supporting both national and international companies to provide certified seeds and associated technologies.

Website: seedtrademalawi.com
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Tunisia: Enjoying our historic relationship with AFSTA

The Tunisian Seed Association *Chambre Syndicale Nationale des Semences et Plant* is organised under the Federation of Agri-Food within the Tunisian Union of Industry and Crafts (UTICA) a famous organisation, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015.

To date, we have nearly 40 members ranging from seed production to marketing and nursery companies for the production of vegetable and arboriculture plants.

The Chamber's Bureau is made up of 12 members and its Executive Committee consists of five members including the President, two Vice Presidents and the Treasurer.

Since its creation, the Chamber's objective was to study the most important concerns of the profession and to facilitate the activity of its members.

One of the main focus of the Chamber over the years has been active participation in the International Seed Testing Association (ISTA) accreditation process of the Central Seed Laboratory in collaboration with friendly institutions such as SEMAE, GEVES, SNES and ISF.

The Chamber has actively participated in meetings, colloquiums and seminars organized at the National and International levels. It has also facilitated the participation of Tunisia represented by the Ministry of Agriculture in seminars and Congresses of international organizations related to the sector (UPOV, ISTA, OECD, etc.)

Besides, representatives of the Chamber's Bureau participate in multiple meetings of the sectorial Commissions, field visits to test sites for new varieties for registration and Certification process in Olive trees and Citrus Plants in Tunisia.

Our relationship with AFSTA is historic since, first of all, we are among its first members, two of our Presidents have also been Presidents of AFSTA (Mr. Ghariani and Mr. Gabsi) and we have organized no less than three successful AFSTA Congresses in 2004, 2014 and 2022.

We are also cooperating with AFSTA on various projects and in particular the launch of COMSHIP in Tunisia since the end of 2021.

AFSTA's 25th Anniversary is a great occasion to strengthen our cooperation in order to grant movement of good quality seeds in Tunisia, North Africa and Africa in general.

Zimbabwe: Good quality seed key to unlocking food security in Africa

Zimbabwe Seed Association (previously Zimbabwe Seed Trade Association) is a not-for-profit, membership-based, non-political representative body of agro-based Persons, Firms or Companies active in the formal seed sector in Zimbabwe and are either entirely or in part engaged in various seed value chain activities and processes.

The association which has a membership of 26, was formed in the early 1990s and changed name to Zimbabwe Seed Association (ZSA) in December 2020.

Our members are registered with the government's national seed authority - Seed Services Institute, hence conduct all their business according to laid down regulations and procedures to ensure that good quality seed of improved varieties is available on the market. They develop, produce, process and/or market seed of a wide range of field, horticulture, and pasture crops.

The country has existing seed, variety protection and phytosanitary legislation and an ISTA accredited laboratory, as well as participates in OECD Seed Schemes and harmonised seed regulations of the SADC and COMESA - all which facilitate seed trade both at home and abroad. Given such facilities, members are open to doing business with partners both at home and abroad.

The Association has been an active member of AFSTA since its formative years contributing to its programs. Zimbabwe successfully hosted the AFSTA congress in 2015 at the majestic Victoria Falls which was well attended, no wonder why it was chosen to host another seed sector related event – the 2025 African Plant Breeders Association Conference APBACon'25, which will run from 6 to 8 October 2025.

Furthermore, Zimbabweans have been active in various committees of AFSTA notably Mr. Denias Zaranyika, past president of AFSTA and the father of AFSTA Special Interest Groups.

Mr Zaranyika was honoured with the AFSTA Lifetime membership award in Dakar, Senegal in 2023.

Zimbabwe Seed Association is proudly associated with AFSTA and congratulate it on its 25th anniversary.

Photo Credit: Zimbabwe Seed Association



Memories: Mr Zaranyika was honoured with the AFSTA Lifetime membership award in Dakar, Senegal in 2023.

Zambia: We produce adequate seed due to our resilience

Zambia Seed Trade Association

The Zambian seed industry is considered to be well-developed and advanced, and an admirable model within the African region. Zambia's seed certification system is one of the strongest in SADC and COMESA regions. This is evidenced by the accreditation of the country to the Organization of Economic Corporation and Development (OECD) seed certification schemes and the International Seed Testing Association (ISTA) as well as its alignment with regional harmonized protocols.

Besides producing sufficient seed, meeting local requirements, Zambia has become a regional and global seed production hub, with seed produced and certified in the country exported to many countries within Africa and beyond, and holds potential for further expansion of this export market.

Favourable factors supporting the seed

The production hub status of Zambia includes good policy and regulatory framework, relatively good climate, seed grower reliability and conducive policies attracting private sector investment in the seed industry.

The growth of the Zambian seed industry over the years has resulted in a rapid increase in the number of players, requiring enhanced coordination to uphold the integrity of the industry. The Zambia Seed Trade Association (ZASTA) is positioning itself to play a greater role in this regard.

The seed industry has played a pivotal role in supporting agricultural production and productivity in Zambia by making the required seed available on the market.

The industry has, in particular, partnered with the government in the provision of seed under the government-supported input subsidy programmes, which have been the main vehicles enabling smallholder farmers access certified good quality seed for a range of crops.

The Zambian government positions Agriculture as one of the priority sectors in driving the country's socio-economic development. Among other benefits, the government expects agriculture to provide a major source of income for both rural and urban households, and employment and wealth creation opportunities. Generally, the agriculture sector has been characterized by low productivity and production.



Seed work in Zambia: The growth of the Zambian seed industry over the years has resulted in a rapid increase in the number of players, requiring enhanced coordination to uphold the integrity of the industry.

The government is committed to changing this status through its policies, plans and programmes aimed at transforming the sector and revamping its performance, to increase its contribution to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and foreign exchange earnings, and enhance household and national food and nutrition security. In pursuance of this aspiration, the Zambian government recently launched a new National Agricultural Investment Plan, dubbed 'Comprehensive Agricultural Transformation Support Programme (CATSP).

As part of the implementation of this programme, the government has set crop production targets for 2027 for three crops – maize to 10 million metric tons; soybean to 3.0 million metric tons and wheat to 1.0 million metric tons, up from 3.5 million, 1.0 million and 430,000 metric tons respectively. Seed being a key input in crop production, these targets challenge the seed industry to ensure that seeds required to meet these production targets are available. Currently, over 120,000 metric tons of seed are produced covering a wide range of crops which include maize, wheat, rice, sorghum, common bean, cowpea and sunflower. Maize accounts for a larger proportion at 80,000 metric tons, while the national maize seed requirement is currently estimated at between 35,000 to 40,000 metric tons, which leaves around 40,000 metric tons for the export market.

“The growth of the Zambian seed industry over the years has resulted in a rapid increase in the number of players, requiring enhanced coordination to uphold the integrity of the industry.”

We believe that the seed industry in Zambia has the capacity and resilience to meet the anticipated increase in seed requirement to meet government-set crop production targets and the general increase in crop production resulting from the government's transformative agenda in the agriculture sector.

If we take maize, for instance, and assume an average yield of 2.7 metric tons/hectare for smallholder farmers, roughly 3.7 million hectares will be required to be planted to harvest 10 million metric tons. This will require roughly 92,593 metric tons of seed. This will mean an additional 12,000 metric tons of seed beyond the current maize seed production level. Even in seasons where severe drought has been experienced, the Zambian seed industry has demonstrated resilience and produced adequate maize seed requirements.

Nigeria: Biotech Committee helps to leverage new technologies

By Stephen Adigun I adigunoludapo@gmail.com

The African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) has played a pivotal role in the rejuvenation of the Seed Entrepreneurs Association of Nigeria (SEEDAN) by among other partnerships, spearheading the formation of a Seed Biotechnology Committee.

