

AFSTA Congress 2025 poised to meet needs of seed industry players

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

As registration for the 2025 AFSTA Congress opened last month, seed industry representatives attending the fete will have new and exciting opportunities to interact, market, and trade like never before while showcasing their products and services to commercial partners and consumers, according to Dr Yacouba Diallo, AFSTA Secretary General.

The congress will be held at Serena Kigali Hotel, Rwanda, from the 3rd to the 5th of March 2025.

To register, visit the AFSTA website at <https://www.afsta.org> and click on the AFSTA Congress 2025 logo. This will direct you to the registration links, including the online registration.

“As you complete the registration, we encourage you to promptly book your accommodation at one of our partner hotels, which offer special rates for delegates,” said Dr. Diallo, Secretary General of AFSTA.

Early bird registration discount is available until January 31, 2025. AFSTA members should use the Congress code provided by the AFSTA Secretariat to receive the discounted member rates.

On the AFSTA website, Dr Diallo stated that the congress will bring together around 300 delegates composed of seed industry professionals, policymakers, development partners, and researchers from around the world, offering great networking and collaboration opportunities.

Delegates can make valuable connections that may lead to collaborations and partnerships. Additionally, dedicated trading tables are available for setting appointments for B-to-B meetings, as well as an exhibition room.

While emerging from a meeting between the AFSTA Board of Directors and the Rwanda Seed Trade Association last month, Dr Diallo announced that many innovations will be implemented, including a press corner with live streaming facilities to increase the visibility of the seed companies and talk shows of the main sponsors. “In Rwanda, AFSTA will have a media booth where seed companies will give interviews on their products, hence gaining publicity for their products and activities.”

He added that the Congress will seek to enhance collaboration with research and breeding institutions.

Specifically, he noted that AFSTA will provide opportunities of transferring seed technologies to seed companies for commercialisation in partnership with the Africa Vegetable Breeding Consortium (AVBC) and the Africa Cereals and Legumes Breeding Consortium (ACLBC).

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Low adoption of improved varieties hinders seed sector growth

By Aghan Daniel I daghan@afsta.org



Dr. Yacouba Diallo
Secretary General | AFSTA

A FSTA Secretary General Dr Yacouba Diallo has urged farmers to work with seed companies to reverse the low adoption of improved seed varieties in Africa, estimated at only 20 per cent, with nearly 80 per cent of farmers still rely on saved seeds from unreliable sources.

Dr Diallo said the trend limits the growth of the continent's seed sector making it a minor player, contributing only 2 per cent of the global market value. He said this contribution was dominated by a few key crops, including maize at 42 per cent, vegetables at 20 per cent, and other cereals and pulses at 14 per cent.

The AFSTA SG also said intra-regional seed trade in Africa remained low, at an estimated rate of just 12 per cent to 18 per cent, significantly lagging behind Europe (62 per cent), Asia at 50 per cent, and Latin America at 25 per cent.

"Low use of high-quality seeds of improved varieties and continued reliance on informal seed systems are major barriers to improving yields and food security on the continent," he said.

Dr Diallo spoke during the "Seed Systems Development in East and West Africa" workshop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, held between August 19 and 22, 2024, with the support of Iowa State University and USDA.

The event, which focused on expanding farmers' access to quality seeds and boosting seed trade, was attended by 60 representatives of seed authorities, industries, scientists, researchers, and policymakers from Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Tanzania.

To combat these challenges, said Dr Diallo, AFSTA has taken a central role in coordinating the seed sector across Africa by promoting harmonisation of seed regulations within regional blocs such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the East African Community (EAC), and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) to remove seed trade barriers and streamline variety registration and seed certification processes.

AFSTA also collaborates with breeding institutions to provide seed companies access to high-yielding, climate-smart, and pest-resistant seed varieties while facilitating technical support and capacity-building initiatives to improve seed quality and business operations.

