

AFSTA E-REVIEW

An electronic newsletter of the African Seed Trade Association

www.afsta.org

AfSTA Congress 2026: A Landmark Success for Africa's Seed Industry

The African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) Congress 2026, held in Cape Town, South Africa, marked a historic milestone for Africa's seed sector, bringing together industry leaders, policymakers, researchers, and private sector stakeholders from across the globe.

With over **500 delegates from 46 countries**, including strong representation from across the African continent, this year's Congress set a new participation record, underscoring the growing importance and influence of AFSTA as the unified voice of Africa's seed industry.

Held fifteen years after the last Congress in South Africa, the 2026 edition reflected both the remarkable journey and the evolving future of AFSTA. Since its founding in 2000, AFSTA has played a central role in advancing Africa's seed systems, promoting private sector development, strengthening regional integration, and advocating for policies that ensure farmers have access to quality seeds.

During the keynote address, H.E John Steenhuisen, Minister for Agriculture in South Africa, underscored how quickly Africa's agricultural sector is evolving. While persistent challenges such as climate change, rapid population growth, and ongoing food insecurity continue to shape the landscape, the sector is simultaneously being redefined by emerging opportunities.

Advances in innovation, the rise of digital technologies, and the expansion of regional and global markets are opening new pathways for growth and resilience across the continent.



H.E John Steenhuisen, Minister for Agriculture, South Africa giving the Keynote address



Cape Town: AfSTA 2026 board members pose for a photo with H.E John Steenhuisen, Minister for Agriculture in South Africa

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AfSTA Congress 2026, Cape Town: Key Insights



Dr Yacouba Diallo,
AfSTA Secretary General

A key highlight of the AfSTA 2026 Congress in Cape Town was AfSTA's ongoing institutional transformation. Guided by its strategic plan, the organisation is focusing on:

- Facilitating market access and seed trade
- Strengthening operational and financial sustainability
- Building strategic partnerships
- Rebranding to reflect future trends

Recent governance reforms, including updated constitutional frameworks and strengthened leadership structures, demonstrate AFSTA's commitment to transparency, efficiency, and long-term impact.

Expanding Influence and Partnerships

AfSTA Secretary General Dr Yacouba Diallo noted that the association continues to grow its footprint, welcoming new members and strengthening collaborations across Africa and globally.

With a membership base now exceeding 120 organisations, the Association represents a diverse and dynamic network of seed companies and national trade associations.

The Congress also showcased AFSTA's strong engagement in policy dialogue, working closely with governments, regional economic communities, and continental bodies to create an enabling environment for seed trade across borders.

Strategic partnerships with international organisations and research institutions are further driving innovation, facilitating technology transfer, and unlocking new opportunities for investment and growth.

**AfSTA membership base
now exceeds 120
organisations**

Over the past year, AFSTA has made significant strides in promoting seed quality and innovation. Through training programmes, webinars, and collaborative initiatives, hundreds of industry professionals have been engaged across the continent. Notably, efforts in plant breeding and biotechnology have led to the transfer of more than 100 improved, climate-resilient seed varieties to members, strengthening agricultural productivity and resilience across multiple countries.

The Congress concluded with a strong call to action under the theme: **"Empowering Africa's Future, One Seed at a Time."**

This vision emphasises:

- Building an integrated African seed market
- Strengthening private sector innovation
- Enhancing collaboration across research, policy, and industry

AfSTA continues to evolve and is committed to leading the transformation of Africa's seed industry and economic growth across the continent.

From Cape Town to Nairobi: The AfSTA Flag Handover To Kenya for the 2027 Congress

Welcome to Kenya!

The seed sector in Africa and beyond is set to gather in Nairobi from 16th to 18th March 2027 as the African Seed Trade Association (AfSTA) prepares for its next annual congress, co-hosted by the Seed Trade Association of Kenya (STAK).

The announcement follows a symbolic and memorable closing ceremony at the AfSTA Congress 2026 in Cape Town, where the official AfSTA flag was formally handed over to the Kenyan delegation.

The flag handover marked more than a ceremonial transition between host cities. It underscored a shared commitment among African nations to strengthen seed systems, enhance agricultural productivity, and foster collaboration across the continent.

The moment reflected unity and continuity within the sector, as stakeholders reaffirmed their collective role in driving innovation and resilience in agriculture.

AfSTA Congresses are widely regarded as key platforms for dialogue, partnership, and knowledge exchange among policymakers, researchers, seed companies, and development partners.

The 2026 gathering in Cape Town reinforced the importance of collaboration in addressing challenges such as climate change, food security, and access to quality seeds.

Looking ahead, Nairobi is expected to build on this momentum by hosting an impactful 2027 Congress that will bring together delegates from across Africa and beyond.



Mr Benard Wambua (Kenya Seed Limited) receiving the AfSTA flag from Dr Lukeshni Chetty (SANSOR)



Delegates from Kenya celebrating during the AfSTA flag handover

A Call for Partnership

In receiving the flag, Kenya invites stakeholders worldwide to participate in the upcoming event and help shape the future of the seed sector. As preparations begin, the focus shifts to Nairobi, where the next chapter of engagement, innovation, and partnership in Africa's agricultural landscape will unfold.



020-24290017



afsta@afsta.org



Kindaruma Road, Nairobi, Kenya

Change in The AfSTA Secretariat

The African Seed Trade Association Secretariat is entering a new phase marked by a dynamic team and a renewed sense of purpose.

With a blend of experienced leadership and emerging professionals, the Secretariat reflects a growing commitment to innovation, efficiency, and stakeholder engagement across Africa's seed sector.