This committee is aimed at demystifying the facts and truths about agricultural biotechnology, boosting the adoption of biotechnology in Nigeria's seed sector, and ensuring a competitive and sustainable agricultural future for the country.

As part of its efforts, the Seed Biotechnology Committee has conducted two major training sessions, introducing key players in Nigeria's agricultural seed sector to the potential of biotechnology. These initiatives have not only enhanced the capacity of seed entrepreneurs but also highlighted the challenges and opportunities for the commercialization of biotechnology in Nigeria.

A deep dive into biotechnology

The first training session organized by the Seed Biotechnology Committee focused on three major themes: an introduction to biotechnology, the challenges to its commercialization in Nigeria, and the advancements and current status of biotechnology use in Africa. Held in early June and July 2024, this training brought together seed entrepreneurs, policymakers, scientists, and representatives from various agricultural institutions.

The introduction to biotechnology aimed to familiarize participants with the terminologies, the basics of genetic modification, gene editing, and other molecular biology techniques that can be applied in seed production. Emphasis was placed on how these innovations could help address Nigeria's agricultural challenges, such as the need for improved crop yields, pest and disease resistance, and adaptability to climate change.

In addition to the technical aspects, the session also covered the challenges to the commercialization of biotechnology in Nigeria. Regulatory hurdles, limited access to financing, and public perception were discussed as key obstacles that need to be addressed for biotechnology to be successfully adopted on a large scale in Nigeria's agricultural industry.

The training also provided an overview of the status of biotechnology in Africa, showcasing how other African countries have adopted biotech solutions in agriculture. This was aimed at encouraging Nigerian stakeholders to take advantage of biotechnology to enhance productivity, efficiency, and food security.



Caption: Nigerian Minister of State Agriculture and Food Security Senator Dr Aliyu Sabi Abdullahi (2nd from left) is captured at Seed Connect Expo 2024: AFSTA is working closely with SEEDAN to create awareness on biotechnology.

AFSTA's role in capacity building

AFSTA has been instrumental in supporting SEEDAN's mission to modernise the Nigerian seed sector. By facilitating the establishment of the Seed Biotechnology Committee, AFSTA has helped SEEDAN position itself to leverage new technologies that are crucial for transforming the industry.

The training sessions also focused more on the practical applications of biotechnology. It provided hands-on learning opportunities, allowing seed entrepreneurs and researchers to explore how biotechnology tools could be used to breed higher-quality seeds that are more resilient and better suited to Nigeria's diverse agro-climatic zones.

These training sessions, organized with AFSTA's support, are expected to lay the groundwork for further investments in biotechnology research and seed development in Nigeria.

Addressing the challenges

Despite the progress made by the Seed Biotechnology Committee, there are still significant challenges to overcome. Regulatory frameworks around genetically modified organisms (GMOs) remain underdeveloped, and public awareness and acceptance of biotechnology solutions are low. Moreover, many seed entrepreneurs face financial constraints that limit their ability to invest in research and development.

However, AFSTA and SEEDAN are committed to addressing these barriers. Through continued capacity-building programs, policy advocacy, and public awareness campaigns, they aim to create an enabling environment for the commercialization of biotechnology in Nigeria's agricultural sector.

Moving forward

The establishment of the Seed Biotechnology Committee is seen as a major step forward in Nigeria's efforts to modernize its agricultural sector and ensure food security. With continued support from AFSTA, SEEDAN is poised to become a leader in biotechnology-driven seed production in Africa.

In the coming months, the Committee plans to expand its training initiatives, focusing on regulatory best practices, public engagement, and more advanced biotech applications. These efforts are expected to attract further investments in Nigeria's seed industry, driving innovation and making the country more competitive in the global agricultural market.

The collaboration between AFSTA and SEEDAN underscores the potential of biotechnology to transform Nigeria's seed sector, promising a future where higher yields, more resilient crops, and a sustainable agricultural system become the norm.

GOODWILL MESSAGES FROM PAST PRESIDENTS

At the occasion of celebrating 25 years of existence, 'The African Seed Magazine' reached out to past presidents of the African Seed Association to establish how they are fairing. Below are the excerpts from our engagement with 10 of them.

Mark Sacchs (2006-2008): AFSTA has stood the test of time



Mark Sacchs

The African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) was established in 1999 in Malawi, with its founding congress held in 2000 in Pretoria. The primary objective of AFSTA was to serve the seed trade industry in Africa by facilitating networking, promoting food security, advocating for the industry, and fostering member and stakeholder development.

As someone who attended the founding congress in 2000 and served in the Board for nine years, two of which I was president, I experienced valuable insights into the organization's evolution and impact. In my term as President, I oversaw the annual Congresses in Zambia and Kenya, which contributed to some extent to the growth and development of AFSTA.

The relationships formed at AFSTA have evidently stood the test of time, and many friendships that I forged at the association continue to this day. This underscores the significance of the connections and collaborations fostered within AFSTA, extending beyond professional engagements to enduring personal relationships.

In its early days, AFSTA placed considerable emphasis on ensuring its sustainability, a crucial aspect for any organization aiming for long-term impact. The fact that AFSTA continues to thrive is a testament to the success of these early efforts and ongoing dedication of its management, members and stakeholders.

My first hand involvement in shaping AFSTA's trajectory and witnessing its evolution provides a unique perspective on its journey and accomplishments over the years.

As I reflect on my retirement from the seed trade in 2022, my contributions to AFSTA and the broader industry are fondly remembered. The legacy of AFSTA's leadership and dedication, alongside that of others involved with it, continues to reverberate through the organization's ongoing initiatives and achievements.

In conclusion, AFSTA's journey from its founding in 1999 to its current standing as a pivotal force in the African seed trade industry reflects a story of resilience, collaboration, and enduring impact. Despite difficulties associated with changes in the global climate, as well as social and political requirements challenges, the necessity of AFSTA's existence and its contributions become even more invaluable.

My personal experience within AFSTA offers a compelling narrative of its evolution and the enduring bonds it has fostered within the seed trade community.

Marcel Busuma Kanungwe (2008-2010): Serving in the board was a cherished personal honour



Marcel Busuma Kanungwe

The AFSTA's commemoration of its 25 years of existence is in many ways a celebration of the success of the men and women that gave birth to the Association. The vision of a continental seed trade association has come true.

My involvement with AFSTA started at the inaugural congress in Pretoria, South Africa in 2000. I was invited to the event in my capacity as President of the Zambian Seed Trade Association (ZASTA). It was love at first sight! The organizing committee of the congress felt that I had a wealth of experience and knowledge in the seed industry, and that I had something to offer to the continental seed industry.

I was nominated and later elected as member of the AFSTA Board. I served in the Board for several years before being elected as Vice President and finally President.

Serving as an ordinary member of AFSTA, Board member and President was not only a cherished personal honour but also that of the Zambian Seed Industry, which mentored me as a leader in the industry.

AFSTA has over the years constituted strong management teams. Any achievement should rightly be attributed to collective efforts.

I pay tribute to all past Presidents, particularly our late colleagues Dr. Nathaniel K. Tum and Guy Blaise Satsa (may their souls rest in peace). Credit also goes to the immediate past Secretary General and CEO of AFSTA. They are all architects of today's success.

My period as President registered several management milestones, such as the organization of the Annual AFSTA Congress using a checklist to standardize the organizational approach of the congress. This approach removes the possibility of missing out key elements in achieving a successful congress. Further success was that of obtaining Diplomatic Status for AFSTA in Kenya. This improved the Association's position as a leader in the African seed trade. These have stood the test of time.

With the improved visibility of AFSTA as leader in the industry, it became easier to attract and obtain local and international projects, thus improving the Association's financial position.

Looking back, some moments stand out as achievements during my time as President. Zambia hosted the 2007 Seed Congress in Livingstone.