He advocates for supportive policies fostering a conducive environment for seed businesses to thrive. This includes promoting public-private partnerships (PPPs) and adopting innovative breeding techniques such as biotechnology and genome editing.

"Through annual congresses, workshops, and training programmes, AFSTA provides platforms for networking, knowledge sharing, and promoting good agricultural practices, helping to create a robust and competitive seed ecosystem in Africa," added Dr Diallo.

The event, organised by the US-based Iowa State University, featured speakers from regional and international development agencies, research centres, national seed trade associations, and seed companies. The speakers discussed initiatives and opportunities that could significantly enhance the effectiveness of seed systems.

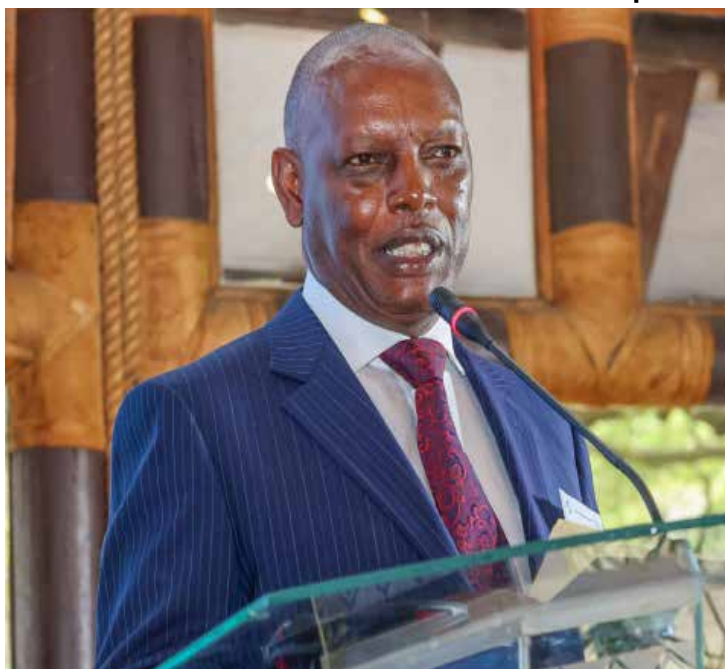
Participants also exchanged experiences in fostering seed system innovations with discussions covering best practices and successful approaches to various aspects of seed system implementation, focusing on fostering public-private partnerships.

Overall, the meeting aimed to expand farmers' access to quality seed, promote the growth of national seed industries, help nations strengthen their seed programmes, and facilitate seed trade in the Continent.

Kenya intensifies its efforts to combat seed fraud

By AFSTA Correspondent I afsta@afsta.org

Photo Credit | AFSTA



Dr Andrew Karanja, the Cabinet Secretary for Agriculture and Livestock Development speaking during the opening of the 1st International Seed Quality Conference at the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) headquarters in Karen, Nairobi. Image: X

Kenya is targeting unscrupulous seed dealers as a key element of the country's strategy to enhance food security, cut the food import bill, and help farmers out of poverty.

Dr Andrew Karanja, the Cabinet Secretary for Agriculture and Livestock Development, stated that the government was employing a multi-agency approach to address the illegal seed trade, which has hindered efforts to increase agricultural productivity.

"We have heavily invested in seed production infrastructure and services over the past two decades.

The government's initiative to increase the production of certified seeds and combat counterfeit seeds is a strategic move to ensure farmers have access to affordable, high-quality seeds," Karanja stated.

Karanja made these remarks during the opening of the 1st International Seed Quality Conference at the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (Kephis) headquarters in Karen, Nairobi.

"We cannot afford to dilute our efforts and jeopardise our livelihoods through the actions and inactions of a few unpatriotic individuals," he added.

The four-day conference, which brought together more than 200 delegates from the public and private sectors, highlighted the persistent challenges African farmers face in accessing quality seeds. These challenges include low purchasing power, limited supply, the prevalence of fake seed dealers, and a general lack of awareness about seed quality.