At the helm is Secretary General Dr Yacouba Diallo, supported by a multidisciplinary team handling key areas such as finance, communications, technical services, and operations. These are specialists in ICT, advocacy, and technical programme management and implementation, ensuring that the organisation remains responsive to the evolving needs of its members.



The introduction of new staff and expanded roles brings fresh perspectives to AfSTA's work with the professionals contributing innovative ideas, particularly in digital transformation, communication strategies, and partnership development.

This shift is helping the Secretariat adapt to the rapidly changing agricultural landscape and the increasing demand for modern, data-driven solutions. Moreover, the strengthened team structure enhances collaboration both internally and with external partners, positioning AFSTA as a more agile and forward-looking organisation.

As the seed sector continues to evolve, the Secretariat's renewed energy and diverse expertise are expected to play a crucial role in shaping a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable future for agriculture in Africa.

New: Joining the AFSTA Secretariat



Kennedy Mangwana

Kennedy, AfSTA's **Technical Manager**, is a strategic plant breeder, seed systems and product management leader with over 20 years of experience translating agricultural research into market-ready and sustainable solutions across East and Southern Africa.

An accomplished small cereals breeder who has released several varieties to his name, his interests sit at the intersection of plant breeding, variety improvement, seed systems strengthening, and agribusiness development.



Lindah Mbaisi

Lindah, AfSTA's **Communications Lead**, is a seasoned Communications professional with over a decade of senior-level experience designing and delivering strategic communication, advocacy, and stakeholder engagement initiatives across membership organisations and development sectors in Africa.

Lindah brings a strong blend of policy insight, technical communication expertise, and regional experience, aligning closely with AFSTA's mandate of strengthening the seed industry.



Samuel Muchiri

Sam, AfSTA's **ICT and Logistics Officer**, is an experienced ICT professional with over eight years of progressive experience in the information and communication technology field. Certified in CCNA and CCNA 2, as well as a cybersecurity certification, Sam focused on detecting and responding to malware within the IT infrastructure.

Beyond managing ICT operations, Sam is particularly keen on positioning technology not only as a supporting function but as a transformative program within organisations.

AfSTA Leadership: Meet Our New Board Members



From Left to Right: Nicolas Perrin (**Member**), Charles Miller (**Member**), Nadine Dushimiyimana (**Member**), Innocent Namuhoranye (**Member**), David Tum (**Member**), Nathalie Issorat (**Member**), Sylvia Horemans (**Vice President**), Amadou Sarr (**Past President**), Clive Mugadza (**President**) and Dr Yacouba Diallo (**Secretary General**)

Nine members (Pictured Above) were elected to the Board at the AfSTA Annual General Meeting (AGM) held in March 2026 in Cape Town, South Africa, marking a key milestone in strengthening the Association's leadership and governance. To further enhance the Board's expertise and regional representation, additional members (Lynette Ngila, Narcis Tumushabe and Mohamed Saidi) will be co-opted by the newly elected Board and will serve alongside the elected Board until the next AGM, scheduled for March 2027 in Nairobi, Kenya.



Clive Mugadza, President



Sylvia Horemans, Vice President

New: Joining the AfSTA Board



Matome Ramokgopa

Matome Ramokgopa is the Regional Sales Director for Sub-Saharan Africa and Managing Director for South Africa at Enza Zaden, also serving as Chairperson of the South African National Seed Organisation (SANSOR), a role he has held since 2021.

With extensive leadership experience in the seed industry, specialising in high-value vegetable seeds, fresh produce, and processing within multinational environments, Matome brings a strong focus on collaboration, negotiation, market development, and strategic partnerships to the AfSTA Board.



Nadine Dushimiyimana

Nadine is a regulatory affairs and policy expert with over a decade of leadership across African and European seed systems.

Nadine is currently the Head of Regulatory Science and Biotechnology in Africa at Bayer, focusing on strengthening agricultural resilience through science-based solutions.

To the AfSTA board, Nadine brings a unique blend of global regulatory expertise, African market understanding, and deep seed-sector experience aligned with AfSTA's 2025–2027 strategic priorities.



David Tum

David Tum is the current General Manager at Simlaw Seeds, having previously served in a similar capacity at Kibo Seeds in Tanzania. Tum has also served as a Director at Kenya Seed Company and as Vice Chairperson of the Seed Trade Association of Kenya (STAK). He continues to contribute to the industry as a Board Member of STAK.

To the AfSTA Board, David brings over 20 years of experience in business administration, leadership within the seed industry, deep industry insight and a strong commitment to advancing agricultural development.

AFSTA Rebrand: A Bold Step Forward with a New Logo and Website

In an era defined by rapid digital transformation and evolving audience expectations, staying relevant requires more than just consistency.

It demands reinvention. AfSTA has embraced this philosophy with a fresh rebrand, following the unveiling of a new logo and a completely redesigned website in Cape Town, South Africa, during the opening ceremony in a speech by the Secretary General, Dr Yacouba Diallo.

For AfSTA, this is a signal of a confident step into the future.

A Logo That Reflects Growth and Identity

The new AfSTA logo is more than a visual update; it represents a refined identity. Sleeker lines, modern typography, and a carefully chosen colour palette combine to create a mark that is both contemporary and meaningful. The design reflects AfSTA's core mission and vision.

By simplifying and modernising the logo, AfSTA ensures it remains versatile across digital and print platforms, enhancing recognition and strengthening its brand presence.