It remains to be the only congress with the country's President being the Guest of Honour. As a result of good collaboration with the Zambian government, the much-awaited approval of the Plant Breeders' Rights was granted. This placed Zambia as a prominent member of the African seed sector.

There is no doubt that AFSTA has achieved a great deal, particularly at helping to harmonize seed regulations in the continent. In the days and years to come, Africa should work on producing enough certified improved seeds for its domestic markets and excess for export.

Governments, universities and seed companies must also up their game and commit more resources to research and development.

AFSTA has a role to play in improving the adoption rates of certified seed, currently at less than 5%. First, National Seed Trade Association (NSTAs) should get involved in marketing activities and strengthen their collaboration with national governments. AFSTA should co-ordinate the activities of the NSTAs.

To help Africa enter the global seed market, AFSTA should establish a seed database to allow international seed players to assess the African seed potential.

My many years of association with AFSTA have been very rewarding. I have made many friends and learned a lot about seed.

I am currently running a vegetable seedling business dubbed Mayo Agroservices, thanks to colleagues in AFSTA who encouraged me. I could have otherwise missed the opportunity.

I am actively involved in ZASTA, which I helped establish and served as its first President.

My close association with AFSTA is attested by my regular presence at its annual congresses. Last year, I attended the APSA Congress in Christchurch, New Zealand. I look forward to being an ambassador for closer relationship between APSA and AFSTA. The two associations have a lot in common.

I wish AFSTA a very happy 25th anniversary, and many more.

Enock Chikava (2010-2012): As AFSTA turns 25, the fire must continue to burn



Enock Chikava

My name is **Enock Chikava**, currently Director, Ag Delivery Systems at the Gates Foundation. Although I am now a global agricultural development leader, working to reduce poverty for millions of farming families in SSA and South Asia by developing and promoting agricultural innovations that drive productivity and income growth while promoting resilience and inclusion, I am a "seedsman" at heart! As AFSTA turns 25, I am thrilled to share my reflections on the journey it has travelled, achieved, and what should be done for

Africa to be fully food secure and sovereign, with a modern agri-food system.

My leadership today wouldn't be the same without the great learning and growth within AFSTA.

I was actively involved in the AFSTA leadership for nine years, during which its membership grew from 30 to about 90. When I was vice president, I championed the crafting of the first Strategic Plan for AFSTA, as well as achieving the financial sustainability goal – then growing the association from \$180,000 in 2008 to \$1 million in 2011. I also remember that we established sub-committees - Member services and Partnerships, West Africa, Plant Biotech and Communications and Advocacy.

This is how I got deeply involved in AFSTA. After moving, as a leader of a multinational seed company, from Kenya to Malawi in 2002, I was involved in the founding of the Seed Trade Association of Malawi (STAM) in 2005, and became its first chairman. Through that national association ticket, I was nominated Board member of AFSTA in 2006. That same year I became chairman of the Working Group on Projects and Fundraising. I was then elected vice president of AFSTA (2007 – 2009), served as president between 2010 and 2012, and past president from 2013

to 2014. I love AFSTA's governance system that smoothly and intentionally passes the leadership button, ensuring continuity and consistency. I sometimes feel such a governance structure would immensely benefit political systems and transitions of power in Africa and the world. I know there are many seed veterans that have been involved in the leadership of AFSTA for much longer. Thank you for all your dedicated service towards the development of an efficient and effective seed sector in Africa!

So, what's my big wishes for AFSTA's next 25 years? Well, the mission still holds tightly: To promote trade in quality seeds and technologies in Africa for the benefit of members and farmers. However, the how to do this has and will continue to change - the business, climatic, political, technological environments have changed dramatically.

Hunger and malnutrition are on the negative trajectories while our understanding of soils, weather, crop genetics, markets, data, and effective regulations and policies is exponentially phenomenal. The African seed sector will continue to innovate, evolve and provide solutions for a vibrant agrifood system. Happy 25th anniversary!

Jitu Shah (2012-2014):

Reforming the seed business in Africa remains our main goal



Jitu Shah

I am the Managing Director of the EASEED Group, partially owned by ZAAD Group that comprises companies involved in breeding, production, processing and marketing of high quality seeds across the globe.

I am in charge of steering the organization's strategic growth in the region in conjunction with the board, the development of company's strategy and appraising the board on all developments.

I am also responsible for ensuring the company is appropriately organized, well-coordinated to drive the vision within all business units and departments; a role I have played passionately and diligently for over 30 years.

In 1992 I attended my first ISF congress in Toronto as a representative of STAK. The event opened my mind on organized seed trade and looking back to the status in Africa by then, I saw the opportunity to reform and strengthen the seed business in Africa.

At the end of the congress, I volunteered to serve on the organizing committee for the next ISF Congress, which was held in Nairobi. The event hosted by STAK was the very first ISF congress to be held in Africa. It was a highly successful and put Kenya on the map. This is where I was determined to make an impact.

AFSTA is the only body through which seed industry players can create a platform for solving business challenges and broadening opportunities through liaison with government's, regulators and all stakeholders.

My greatest passion has always been to transform the livelihoods of the African farmer, for which AFSTA presents the best platform.

I took over the leadership of AFSTA around the time of its 10th anniversary. I applaud those who had served before me for laying a strong foundation that made my work easier.

During those first 10 years, AFSTA had grown from an idea to a globally recognized, credible association of companies operating in and shaping the seed trade in Africa.

During my presidency, AFSTA made some significant strides towards ensuring its financial sustainability. By running an efficient secretariat and putting in place a sound financial plan, I ended my tenure fully satisfied that AFSTA was on a positive sustainable path.

More importantly, we acquired a building in a prime location in Nairobi that now houses the secretariat and serves as the headquarters of the association.

During my two years, we also organized successful congresses in Mauritius, Zanzibar and Tunisia.

We have held successful congresses in Kenya after every three years.

We also established a West African regional office in Senegal. In terms of programs, AFSTA launched a number of activities, including partnership with COMESA/ACTESA in the harmonization process and implementation of COMESA seed regulations

We also initiated a project to support the NSTAs with Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, active participation in the implementation of the USAID-funded West Africa Seed Program (WASP) in partnership with CORAF/WECARD, as well as sensitization and awareness creation, and biotechnology.

Besides, we wrote a project proposal to establish seed statistics in a few African countries.

I met and interacted with great teams that opened my eyes during this learning period, which exposed me to a lot of issues.

During the period, the AFSTA Magazine was introduced in 2015. The annual publication has served as a great source of information and knowledge to industry players across the globe by highlighting new technologies, emerging trends and farming status in the world. The topics discussed have driven research, seed production, distribution and marketing.

With key achievements courtesy of hard work and team dedication, some moments will linger in our memories for longer.

Hosting of the AFSTA Congress in Mauritius achieved over 600 delegates from around the world. This is a record high number of delegates in any congress organized in Africa.

Looking ahead, Africa is undoubtedly the next economic frontier, being the continent endowed with natural resources, including fertile, virgin land with huge potential.

In spite of this potential, most of Africa's population remains undernourished and impoverished. At the same time, the population is growing at an alarming rate. It is estimated that the sub-Saharan Africa will record the world's largest population growth between now and 2050. If current demographic patterns continue, Africa will more than double in population, from 1.1 billion to 2.4 billion.

Against this background, there exists many other forces Africa has to contend with. They include the devastating effects of climate change. I believe AFSTA is well positioned to serve as a credible forum for stakeholder collaboration in devising practical and strategic responses to these challenges.

We need to introduce and promote the take-up of new, more nutritious cereals and other food products that enhance nutrition. Investing in the development of such products will serve the social need.

Denias Zaranyika (2016-2018): A shared vision for development of quality seeds kept me at AFSTA



Denias Zaranyika

I live in Zimbabwe, my home country. I have since retired from involvement with any particular seed company but engaged in broader agricultural sector and socio-economic programs.