Karanja spoke of plans to revise existing regulatory frameworks to make them more predictable and foster competitive seed markets. He called on all stakeholders in the agricultural value chain to adhere to seed regulations and report illegal activities.

Kephis Managing Director Theophilus Mutui emphasized the organisation's efforts to automate procedures and integrate them with other government systems. He highlighted the new Seed Certification and Plant Variety Protection System (SCPVP) as a significant advancement, improving service delivery and customer service in the industry.

Dr Andrew Karanja, the Cabinet Secretary for Agriculture and Livestock Development speaking during the opening of the 1st International Seed Quality Conference at the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) headquarters in Karen, Nairobi. Image: X

Story link: <https://amaafrica.co.ke/blog/kenya-renews-fight-against-seed-fraud/>

The government's initiative to increase the production of certified seeds and combat counterfeit seeds is a strategic move to ensure farmers have access to affordable, high-quality seeds

Morocco's farming revolution: Defying drought with science

By Sharon Atieno I sharonphoebeatieno@gmail.com

In the heart of sun-soaked Morocco, scientists are cultivating a future where tough crops defy a relentless drought, now in its sixth year.

"Look at these beautiful ears of wheat," said Wuletaw Tadesse Degu, the head of wheat breeding at the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA).

"The difference in quality between our field and others is striking," he said, pointing towards a lush expanse in Marchouch, south of Rabat, which stood in stark contrast with the barren lands elsewhere.

According to a dire prediction from the World Resources Institute, a non-profit research organization, Morocco is expected to experience "extremely high" water stress by 2040.

Figures from the North African country's central bank paint a grim picture.

Cultivated areas across the kingdom are expected to shrink to 2.5 million hectares in 2024, compared with 3.7 million last year, and cereal yields are more than halving to 25 million quintals (2.5 million tonnes) over the same period.

"It has become essential to use resilient seeds and employ them as quickly as possible," said Tadesse, whose centre recently inaugurated a plant gene bank.

Adapted genotypes

Tadesse's mission is to develop genotypes that not only withstand drought and heat but also yield abundantly.

Last year, while the nation struggled, Marchouch achieved a yield of four tonnes per hectare with just 200 millimetres of rainfall.



A Moroccan farmer: The country has chosen to liberalise its market.

Controlled irrigation and strategic sowing techniques are behind this agricultural revolution.

Farmers are experimenting with planting times and judicious irrigation to maximise production.

Even 10 millimetres of water, carefully applied, transformed barren soil into thriving fields. Barley, too, has seen a resurgence, with yields jumping from 1.5 to two tonnes per hectare last year, thanks to climate-smart genotypes, said Miguel Sanchez Garcia, a barley specialist at ICARDA.

The centre, which operates in 17 African and Asian countries, says it has developed 30 "elite lines" of grain. Most of them are produced in Morocco by breeding genotypes of wild wheat with different ancestors, said ICARDA genetics researcher Ahmed Amri.

'Slow system'

Last year, Moroccan agricultural authorities granted approval for six new varieties of wheat and barley; however, challenges stemming from bureaucratic processes present significant obstacles.

Approval processes drag on, impeding the timely dissemination of new varieties to farmers, researchers at the center said, resulting in a five-year journey from approval to market-ready seeds.

"The certification system takes too long and should be revised quickly," said Moha Ferrahi, head of genetic resources conservation and improvement at the National Institute of Agricultural Research.

Ferrahi also pointed to the lack of engagement from private companies and farmers who opt for "foreign seeds to have a quicker return on investment while these seeds are not adapted to the climate of Morocco."

Yet many see room for improvement, even in a drought-hit country where the average citizen consumes about 200 kilograms of wheat per year - significantly above the world's average, according to official figures.

"Unlike countries like Egypt or Ethiopia, Morocco has chosen to liberalise its market," said researcher Amri, meaning that authorities have no control over what varieties farmers select.