Icon Logo



Vertical Logo



Horizontal Logo

A Website Built for the Modern User

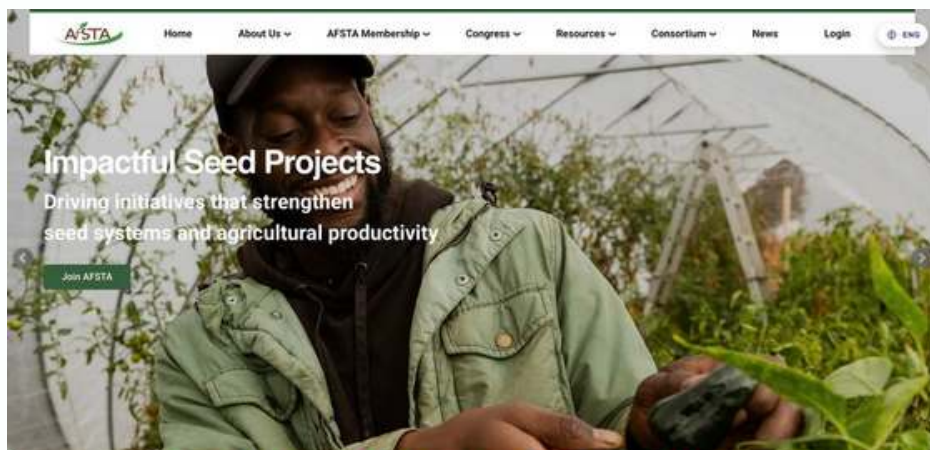
Alongside the new logo, AfSTA has launched a redesigned website focused on member experience, accessibility, and functionality.

The updated platform offers:

- A membership portal: This feature will facilitate data, registration, and renewal of membership.
- Intuitive Navigation: Visitors can easily find information with a cleaner, more structured layout.

- Responsive Design: Optimised for all devices, ensuring seamless browsing on mobile, tablet, and desktop.
- Enhanced Content Delivery: Clearer messaging and improved visuals help communicate AfSTA's mission and services effectively.
- Faster Performance: Streamlined design and improved backend systems provide quicker load times and smoother interactions.

The new website is not just an upgrade; it is a transformation into a dynamic hub that better serves AfSTA members.



Why the Re-Brand Matters

For AfSTA, this change represents growth, adaptability, and a renewed commitment to its stakeholders. It positions the organisation to better connect with its audience, expand its reach, and remain competitive in a fast-changing landscape.

With its new logo and website, AfSTA is clearly focused on the future. The rebrand sets the tone for continued innovation and stronger engagement, ensuring the organisation is well-equipped to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead.



African Seed
Trade Association

AfSTA Congress 2027



Call For Sponsorship

Partner with AFSTA and position your brand at the forefront of Africa's seed sector. The AFSTA Congress 2027 offers high-impact visibility, networking, and collaboration opportunities.

Reach out to us via the contacts below to receive the sponsorship package and explore tailored partnership options that align with your organisation's goals.

For More Information



www.afsta.org



afsta@afsta.org



020-24290017

The Role of African Seed Industry in Accelerating Farmer Productivity and Profitability

By Enock Chikava, Director, Agricultural Delivery Systems, Gates Foundation



Despite global progress due to easing food price inflation and rising incomes, food insecurity in Africa continued to worsen in 2024, affecting about 307M people, or ~20% of Africa's population, driven by rising food costs and slow economic recovery.

In addition, global agricultural productivity growth, averaging 0.76%/yr, is only about one-third of the 2%/yr target needed to sustainably and profitably meet agricultural demands. While Africa's ability to feed itself is improving (cereal self-sufficiency rose to 92% in 2020 vs 84% in 2010, despite a 29% increase in population), much of the growth has been driven by area expansion.

Achieving full cereal self-sufficiency by 2050 on current land area will require yields to rise from 1.5 to 3.2 mt/ha—an average annual increase of 58 kg/ha/yr compared to the historic rate of 20 kg/ha/yr.

To make real progress, two big things are needed: first, a clear African vision and commitment to create an enabling policy environment for ag growth, and second, the pace of technical progress must accelerate dramatically.

At the beginning of the year, Africa, through the Africa Union Commission (AUC) finalized their 10 year agriculture and food systems blue print dubbed, CADDP Kampala declaration committing to by 2035, a) increase food production output by 45%, b) tripling intra-Africa food trade, c) mobilize \$100 billion in investments in agriculture and d) allocating 1% of the Agriculture Growth Domestic Product (AgGDP) to research and development (R&D).

To make these goals more practical and achievable, more work is needed to identify the key food production basins and the developing the trade infrastructure for food to move smoothly from surplus regions to where it's needed. This work is going on as the 10-year plan kicks in 2026.

This article focuses on the role of the African Seed industry in accelerating innovation to propel farmer productivity and profitability – hence the mandate of AfSTA. Let's dive in!

After many years in the African seed sector, I got involved in philanthropic work, and we have a bold mission, believing that everyone and everywhere should have an opportunity to live a healthy, productive life. In Africa, this cannot be achieved by making agriculture successful, since most of the population are smallholder farmers who are also producing 80% of the food on the continent.

Our contribution to agriculture's growth and wealth creation in Africa centres on developing breakthrough solutions that address agricultural bottlenecks, so that the private sector can accelerate impact for small-scale producers in key countries. We de-risk agricultural innovations so that smallholder farmers can participate actively in functioning markets. In this article, I am sharing a select big bets that, if successful, can address persistent bottlenecks across Africa, as we collaborate with partners, including AFSTA, governments, development organisations, ag-tech and fintech innovators. Here we go!

What if we hybridise cereals to develop a market opportunity like Maize?