These include Advisory Board Chairman of the Federation of Young Farmers Clubs of Zimbabwe; Board Member of AFC Holdings (agricultural finance), Board Chairman of AFC Leasing; and Board Member of Africa University and Chairman of the university Development Committee.

I also spend time overseeing operations at my farm in Goromonzi District of Zimbabwe; and participate in various fundraising initiatives that are aimed at the development of the rural district I hail from. There I have initiated installation of electricity at Zaranyika School and introduced ICT equipment in various others.

As we celebrate the many years that AFSTA has been in operation, allow me to recall a few things.

My involvement with AFSTA leadership was out of a truly shared vision for the development of quality seeds as key to food security on the African continent. Serving on the AFSTA Board and being president was furtherance of my contribution to this vision.

I retired from AFSTA in the full knowledge that we made gigantic strides in fulfilling that lofty goal and that those who came after us are building on a solid foundation.

What then could be some key achievements for me as the President of AFSTA, which have been sustained to date?

First, spearheading formation of Special Interest Groups (SIGs), in response to our membership, to tackle issues of “field crops” and “vegetables” specifically. The SIGs continue on a growth trajectory.

The second milestone was presiding over the third Strategic Plan for AFSTA, which introduced new and fresh thinking by making the board more involved in the running of the Secretariat.

Thirdly, introduction of exciting golf tournaments at AFSTA congresses and also the unforgettable, record attendance at the AFSTA Victoria Falls in 2017 and Mombasa congresses in 2018, which also recorded some surpluses.

Key moments during my tenure in the AFSTA Board and in the African seed sector were:

- Seeing the rapid growth in membership, not only because of the huge numbers that have joined AFSTA in the last decade, but that it signified that the formation of AFSTA was long overdue.
- Readmission of Egypt and Senegal into the AFSTA fold, cementing the association as truly representative seed body to facilitate harmonization of relevant trade regulations within and beyond Africa.
- Leading a delegation of AFSTA board members on a strategic 10-day trip to the USA, where we also made presentations to the United Nations and USAID. Cementing and enhancing collaboration with the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities and the international and regional seed organizations; as well as development partners.
- Chairing the Communication and Advocacy Committee whose publicity helped grow AFSTA membership and activities, including participation in ISF Congresses. The Committee led to the birth of the ‘African Seed Story’ magazine (precursor to ‘The African Seed’) that started documenting and publishing the history and activities of AFSTA.

We look ahead to the next five years, as AFSTA has done remarkably well in the past 25. But like any project or program, there is need for continual assessment and refinement to meet new demands and changed circumstances. I believe that we have created a responsive organization.

Going forward, and in order for us to maximize the capacity that we have created, there may be need to strive to continually invest in digital technologies to improve the efficiency of the operations of the secretariat as well as many of our member services.

AFSTA should not only promote the growth and activities of SIG, but also be involved in educating people about beneficial types of food – vegetables and small grains. Growing is not enough if there is no consciousness of the health benefits.

Vegetables and small grains are critical not only to fight hunger but also the increasing prevalence of diseases.



My involvement with AFSTA leadership was out of a truly shared vision for the development of quality seeds as key to food security on the African continent. Serving on the AFSTA Board and being president was furtherance of my contribution to this vision.



Nicholas Goble (2014-2016): Time to secure the rights of the breeders



Nicholas Goble

I am currently the Seed Business Manager for Corteva Agriscience™ South Africa, managing the Pannar and Pioneer seed brands. I also serve as board member of ISF and SANSOR and chair the association's agronomy committees. I have had the privilege of serving farmers throughout Africa for over 30 years. I have also built wonderful relationships with colleagues and farmers from Sudan to Angola, the DRC and many of the more mainstream agricultural countries.

When asked to reflect on my time on the board of AFSTA and later taking the presidency in 2014, the most obvious point of reflection was the purpose of AFSTA in the seed value chain and their movement as we progress into the future.

How can we, as an industry, play our part in the improvement of food security in the many challenging environments in Africa? And can we attract investment into our seed sector by securing the rights of the breeders who invest their time and capital to develop solutions for farmers and our industry in Africa?

If we go back to the formation of AFSTA under the vision of Mr Bernard le Buanec of ISF, Dr Wynand van der Walt of SANSOR and Marc Condon of ASTA at the CSIR in Pretoria in 2000, a framework was devised to include all countries in Africa to tackle key issues that seed companies needed addressed, either in their own countries or if companies were looking to export seed into neighbouring countries. I had started my career at Pannar Seed as an Export Marketing Officer in 1995. Our Export Director, Mr Deon van Rooyen, decided that we had to be part of AFSTA's growth and success after it was formed. So my long association began after the congress in Cario in 2001.

Being part of a business that was actively exporting seed from South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia in the early part of my career, it became obvious that many individual country seed laws in many were often ambiguous and sometimes impractical or very restrictive.

At the time, the SADC seed harmonization work stream was underway, which made practical sense of some of the limiting issues. I got the opportunity to work with Justin Rakotoarisaona on the COMESA Seed Harmonization project under the direction of Joe and Alida Cortez from the University of Iowa.

Many of the workshops took place in Lusaka, Zambia, and I was truly amazed at the outcome of that process and how skillfully Joe navigated past all the nationalistic agendas and managed to get all the countries in COMESA to agree on a standard set of regulations aligned with the SADC seed laws. This would enable companies to move seed more effectively throughout the region.

Describing my tenure on the Board of AFSTA, the priorities set were simple. The scope of AFSTA had been created to serve the seed sector and create a unified voice for the represented seed companies to advocate for a set of standards that would give the association the confidence to invest in the respective countries in Africa. For this to happen, AFSTA would need to have an independent voice that would align with a set of principles considered beneficial to seed companies and ultimately farmers and value chains in the respective countries.

We have excellent seed policies in the SADC and COMESA seed harmonized laws, but as a trade region have been poor at the implementation of those regulations. We still have the risk of weak or limited Intellectual Property regulations to protect our plant breeders, and fake seed is becoming a larger threat. Looking forward, AFSTA will need to continue to fight for making quality seed available for farmers in a sustainable means, and that we navigate important topics such as Plant Breeder Rights, efficient variety release protocols and the place for new breeding techniques as we unlock Africa's agricultural potential.

Riadh Gabsi (2018-2020): I celebrate AFSTA's dedicated secretariat



Riadh Gabsi

I am Riadh Gabsi and have been in the business of the Agro-Inputs for the seed sector in Tunisia since 1989, acting as Manager and then Consultant for local companies. Currently I am managing a seed company (NewSem) and a consulting company (AIN Consulting) that that operate in the sector of Agro-Inputs in Africa and the Middle East.

I have also been the President of the Tunisian Seed Association since 2012, and served in the AFSTA Board from 2013 to 2022. Besides, I served at the Board of Directors of ISF from 2014 to 2022, and also became a member of its committee for Trade and Arbitration Rules (TARC).

My stint in the AFSTA Board and family started when I was co-opted and became the President of the NOC in 2014, in Tunisia.

The sense of equality, as well as attitude among Board members made me enthusiastic to serve, until I assumed the Association's presidency. I was grateful for support from my colleagues in the Tunisian Seed Association and the great dedication of the AFSTA Secretariat, especially Justin, the Secretary General.

My position as AFSTA President coincided with the implementation of the three-year (2018 to 2020) AFSTA strategic plan. It had brought positive changes into the association.

We teamed up with various organizations (OAPI, ARIPO, GNIS now SEMAE, etc.) to promote the implementation of PVP in order to motivate private breeding in Africa, and actively encouraged the RECs

to implement the harmonized seed regulations, even as AFSTA offered technical support.

We sustained excellent forums to sensitize African countries with science-based facts on genetically modified organisms (GMOs) within the framework of a Croplife International-funded project, which operated a sub-committee called Plant Biotech Communication and Advocacy Committee. We later created the Plant Breeding Innovation committee.