This Big Bet aims to unleash the power of hybrid vigour in other cereal crops, to drive 30–50% adoption of high-performing hybrid cereals — rice, sorghum, and millet in Sub-Saharan Africa. Despite years of breeding investment, SSPs still rely on outdated varieties, with yields 30–70% below potential. This initiative pivots to delivering hybrids with >25% yield gains and observable traits that overcome adoption barriers.

By 2040, genetic gains of hybrids alone could boost annual production by 52 million tons. This is possible in its ability to de-risk early-stage technologies, influence CGIAR and NARES pipelines, and mobilize public-private partnerships for value chain flagships/commercialisation clusters, as well as competitive licensing to medium and large private seed companies.

This expands cereal production into agro-ecologies that are becoming marginal for maize, and boosts the productivity of sorghum and millets in the Sahel region. Hybrid cereals will utilise the same production, processing, distribution and marketing channels as companies add these to their product profiles, enhancing farmer productivity and profitability

What if the cost of fertiliser is drastically reduced by 40-70%?

Chronic soil nutrient deficiencies in SSA, where limited access to synthetic fertilisers constrains yields and income for smallholder farmers. By developing, validating, and scaling microbial biofertilizers (e.g., nitrogen-fixers, phosphorus solubilisers), a 30% adoption by 2035 across nine crops can unlock 49 million tons of additional crop production and billions in annual farmer income gains.

These low-cost inputs can deliver comparable yield gains at less than half the cost of synthetic fertilisers but currently face low adoption due to quality inconsistency, weak regulation, and farmer scepticism. We aim to de-risk product pipelines, shape regulatory ecosystems, and scale solutions via public-private models. Timely action is critical to counter unverified market claims and redirect subsidies toward validated, low-cost bioinputs. This complements the hybrid cereals as seed treatments that provide 20kgN/ha (equivalent to 60 kg of Urea) at 30% of the Urea price.

However, to double yields in Africa, farmers must apply 100-140 kgN/ha from the current average of 23kgN/ha. So, biofertilizers alone are not sufficient, that's why a complementary bit bet, decentralised fertiliser is being pursued. This aims to cut nitrogen fertiliser costs for small-scale producers in Sub-Saharan Africa by scaling decentralised production, particularly plasma nitrates and green ammonia, to achieve a retail price of \$450/MT urea equivalent (a 40% reduction from the current retail price of \$700/MT).



With 70–80% of soils degraded and fertiliser costs often twice the global average, the goal is to increase nitrogen application rates by 50%, potentially boosting yields by 34% and incomes by 84%. This is achievable through de-risking early-stage R&D, shaping markets, and convening public and private partners.

Increasing area under irrigation

Expanding access to affordable, easy-to-use irrigation helps to close persistent income, nutrition, and resilience gaps for smallholder farmers. With just 3% of land irrigated in SSA, the goal is to reach 1.5M smallholder farmers by 2035, tripling irrigated area in Kenya and Nigeria and adding 1M hectares, generating above \$2B in annual income and boosting yields by 300%.

The mechanism of intervention involves:

- a) Lowering costs (e.g., reducing solar pump prices from \$450 to \$250),
- b) Scaling smart delivery models (e.g., irrigation-as-a-service), and
- c) Ensuring equitable access through farmer field schools, food preservation, and tailored support.

Gender equity is central, with a goal for 40% of new users to be women. We are de-risking R&D, shaping policy and finance, and leading gender-inclusive innovation.

The last opportunity I would like to share in this article is in data, prediction, and advisory: Develop and scale AI-enabled datasets, models, and services to improve information for and decisions by farmers and policymakers, enabling climate resilience, productivity, and profitability.

- **AI Advisory.** This transforms the agricultural extension by scaling AI-powered, personalised advisory tools to 43M farmer users across Africa by 2035, generating 15% productivity gains and above \$3.1B in annual income.

Current systems are underfunded and ineffective, with digital advisory adoption below 10% in Sub-Saharan Africa due to trust, cost, and relevance challenges. Delivery focuses on

- a) A *Global AI for Agriculture Collaborative to build shared model infrastructure and open datasets;*
- b) *Support for private-sector ag-tech innovators with scalable, sustainable business models;*
- c) *Rapid country deployment in early-ready markets, leveraging existing digital infrastructure. Initial pilots show strong promise, from 19% to 66% productivity gains at \$0.29 per household/year.*

We are de-risking early deployment, aligning public-private interests, and ensuring African agriculture shapes the global AI stack, not trailing behind it.

“The continent can and must be a net food exporter, rather than spending currently above 50 billion dollars on food imports.”

- **Better Weather Data.** This closes the climate information gap by improving weather forecast accuracy, accessibility, and use across Sub-Saharan Africa, targeting over 50M farming households.

Current forecasts are poorly localised for tropical conditions, limiting small-scale producers' ability to manage risk and adapt to climate shocks. The approach includes:

- a) *Tech products (localised AI forecast models, data collection tools);*
- b) *Process innovations (federated data systems, open platforms);*
- c) *Business models (partnerships with national meteorological services and AI leaders).*

As a public-good climate enabler, we are de-risking tech and convening high-capacity partners like Microsoft, ECMWF, and the Turing Institute.

- **Crop measurement and evaluation (CroME).** This transforms how agricultural productivity is measured across Sub-Saharan Africa by building a digital public good platform that integrates Earth Observation, geospatial AI, and predictive modelling.

Current models explain just ~40% of yield variance, and government statistics overestimate yields by up to 32%, undermining decision-making. CroME includes:

- a) **A 20-year, 5 km² historical yield reanalysis** using a harmonised database of 500K+ spatial yield observations (GROW-Yield), trained on EO and validated via crop cuts and surveys
- b) **Geospatial foundation models:** Leveraging AI embeddings to build low-cost, scalable data layers for crop identification, phenology, and agronomic operations (in collaboration with Google Research, DeepMind)
- c) **Full predictive modelling:** Integrating an expanded genotype layer enabled by innovations in varietal identification with environment and management insights layers derived from geospatial FM to explain yield gaps and support economic.

Let me end where I started - agriculture and food systems transformation in Africa is possible. The continent can and must be a net food exporter, rather than spending currently above \$50 billion dollars on food imports. Food insecurity is solvable – by creating an enabling policy environment, starting with the 10-year CAADP Kampala action plan and frugal innovation development and leveraging catalytic delivery, led by the private sector. That's where AFSTA comes in!

AfSTA and ZASTA in Supporting EU Equivalence Seed Schemes Implementation in Zambia

By Kennedy Mangwana, Technical Manager, AFSTA



The implementation of the European Union (EU) Seed Equivalence framework in Zambia is being actively supported through coordinated efforts by key industry stakeholders, notably the African Seed Trade Association (AfSTA) and the Zambia Seed Trade Association (ZASTA).

Their involvement reflects a strong public-private partnership approach aimed at aligning Zambia's seed systems with international standards and facilitating access to EU and other international markets.

ZASTA plays a central national role as the representative body of the Zambian seed industry. With a membership base comprising both multinational and local seed companies, ZASTA provides a platform for industry coordination across the seed value chain—from breeding to marketing.

During the EU equivalence preparation process, ZASTA has been instrumental in articulating industry perspectives, sharing sector data, and mobilising its members to align with regulatory and technical requirements.

In collaboration with government institutions such as the Seed Control and Certification Institute (SCCI), ZASTA has contributed to stakeholder engagement, ensuring that private sector realities are integrated into policy and regulatory improvements. It also encourages its members to adopt best practices in seed production, certification, traceability, and quality assurance, all of which are critical for compliance with EU standards.

At the regional and continental level, AfSTA complements these efforts by providing strategic support and facilitating alignment with broader African seed sector initiatives. As a continental umbrella body, AfSTA enhances knowledge sharing, promotes harmonisation of seed regulations, and supports capacity building across member countries. Its participation in the technical working groups underscores its role in linking Zambia's efforts with regional frameworks such as COMESA and SADC seed harmonisation systems.



AfSTA plays a key role in ensuring that Zambia's seed systems align with international benchmarks, including the OECD Seed Schemes and ISTA rules, which form the foundation of European Union requirements.

AfSTA's involvement also strengthens Zambia's positioning within international seed trade discussions by fostering collaboration with global organisations such as Euroseeds and SEMAE. Through this engagement, AfSTA helps ensure that Zambia's seed systems are benchmarked against international standards such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Seed Schemes and the International Rules for Seed Testing rules both of which underpin EU requirements.

Together, AfSTA and ZASTA provide critical institutional, technical, and advocacy support. Their contributions enhance coordination between public and private actors, promote adoption of international best practices, and support the overall objective of achieving a robust, transparent, and internationally recognised seed certification system.



ZASTA Team
Photo Credit: Via Zambia Business Times

ZASTA has been instrumental in articulating industry perspectives, sharing sector data, and mobilising its members to align with regulatory and technical requirements.

Empowering Farmers and Building Future Talent: Highlights from the STAK Meru Field Day

By Joyce Karanja, Executive Officer, STAK



In March 2026, the Seed Trade Association of Kenya (STAK), in partnership with Meru National Polytechnic, successfully hosted the STAK Meru Field Day at the Giaki Demonstration Farm in Meru County.

The event attracted over 700 farmers from across Meru County, alongside more than 30 exhibiting organisations representing agribusiness companies, researchers, students, and development partners in a dynamic platform aimed at promoting agricultural innovation, knowledge transfer, and market linkages.

The Field Day was designed to bridge the gap between farmers and agricultural service providers by creating opportunities for direct engagement. Through demonstration plots, exhibitions, plant clinics, and expert-led advisory sessions, farmers were exposed to modern farming technologies and best practices that can significantly enhance productivity and sustainability.

A key highlight of the event was the establishment of demonstration plots showcasing a wide range of crops, including maize, beans, sorghum, vegetables, and forage crops. These plots enabled farmers to observe the performance of different crop varieties under real field conditions.



Training sessions on climate-smart agriculture, soil health management, safe use of agrochemicals, seed certification, and sustainable farming practices were delivered by the Cereal Growers Association, AAK, Farm Africa, and the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS), enriching the learning experience.

Collaboration with Meru National Polytechnic was supported by the Ministry of Education through the State Department for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

Following this engagement, STAK has the opportunity to collaborate with TVET institutions across the country anchored on:

- Aligning TVET training programmes with industry needs
- Enhancing practical and work-based learning opportunities
- Strengthening trainer and institutional capacity
- Promoting commercialisation and income generation within TVET institutions
- Supporting research, innovation, and product development
- Strengthening public-private collaboration in skills development

Building on these achievements, future field days can further enhance outreach, improve planning, and deepen partnerships to maximise impact for farmers, students, and stakeholders across the agricultural sector.



AFSTA and CIMMYT Explore Strategic Collaboration to Strengthen Seed Systems in Africa

By Lindah Mbaisi, Communications Lead, AfSTA



Bridging Science and the Seed Sector

The African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) continues to deepen its engagement with global research partners, following a high-level meeting in January 2026 between its leadership and the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT).