We organized a workshop on the ISPM 38 and e-Phyto, in which a number of East African NPPOs had been invited to explain more about these Phytosanitary

measures. We encouraged each and every Organization and individual to collectively and consistently fight fake seed.

At the time, AFSTA significantly increased membership. The West African seed industry became more active in the seed sector development under the leadership of the “West Africa” Committee.

I consistently made efforts to strengthen the cooperation with various seed stakeholders including the regional and international seed organizations (ASTA, APSA, ESA and ISF) toward a better seed business environment. This was for purposes of facilitating the seed trade,

with a view to improving supply of quality seed to farmers, supported by ISTA, OECD and UPOV.

A lot more has been done in the 25 years of AFSTA's existence, and it must continue. I thank the Board and the Secretariat for their dedication. I see a bright future of our great AFSTA Association.

Azariah Soi, Kenya, AFSTA President 2019 – 2021: We had a vision, and it has borne fruit

When I left the AFSTA Board in March 2024, I set up Grandling Nursery Limited, a company that deals with seed propagation. I set up this outfit after I realized there was huge demand for readily available seedlings to propagate seeds, especially in the horticulture sector. Now we produce all types of horticulture seedlings, from vegetables to different fruits like passion and oranges.

I got involved in seed association matters while at Simlaw Seed Company in Kenya, and became an AFSTA board member. We mainly articulated issues around registration of varieties, crossborder seed movement and trade regulations. Our agitation was to create a vibrant seed industry, relevant to farmers, all regulated and removing the bottlenecks in the seed production and trade, specifically on importing seed from other countries, marketing in the country and exporting it within East Africa.

After serving in the AFSTA Board for about two years, I became the chairman of the Seed Association of Kenya, and over time, again with my experience, my association nominated me to sit in the board of Africa to represent our interests.

With time, my contribution in the AFSTA board was noticed, and I got elected to be the vice president before later becoming President. I was moved by the passion to promote seed trade in Africa and to ensure farmers have access to quality seeds.



Azariah Soi

As a president, I looked forward to strengthening seed associations in Africa, an intervention my predecessor had begun. These associations are very useful in driving their agenda at the national level to bring seed stakeholders together and address their challenges.

Of course we had several challenges, as Africa was experiencing rapid population growth, hence more people had to be fed. Climate change slowed down adoption of improved seed technology, hence impacting seed production and food security.

While at the helm, I expected faster adoption of quality seed because it plays an important role in production of agricultural crops, but this did not happen.

We then came up with AFSTA Strategic Plan 2021 - 2023, which focused on four key priority areas, namely promotion of movement of quality seed in Africa, innovation in the seed industry, partnership and collaboration, and membership.

COVID-19, a key phenomenon during my tenure, was a major setback. We were not sure how we were going to move forward when it struck. It proved to be a major threat in the seed industry because movement was restricted globally. Holding a congress was not easy, but we had one in Zambia in 2019 and even after that we held another one in Diani, at Kenya's South Coast, in 2020. Our resilience made it possible to navigate the pandemic. Successfully holding the two congresses was a major achievement and key moments for me as AFSTA President. Another key moment was my transition from employment to my preoccupation. Thirdly, the fact that AFSTA staff have remained so professional with a board that is far away from their offices made my work easy and memorable as the association's President. It remains a key factor, even as we celebrate AFSTA@25.

Going forward, we need to see an enabled AFSTA with a solid resource base to support national seed associations, which are the entry points in facilitating seed movements, trade and production at national level. We also need to review our pillars to enable us meet our expectations across the continent and to serve our members better.

Dr. Kulani Machaba (2022 – 2024): AFSTA fathers laid a solid foundation for seed associations in Africa



Kulani Machaba

The 2025 AFSTA Congress in Rwanda is special, as it also serves as the 25th anniversary celebration of AFSTA. As we commemorate a significant milestone for AFSTA, I take this moment to reflect on our journey and express gratitude to those who made it possible.

The visionaries behind AFSTA, including the former leaders of the then International Seed Federation, Cameroon Seed Trade Association, Egyptian Seed Association, SANSOR, STAK, ASTA, SEMAE (formerly GNIS), and the 16 Africa National Seed Trade Associations have certainly laid a solid foundation, with the first Board of Directors representing diverse sub-regions of the African Continent (Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Cote d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, Tunisia and Zimbabwe).

Other organizations that were there with AFSTA from the beginning to lend support and lay a solid foundation of the African seed trade include ISTA, FAO, the World Bank, UPOV and the OECD. We are also deeply appreciative of the Kenyan Government, which has graciously hosted AFSTA as an international organization for the past 25 years.

However, through the unwavering dedication and strong leadership of its founders, it has transformed into a leading continental organization.

Currently, we operate from our own office in the heart of Nairobi, fully independent and financially stable. The success of AFSTA is a testament to the collective efforts of our Board members, sponsors, staff, partners — local and international — and, most importantly, our valued members, which include NSTAs, private seed companies, and agricultural research centers.

Our primary goal since inception has been to unlock seed markets across Africa and enhance farmers' access to high-yielding varieties and quality seeds. At the 2000 AFSTA inaugural Congress, Dr Wynand van der Walt (God bless his soul) indicated that the African seed market value was about \$1 billion. And 25 years later, the African seed market has surged to \$3 billion (Mordor Intelligence, 2024).

This growth is attributed to many factors, and the synergies AFSTA created with the African Union, RECs (harmonization of seed laws), ISF members, and various global partners that have helped to formalize seed systems and increase farmers' access. At the inaugural Congress in 2000, AFSTA had less than 42 members.



AFSTA, founded in 2000, began as a small entity, heavily reliant on donor funding.



By March 2024, AFSTA's membership included more than 110 members from around the world. AFSTA has collaborated with the African Union and RECs to fast-track harmonization of seed laws in Africa, and with ARIPO-OAPI to support African countries and NSTAs in implementing PBR/PVP systems.

Notable highlights on where AFSTA participated with various partners to move the seed industry forward include:

- Collaboration with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), African Union Development Agency (AUDA) and Inter African Phytosanitary Council of the African Union (IA-IPSC) on seed and phytosanitary law harmonization across Africa, as well as advocating for favourable agricultural biotechnology regulations that will encourage FDI.

Besides, there is COMESA Seed Harmonization Implementation Plan (COMSHIP) being launched in 21 COMESA Member States since 2014 to trigger implementation at the national level.

- Collaborated with COMESA in training of more than 200 seed inspectors, analysts, and plant quarantine inspectors; and collaboration of a harmonized seed variety catalogue.
- Collaborated with ECOWAS/CORAF to address challenges relating to harmonization of seed regulations in West Africa, and address technical trade barriers.
- Collaboration with NSTAs and authorities to support favorable Gene Editing policies in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia and Malawi.

The future

The Board is looking at making AFSTA to be a strong in-service delivery and support the formation of strong NSTAs in African markets that still lack formal seed systems.

Support NSTAs in policy engagements with national governments on technical and regulatory issues impacting the seed trade (phytosanitary regulations impacting import/export of seeds, PBI, Digitalization, DUS/seed certification improvements, favorable policies for utilization of UAVs in the seed sector, and agricultural biotechnology policies).

Strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders like AU/RECs, ISF, UPOV, CGIAR, ISTA, TASAI, EuroSeeds, APSA, ARIPO, OAPI, CLI, ASTA, BMGF, AGRA, etc.

Lastly, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the success of AFSTA over the past 25 years.

Happy birthday AFSTA, and I wish everyone a great 25th AFSTA Congress.

GOODWILL MESSAGES FROM PARTNERS

For the past 25 years, AFSTA has worked closely with many international organisations such as the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), International Seed Federation, American Seed Trade Association and Asia Pacific Seed Alliance, among others. Below are good will messages from these valued partners.