The meeting, led by AFSTA Secretary General Dr Yacouba Diallo and CIMMYT's Global Maize Program Director Ashish Saxena, focused on identifying strategic areas of collaboration aimed at strengthening seed systems and enhancing communication and outreach for agricultural innovations across Africa.

This engagement reflects a shared commitment to advancing food security through stronger linkages between science, policy, and the private seed sector, an approach increasingly recognised as essential for driving sustainable agricultural transformation on the continent.

A key theme of the discussions was the importance of aligning scientific research with the practical realities of the seed industry. Both AFSTA and CIMMYT acknowledged that while significant progress has been made in crop research and breeding, translating these advancements into tangible benefits for farmers requires stronger collaboration with private seed companies.

By working together, the two organisations aim to bridge this gap, ensuring that innovations developed through research are effectively commercialised, scaled, and made accessible to farmers.

This includes improving the flow of information, strengthening value chains, and enhancing the capacity of seed companies to adopt and distribute new technologies.

The collaboration also underscores the critical role of communication and outreach in driving impact. Effective dissemination of knowledge ensures that farmers, policymakers, and industry stakeholders are aware of new developments and can make informed decisions.

Advancing Dryland Crops, Maize, Wheat Innovations

By working together, the two organisations aim to bridge this gap, ensuring that innovations developed through research are effectively commercialised, scaled, and made accessible to farmers. This includes improving the flow of information, strengthening value chains, and enhancing the capacity of seed companies to adopt and distribute new technologies.

As AFSTA and CIMMYT move forward with their discussions, there is a shared sense of optimism about the potential impact of this collaboration. By aligning their efforts, the two organisations are well-positioned to contribute to the development of resilient, efficient, and inclusive seed systems across Africa.

AFSTA–SSG Partnership: Advancing Inclusive Seed Systems Across Africa



In a significant step toward strengthening agricultural systems across the continent, the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) Secretariat and the Seed Systems Group (SSG) recently convened to explore opportunities for collaboration. This meeting marks the beginning of what could become a strategic partnership aimed at addressing some of the most pressing challenges facing Africa's seed systems today.

Led by AFSTA Secretary General Yacouba Diallo and SSG President Issoufou Kapran, the discussions reflected a shared commitment to building stronger, more resilient, and inclusive seed systems.

Both organisations recognise that seeds are the foundation of agriculture, and that improving seed systems is essential for ensuring food security, enhancing productivity, and supporting sustainable development across Africa.

At the heart of the discussions was a mutual vision: to transform seed systems in ways that are responsive to the needs of farmers, particularly those in underserved and “left-behind” regions. Across many parts of Africa, farmers still face limited access to quality seeds, inadequate market linkages, and policy environments that can hinder innovation and growth.

By working together, AFSTA and SSG aim to address these gaps through coordinated and strategic interventions.

The proposed partnership will focus on several key areas, including seed systems development, capacity building, policy review, and improving market access. These pillars are critical to creating an enabling environment where both public and private sector actors can thrive, and where farmers can access the tools they need to succeed.

FOCUSING ON “LEFT-BEHIND” COUNTRIES

One of the most important aspects of the collaboration is its emphasis on countries that have historically been underserved in terms of agricultural investment and support. These “left-behind” countries often face structural challenges such as weak regulatory frameworks, limited infrastructure, and low levels of private sector engagement.

By targeting these regions, AFSTA and SSG aim to ensure that progress in seed systems development is inclusive and equitable. This approach aligns with broader continental goals of reducing inequality and ensuring that no country or community is left behind in the pursuit of agricultural transformation.

By AfSTA Communications



AFSTA Strengthens Voice in Agricultural Innovation at CORAF 2026 Forum in Abidjan



Championing Research Collaboration

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire - The African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) continues to demonstrate its leadership in advancing Africa's agricultural transformation, with its Secretary General, Dr Yacouba Diallo, playing a prominent role at the 4th Forum of Agricultural Research Leaders in West and Central Africa (FLR-WCA).

Organised by the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF), the high-level forum brought together key stakeholders from across the continent to engage in critical discussions shaping the future of agriculture in Africa.

The forum focused on advancing innovative and inclusive agricultural research while strengthening regional food sovereignty. Through a series of panel discussions, interactive group sessions, and knowledge-sharing exchanges, participants explored how research and innovation can be leveraged to address issues such as climate change, food insecurity, and limited agricultural productivity.

At the heart of these discussions was the recognition that Africa's agricultural future depends on strong partnerships between research institutions, governments, and the private sector.

As a key participant in a panel discussion, Dr Yacouba Diallo highlighted the importance of innovative financing mechanisms, enhanced research collaboration, and strategic partnerships in driving progress.

Dr Diallo emphasised that sustainable agricultural transformation requires not only technological advancements but also the financial resources and institutional frameworks needed to scale innovations effectively. By advocating for increased investment in agricultural research and development, Dr Diallo underscored the need to unlock new funding streams that can support long-term growth.

CORAF is the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development

Through platforms such as the CORAF forum, stakeholders have the opportunity to build networks, exchange best practices, and develop joint initiatives that address common challenges. AFSTA recognises that collaboration between public research institutions and private sector actors is particularly critical, as it helps bridge the gap between innovation and practical application.

By supporting these collaborative approaches, AFSTA aims to ensure that research outputs are effectively translated into improved seed varieties and technologies that benefit farmers across the continent.

By AfSTA Communications

AFSTA Champions Resilient Seed Systems at Africa–OECD Dialogue in Nairobi



The African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) is actively contributing to discussions on the future of Africa's agrifood sector at the Africa–OECD Public-Private Dialogue on mobilising the private sector for sustainable trade and investment.

The Africa–OECD Partnership, launched in 2023 by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the African Union Commission, aims to deepen engagement at continental, regional, and national levels. Central to this partnership is the promotion of regional integration through enhanced trade and investment in agrifood value chains.

The Nairobi dialogue that took place in February 2026 serves as a critical platform for advancing this agenda. By bringing together public institutions, private sector actors, and development partners, the forum facilitates meaningful exchanges on how to unlock Africa's agricultural potential while ensuring sustainability and inclusivity.

A key theme of the dialogue is the role of the private sector as a driver of growth and transformation in Africa's agrifood systems.

With increasing recognition that public resources alone are insufficient to meet the continent's agricultural development needs, there is a strong emphasis on creating enabling environments that attract and sustain private investment.

AFSTA's participation highlights the critical role of the seed sector within this broader context. Quality seeds are the foundation of agricultural productivity, and strengthening seed systems is essential for achieving food security, improving livelihoods, and building climate resilience.

In his address, Dr Diallo underscored how the OECD Seed Schemes play a vital role in harmonising seed standards, facilitating cross-border trade, and ensuring quality assurance. These frameworks are particularly important for Africa, where fragmented regulatory systems can hinder the efficient movement of seeds and limit access for farmers.

As the Africa–OECD Public-Private Dialogue continues, the outcomes of these discussions are expected to inform future strategies and initiatives aimed at strengthening Africa's agrifood systems. The emphasis on collaboration, investment, and policy coherence provides a strong foundation for driving meaningful change.



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AFSTA Contributes to Regional Dialogue on Resilient Seed Systems in the IGAD Region



Addressing Regional Seed System Challenges

AfSTA continues to play a pivotal role in advancing resilient seed systems across the continent, as demonstrated by its active participation in a high-level regional consultative dialogue in Djibouti.

The three-day meeting, held from 10th to 13th February 2026, was officially opened by the Chief Guest, H.E. Ambassador George Macgoye, Kenya's Ambassador to Djibouti, and featured a diverse group of stakeholders committed to strengthening the seed sector in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region.

The consultative dialogue aims to identify key challenges and gaps within the regional seed sector, while also mapping out major stakeholders and exploring opportunities for targeted policy and programmatic interventions. Across the IGAD region, which includes Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Uganda, seed systems face a range of constraints, from limited access to quality seed and weak regulatory harmonisation to climate-related pressures and market inefficiencies.

AfSTA's Technical Manager, Kennedy Mangwana, delivered a presentation on "The Seed Trade Landscape in Africa: Emerging Trends and Opportunities." His presentation highlighted key developments shaping the continent's seed sector, including increasing private sector participation, advances in seed technology, and the growing importance of regional trade frameworks.

The strength of the dialogue lies in its inclusive approach, bringing together a wide range of stakeholders. Participants include representatives from the private sector, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and leading technical partners such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), and the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT).

Broad-Based Participation and Collaboration

AFSTA's engagement in the IGAD dialogue shows its commitment to building and strengthening these partnerships. By working closely with regional bodies such as IGAD, as well as international organisations and national stakeholders, AFSTA is helping to create a more cohesive and effective ecosystem for seed systems development.

As the consultative dialogue progresses, participants are expected to outline concrete recommendations and action plans that will guide future interventions in the IGAD region. These outcomes will play a critical role in shaping policies, programmes, and investments aimed at enhancing seed system resilience.

By AfSTA Communications

Advancing Dialogue on Wheat Self-Sufficiency at the WECA Wheat Summit in N'Djamena, Chad



AfSTA is at the forefront of Africa's Wheat Conversation

March 2026 - AfSTA continues to play a leading role in advancing Africa's agricultural transformation agenda, with its Secretary General, Dr Yacouba Diallo, participating in the 3rd West and Central Africa Wheat Summit dubbed **#WECAWheat2026**.

The high-level convening took place in N'Djamena, Chad, bringing together policymakers, development partners, researchers, and private sector actors committed to strengthening the region's wheat value chain.

The summit provided a critical platform to address one of Africa's most pressing challenges—reducing dependency on wheat imports and building resilient, self-sufficient food systems. With rising global market volatility and climate-related disruptions, the need to transform wheat production across West and Central Africa has become increasingly urgent.

During the summit, Dr Diallo served as a panellist in a session organised by the African Development Bank Group in collaboration with Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT) and International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA). The session, titled "Wheat Sector Transformation for Self-Sufficiency," focused on strategies to boost local production, enhance seed systems, and scale up climate-resilient wheat varieties suited to African agro-ecologies.

In his contribution, Dr Diallo emphasized the central role of strong and efficient seed systems in achieving wheat self-sufficiency. He highlighted the importance of collaboration between the public and private sectors to accelerate the development, certification, and distribution of improved seed varieties. He also underscored the need for harmonized seed policies across countries to facilitate cross-border trade and ensure farmers have timely access to quality seeds.