Yolanda Huerta (UPOV)
Vice Secretary-General

Message from the desk of Yolanda Huerta, Vice Secretary-General, International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV)

Congratulations to AFSTA on its 25th Anniversary!

Reaching this milestone is testament to your dedication to strengthening Africa's seed sector and promoting food security and trade opportunities across the continent.

Over the years, UPOV has been honored to partner with AFSTA in advancing plant variety protection (PVP), a key tool in fostering innovation in agriculture and horticulture.

Together, we have achieved significant milestones, including contributing to awareness raising activities on the role of PVP for development, supporting plant breeders, farmers and growers through tailored training programs, and enhancing collaboration between public and private stakeholders. These efforts have helped create an enabling environment for the much-needed investment in new plant varieties across the continent.

New plant varieties can play a vital role here. Innovation in plant breeding is essential to tackle these environmental challenges by enhancing crop adaptability, improving yields, and increasing disease resistance.

Alongside OAPI's and ARIPO's growing engagement, the entry into force of the Arusha Protocol on PVP in November 2024, demonstrates how momentum is building across Africa in the drive to strengthen plant variety protection and support agricultural innovation.

This progress is driving the development of improved plant varieties, which are vital for food security, farmers' livelihoods, and trade opportunities across the continent, enabling farmers and businesses to compete in global markets with climate-smart, sustainable and quality products.

The increasing interest in PVP among African countries—many of which have joined or are working towards UPOV membership—highlights the impact of these efforts. By fostering access to climate-resilient varieties, the framework supports both productivity and sustainability across the agricultural and horticultural value chain.

UPOV remains committed to supporting AFSTA's engagement efforts by expanding its technical support and capacity building initiatives, while fostering regional cooperation.

As AFSTA celebrates this remarkable achievement, we look forward to deepening our partnership and continuing to work towards a thriving and innovative sector that creates employment for SMEs, and youth, while meeting the aspirations of breeders, farmers and communities throughout Africa.

International Seed Federation (ISF)

From the desk of Arthur Santosh Attavar, President, ISF and Michael Keller, Secretary General, ISF

On behalf of the International Seed Federation (ISF), we are honoured to extend our heartfelt congratulations to the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) on the occasion of your 25th anniversary. This milestone is a testament to your commitment to fostering a robust and sustainable seed sector in the continent. Over the past quarter of a century, AFSTA has played a crucial role in empowering African farmers and promoting food security by advocating for policies that support innovation and access to quality seed.

Our collaboration with AFSTA has been a key pillar in advancing our shared mission of ensuring access to high-quality seeds

for farmers worldwide. Together, we have addressed critical challenges, from advocating for harmonized seed policies and regulations to promoting the adoption of improved plant breeding technologies. These collective efforts have enabled us to support farmers and communities, helping to feed Africa's growing population while enhancing resilience to climate change and other pressing challenges.

One of the highlights of our collaboration has been AFSTA's leadership in strengthening regional dialogue and cooperation. Your focus on connecting stakeholders across the seed value chain in Africa has enriched our global vision of a more interconnected and dynamic seed industry. Through knowledge exchange, capacity building, and partnerships, AFSTA continues to play a vital role in shaping an Africa where every farmer, from large-scale enterprises to smallholder families, has access to the highest quality seed of his or her choice.

As you celebrate 25 years of excellence and leadership, we look forward to building on our strong partnership with renewed vigour and shared purpose. The challenges of the future will demand even greater collaboration, innovation, and action. Together, ISF and AFSTA will continue to ensure that quality seed remains the foundation of sustainable agriculture and food systems across Africa and beyond.

Congratulations once again to AFSTA for this achievement. We look forward to many more years of working side by side to ensure all African farmers have access to quality seed, supporting food security and sustainable agriculture.

Happy 25th Anniversary!

From the desk of Francine Sayoc, Executive Director, Asia Pacific Seed Alliance (APSA)

To Yacouba and colleagues at the African Seed Trade Association,

On behalf of the Asia Pacific Seed Alliance (APSA), I extend our heartfelt congratulations to the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) on your remarkable milestone of 25 years.

AFSTA has worked on advancing the seed sector across the African continent, a mission that resonates in our part of the world too.

As two of the fastest-growing regions in the world, Asia and Africa share immense potential to shape the future of global agriculture. Supporting smallholder farmers, who form the backbone of our agricultural systems, is critical to unlocking this potential and achieving food security and sustainable development.

Seeds are the foundation of resilient, productive, and sustainable food systems. We must stay on the course of empowering the agriculture sector with innovative solutions to adapt to changing climates and feed growing populations.

As you celebrate this special moment with your members, I look forward to strengthening our collaboration and exchanging knowledge towards our shared vision of a more secure and sustainable agricultural future for our respective regions.

Warmest congratulations once again and best wishes for success in the years ahead!

Celebrating the women who make it happen

Women play a crucial role in the seed sector in Africa, where agriculture is a key driver of economic growth and food security. The African Seed Trade Association recognizes the need for equal participation of men and women in decision making. As we mark our silver jubilee, we are happy to introduce to you the women who contribute a lot to the efficiency of AFSTA as members of the Board of Directors.



Head, Legal and Corporate Affairs at Dryland Seed Limited, Kenya

Lynette Ngila is a lawyer by profession and currently heads the legal and corporate affairs at Dryland Seed Limited for the past four years. Since taking the helm of the company in 2021, she has contributed in contractual process improvement and focused on expanding its reach and productivity. One of her greatest achievements has been leading the company in navigating the challenges of the agricultural sector to ensure a steady supply of high-quality seeds to farmers across the region.

Currently, Lynette is working on expanding the company's product range and enhancing its sustainability practices, with a focus on climate-resilient crops to address the challenges posed by changing weather patterns. In addition to her role at Dryland Seed Company, Lynette is passionate about agriculture policy specifically advocating for legislation that creates a conducive environment for

seed companies to operate in the continent.

Further, she advocates for greater representation of women and youth in the seed industry.

She hopes that her involvement in various boards, including her current position, will help drive meaningful change and create opportunities for these underrepresented groups.

Lynette sees AFSTA at 25 as a significant milestone for the seed industry in Africa. She believes that it offers a valuable platform for collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and advocacy to help address the unique challenges faced by the seed sector. This anniversary is not just a celebration but an opportunity to further the role of women and youth, ensuring that they have a strong voice and presence in the future of African agriculture.

Ms. Issorat Nathalie who joined the AFSTA Board two years ago, is the Distribution Network Manager for the Novalliance Group and Director of SEMAGRI based in France. Her main activity is to manage and coordinate business activities of the company. Such include sales, finance, development and human resource.

She has been doing this at Novalliance Group for 28 years. The Group has more than 850 employees, including SEMAGRI, which has been based in Douala, Cameroon, since 1996.

To ensure its development and its main activity as a seed company for tropical zones, the Novalliance group relies on various criteria such as innovative research, quality seed production, high-performance industrial sites and the marketing of our products via a distribution network as close as possible to our customers.

Her experience at the board has been rich in exchanges with seed industry counterparts as well as in other areas of expertise. This has in turn enabled the Board to strategically restructure the association and implement action plans on issues linked to the needs of the seed industry players.



Distribution Network Manager Novalliance Group and Director SEMAGRI, France



Sylvia Horemans, Chief Executive Officer, Kamano Seed Zambia

Sylvia Horemans, a distinguished Zambian entrepreneur and co-founder of Kamano Seeds, has solidified her legacy as a trailblazer in Zambia's agricultural sector.

Established in 2004 with her late husband, Desire Horemans, Kamano Seeds has flourished under Sylvia's visionary leadership, earning national and international recognition.

With over 25 years of Management experience spanning the parastatal and private sectors, Sylvia has driven Kamano Seeds to notable achievements, including winning 1st prize for marketing and selling the highest volume of orange maize seed under the Harvest Plus/Ag Result initiative.

On International Women's Day on March 8, 2019, Sylvia was honoured by CIMMYT for her exceptional contributions to the Seed Business Industry in Eastern and Southern Africa. Her influence in the industry extends further as a Committee Member of the Zambia Seed Trade Association and a Board member at African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA).

Her career is adorned with prestigious accolades. In 2019, she received the Agriculture and Natural Resources Award, followed by the ZAQA Certificate 1st Prize as Female Agribusiness Entrepreneur of the Year in 2021. She was celebrated with the ABSA Women in Business Award at the 2023 Agribusiness Awards and most recently, in 2024, earned the CEO of the Year award at the Female Founders Initiative Global Awards in Dubai.

She has enhanced her expertise with seed breeding training in Sweden and Sri Lanka. Sylvia holds certifications in Plant Breeding, Seed Production, and Agribusiness. Her affiliation with Marketing Matters, local and international agricultural organizations has enriched her with global business insights.

A staunch advocate for women's empowerment and youth development, Sylvia is dedicated to initiatives that enhance food security and support smallholder farmers. Her leadership and commitment continue to inspire and impact communities across Zambia and Africa, cementing her legacy as a champion for sustainable agricultural development.

AFSTA LIFETIME MEMBERS



*Mark Sacchs, Former President
South Africa*



*Marcel Busuma Kanungwe
Former President, Zambia*



*Enock Chikava, Former President
Zimbabwe*



*Jitu Shah, Former President
Kenya*



*Denias Zarynyika
Former President, Zimbabwe*



*Nicholas Goble, Former President
South Africa*



*Riadh Gabsi, Former President
Tunisia*



*Azaria Soi, Former President
Kenya*



*Mr. Justin Rakotoarisaona
Former Secretary General, Madagascar*



*Dr. Bernard Le Buanec
Founder Member, France*



*Mr. Amadou Djigo
Long Serving Member, Senegal*



*Mr. Francois Burgaud
France*

AFSTA FOUNDER MEMBERS



*Mr. Dominic Gitau
Kenya*



*Mr. Francois Burgaud
France*



*Mr. Obongo Nyachae First Interim
AFSTA Secretary General*



*Dr. Wynand Van Der Walt
South Africa*



*Dr. Nathaniel Tum
Kenya*



*Dr. Bernard Le Buanec
France*



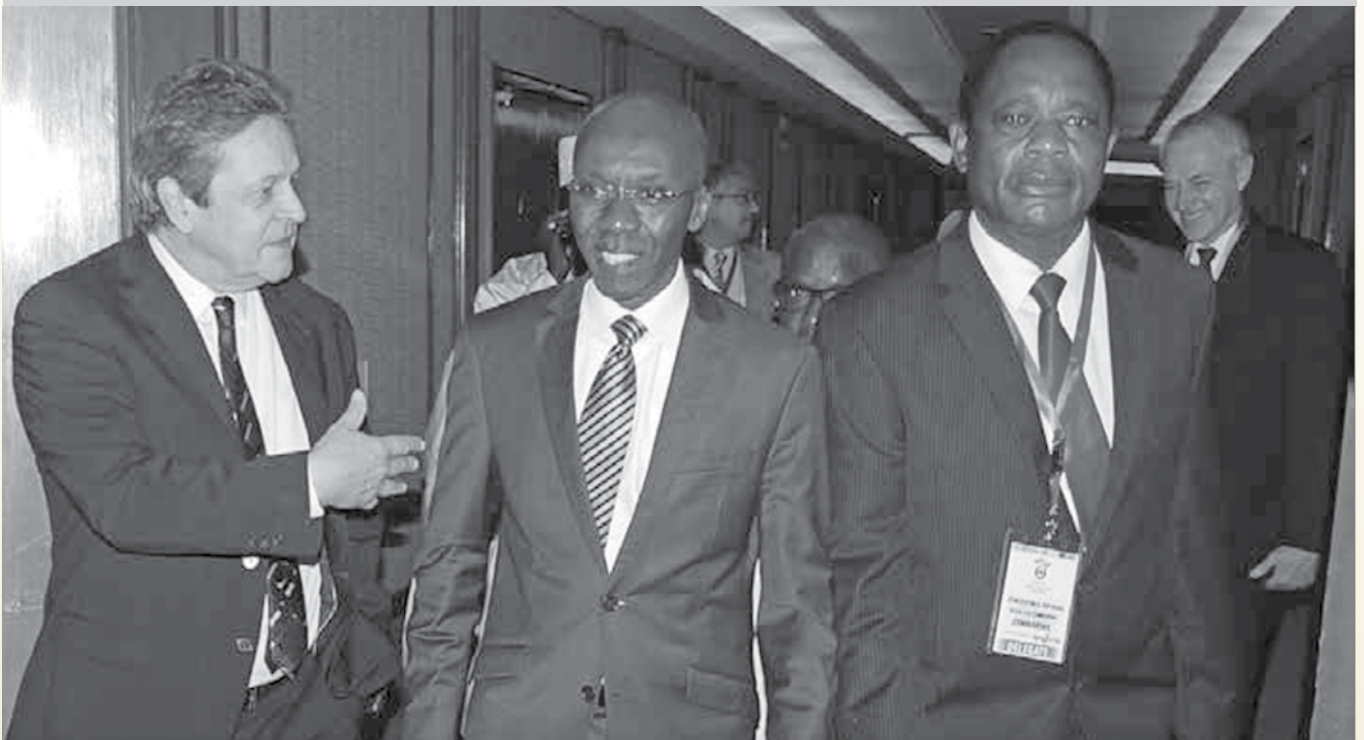
*Mark Condon
USA*

FROM THE ARCHIVES



The 2017 Board Members pose for a group photo in Nairobi.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

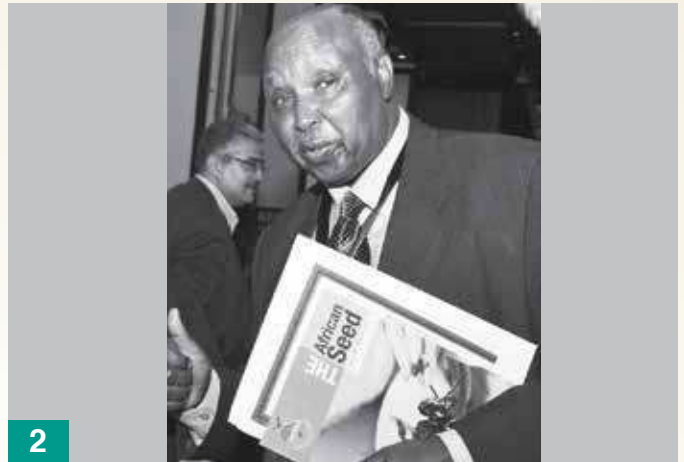


Senegalese Permanent Secretary for Agriculture, Dr Dogo Sekh (centre) arrives at the King Fahd Hotel in March 2017 to officially open the Dakar Congress. He was flanked by AFSTA President, Mr Denias Zaranyika (left) and a board member Mr Francois Burgaud (right).

FROM THE ARCHIVES



1



2



3



4



5

1. Founder member, Dr. Wynand van de Walt makes a contribution during one of the sessions in Victoria Falls in 2015 2. Dr. Nathaniel Tum, founder President of AFSTA during a past Congress 3. Former president, the late Guy Blaise Satsa is captured with a certificate of completion of his presidency awarded to him by the AFSTA Board 4. Former AFSTA Secretary General, Mr. Justin Rakotoarasaona, poses for a photograph with then Executive Board comprising of Mr. Nick Goble, Mr. Jitu Shah and Mr. Denias Zaranyika. 5. Board of Directors pose for a group photo after a past board meeting in Nairobi.