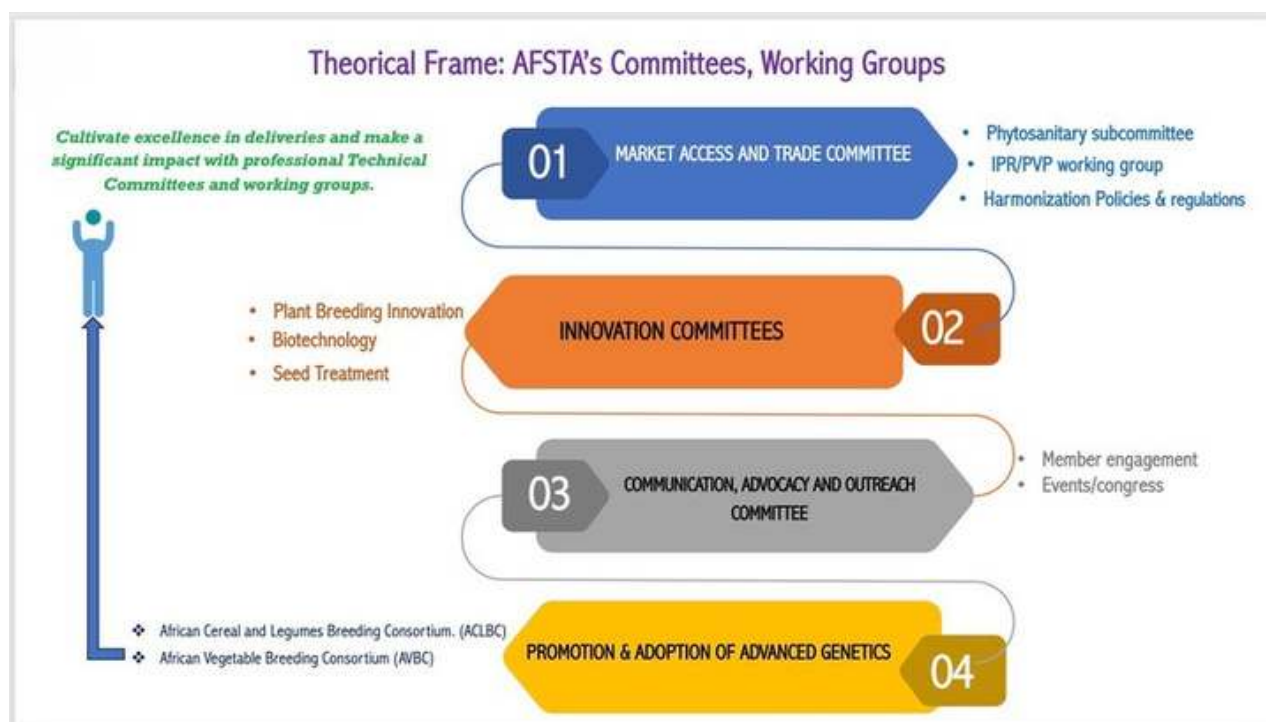
Commitment to supporting innovation and partnerships

By working closely with research institutions, governments, and development organizations, AfSTA continues to champion solutions that enhance seed quality, promote technology adoption, and strengthen market linkages for farmers.

As Africa looks to secure its food future, platforms such as the West and Central Africa Wheat Summit remain vital in shaping coordinated action.

By AfSTA Communications

Theoretical Frame: AfSTA Committees, Working Groups and Consortia



Why Join AfSTA?

Benefits of Being an AfSTA Member

- 1. Grow Your Business and Raise Its Visibility Across Africa:** AFSTA membership opens the door to new markets and commercial opportunities across the continent.
- 2. Influence Policies That Shape the Seed Industry:** AFSTA represents the collective voice of Africa's seed sector in discussions with governments and regional bodies.
- 3. Access Knowledge, technologies, and Innovations:** Stay ahead in a competitive seed industry through timely updates on developments shaping the seed sector and cutting-edge knowledge and technical expertise.
- 4. Build Strategic Partnerships and gain connections to members across the entire seed value chain:** AFSTA connects members across the entire seed value chain to create partnerships, joint ventures, and new collaboration opportunities.
- 5. Get privileged Access to Africa's Largest Annual Seed Industry Event** and the African plant breeding consortiums: The Annual AFSTA Congress provides unmatched opportunities to build partnerships, identify distributors, promote seed products, and expand into new markets.

Welcome OUR NEW AFSTA MEMBERS!

Ordinary Members



NASECO SEEDS

Better Seeds For Higher Yields



Associate Members



Join AfSTA Today

Upcoming Events:

- ISF World Seed Congress 2025, 18-20 May, Portugal, Lisbon
- SeedNL Annual Event ("Seeds of Collaboration"), June 23, 2026, Woerden, Netherlands.
- Seeds Canada Annual Conference: July 6–8, 2026.
- 3rd Rwanda National Seed Congress 20-21 July, Kigali, Rwanda
- Wambugu Farm Agri Show, 25-26 July, Kenya
- Seed Business Convention, Melbourne, Australia, 18 - 20 August 2026
- Africa Food Systems Forum from 1-5 September in Kigali, Rwanda
- The 2nd India- Africa Seed Summit 2026, 10–12 September, Hyderabad, India
- Africa Vegetable Breeding Consortium (AVBC) Annual Workshop, 8-11 September, Cotonou, Benin
- West Africa Agri Show, 29-30 September, Ghana
- Euroseeds 2026 Congress, 25 to 28 October, Valencia, Spain
- SeedConnect (late November- TBC), Abuja, Nigeria
- Asian Seed Congress, Türkiye, 1 - 5 December 2026
- ASTA's Field Crop Seed Convention: December 14–17, 2026.

Call for Articles: AfSTA Magazine (13th Edition)



The African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) invites experts, practitioners and value chain stakeholders in the seed sector to submit articles, in English or French, for the 13th edition of the African Seed Magazine, to be published in March 2027.

We welcome well-researched and insightful articles highlighting initiatives, innovations, policies, and developments shaping the African seed sector.

Submission Deadline: 10 January 2027

Please submit your articles to the AfSTA Communications Lead, Linda Mbaisi, at: lindah@afsta.org.

For Inquiries:

Email: afsta@afsta.org

Call: 020-24290017

Website: www.afsta.org