PICTORIALS: CONGRESS 2024



1. Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Agriculture, Hon Mithika Linturi exchange pleasantries with AFSTA Congress 2024 NOC Chairman, Mr Wellingtone Wasike a few minutes after officially opening the showpiece 2. Bayer's Peggy Odongó (in black) and other delegates follow proceedings at the AFSTA Annual Congress 2024 in Mombasa 3. AFSTA staffers, Catherine Langat, Charles Nyachae (centre, front) at the Congress 4. Quali Basic Seed staffers Wanjiru Njoroge and Sandra Alai receive cabinet secretary, Hon Mithika Linturi at their exhibition in the Mombasa Congress 5. AFSTA President, Mr. Amadou Sarr takes a selfie during the AFSTA Mombasa Congress in 2024

PICTORIALS: CONGRESS 2024



1-4 Various exhibitors take delegates through their products and services at the Congress.

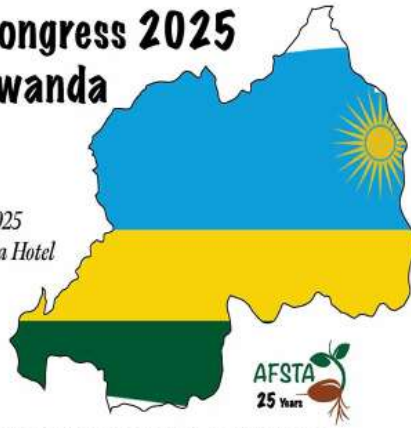
PICTORIALS: CONGRESS 2024



1,2,4,6. Delegates, AFSTA officials and ushers captured during the gala dinner. 3. Kenya Seed Board Chairperson, Hon Purity Ngirici, (extreme right) is all ears to an exhibitor at the Congress. 5. AFSTA officials welcome top Ministry of Agriculture officials at the Congress. 7. AFSTA Board members take a break from their October 2024 meeting in Nairobi. 8. In coming AFSTA Secretary General, Dr Yacouba Diallo delivers his inaugural speech at the Mombasa Congress.

AFSTA Congress 2025 Kigali, Rwanda

3-5 March 2025
Kigali Serena Hotel



Celebrating 25 years of quality seed in Africa

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AFSTA Members 2025

Full Members (Private Seed Companies) (48)

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AFSTA Members 2025

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Seed Associations in Africa (full members) – 18 Seed Associations

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KAMANO SEED COMPANY LTD



Kamano Seed Company is a proudly Zambian seed enterprise dedicated to providing high-quality agricultural and horticultural seeds to local farmers. Registered with the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives through the Seed Control and Certification Institute (SCCI). We strive for excellence in every aspect of our operations.

Our mission is to deliver top-tier agricultural seeds tailored to farmers' needs, while our vision is to become Zambia's leading supplier of pure, reliable, locally bred, and environmentally sustainable seeds.

Headquartered in Lusaka, with outlets across the country and research and production sites at Kalola Farm in Chisamba and Mwinilunga respectively, we efficiently serve farmers nationwide. As a certified seed multiplier, producer, processor, and distributor, Kamano collaborates with smallholder farmers through our Out-Grower Scheme. This initiative provides farmers with SCCI-approved foundation seeds, farmers registration, Smart Agriculture practices, Extension services and guaranteed market, actively contributing to poverty reduction and agricultural growth.

Kamano Seed Company is committed to advancing sustainable agriculture by producing drought-resistant seeds, ensuring resilience in farming amidst climate change. Our support for smallholder farmers aims to transform Zambia's agricultural sector for the better.

We also prioritize empowering women and youth through initiatives that enhance food security and promote smallholder farming. Kamano's efforts in fostering women's empowerment in agriculture are leaving a lasting impact on communities across Zambia and Africa, driving sustainable development and improving livelihoods.

Main Products:

Maize, Sugar Beans, Cowpeas, Velvet Beans, Groundnuts, Soya Beans, Paddy Rice, Sunflower, Sorghum, Pearl Millet, Finger Millet, Irish Potato Seed, Vegetable Seed, and Sun Hemp



Beans (Mbereshi)



Orange maize



Sorghum

Sunflower



Cowpeas



White maize



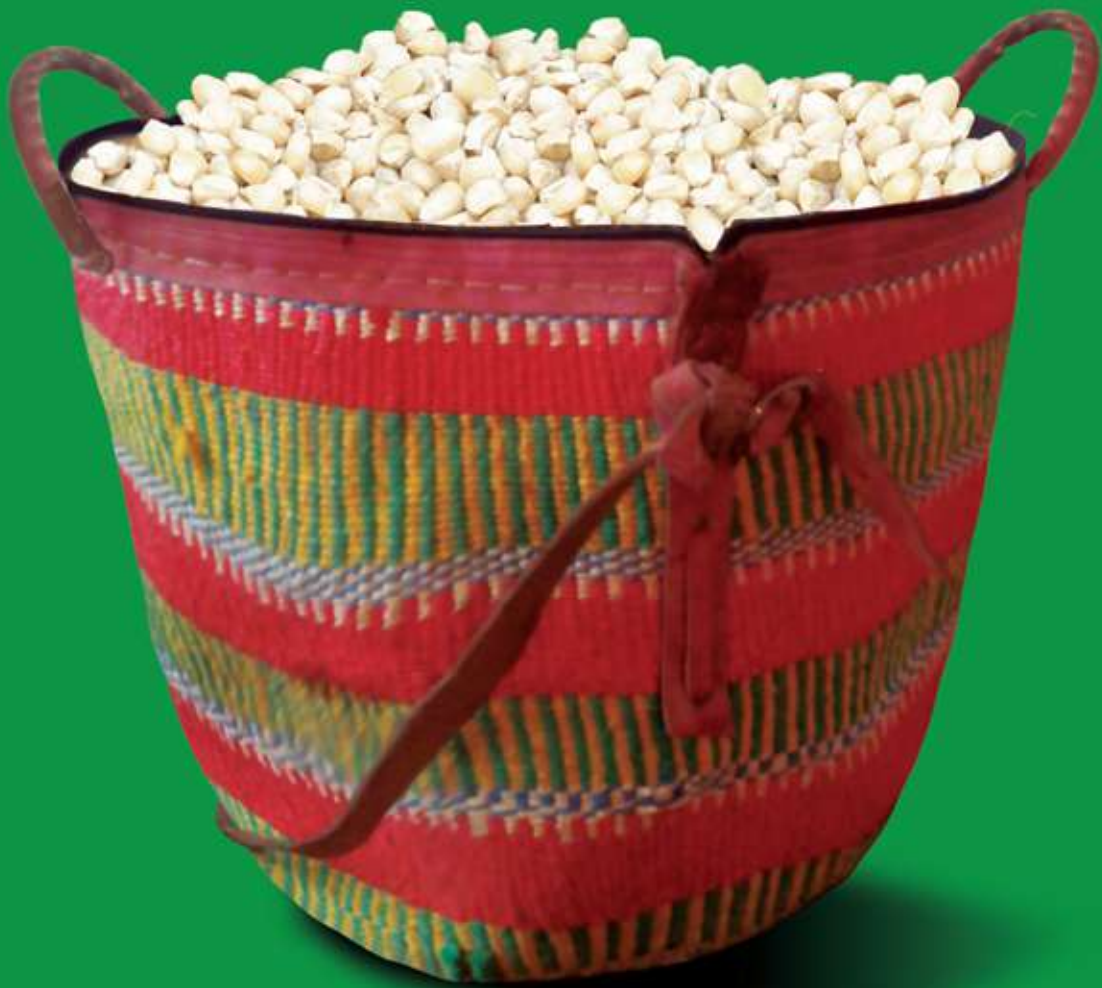
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