But Amri remains convinced that, coupled with the national agricultural programme, the widespread adoption of resilient varieties will help offset mounting losses.

Article link: <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/north-africa/2024/05/02/morocco-s-farming-revolution-defying-drought-with-science->



Angola delegates captured during a visit to Ibadan, Nigeria. The tour aimed at bolstering partnership with IITA to deliver proven technologies and support to smallholder farmers in the country.

Angola to boost smallholder farmers' productivity with IITA technologies

By Folake Oduntan

A World Bank-funded project in Angola, the Smallholder Agricultural Transformation Project (MOSAP 3), which seeks to increase the target group's productivity per hectare has taken off with resounding success, according to the IITA, the main collaborators in the partnership.

Speaking during a recent visit to the Ibadan-based body by delegates from Angola's Institute for Agrarian Development (IDA), Director General Felismino da Costa said the various crop improvement solutions, capacity development, and technological packages available in IITA meet the aspirations of the Angolan

government, especially for youths and women involved in crop and livestock farming in Angola. Some of their identified intervention directions are maize, sorghum, millet, cassava, beans, and livestock.

The August tour aimed at bolstering partnership with IITA to deliver proven technologies and support to smallholder farmers in Angola. Mr da Costa added that one of the key ingredients of the project was its collaboration with IITA to deliver all-round solutions for farmers in their Farmer Field Schools.

"We count on IITA's support to rehabilitate our farmer field schools and replicate the model of youth empowerment in agriculture in Angola," he added.

Responding to the team's need to improve seed production for smallholder farmers in Angola, Mercy Diebiru Ojo, IITA Cassava Seed Systems Specialist, said IITA has developed models that combined technology packages for seed production, value addition, and digital technologies for monitoring different crops. These aim to improve productivity, food security, and climate solutions in agriculture.

Article link: <https://www.iita.org/news-item/angola-to-boost-smallholder-farmers-productivity-with-iita-technologies/>



WHY ATTEND THE 2025 AFSTA CONGRESS?

Benefits of Participating in the 2025 AFSTA Congress

Attending the AFSTA Congress in Kigali, scheduled for March 3-5, 2025, offers numerous benefits for stakeholders in the seed industry. Here are some of the key advantages of 3 full days of interactive programming:

1. Marketing and Trading

Opportunities: Participating in the AFSTA Congress 2025 is an effective way for seed companies to promote their brand, conduct market research, showcase their products and services to commercial partners and consumers.

2. Networking and Collaboration

Opportunities: The congress will gather global seed industry professionals, policymakers, and researchers, facilitating valuable connections that can lead to collaborations and partnerships. There are also reserved trading tables that can be used to seek appointments.

3. Information and Knowledge Sharing:

Participants in the AFSTA Congress will have access to workshops and presentations on the latest seed industry trends globally to enhance understanding of the industry to enable them to improve their operations.

4. Market Insights:

Attendees can gain insights into market dynamics, regulatory frameworks, and best practices that can help them navigate the complexities of the seed industry in Africa.

5. Showcasing technologies and

Innovations: The congress features exhibitors showcasing new technologies,

products, services and providing participants with first-hand knowledge of advancements that can improve the operations of the participants

6. Advocacy and Representation:

The event serves as a platform for the AFSTA African Seed Trade Association and the global industry to stay informed about industry issues and to advocate for the interests of the private seed sector, ensuring that the voices of private sector are heard in policy discussions.

7. Cultivating Collaboration with research and breeding institutions:

Transferring seed technologies to seed companies for commercialisation: In Partnership under Africa vegetable breeding consortium (AVBC) and Africa cereals and legumes breeding consortium (ACLBC)

8. Media visibility:

In Rwanda, AFSTA will have a media booth where seed companies will give interviews on their products hence gaining publicity for their products and activities.

9. Enjoying the host country culture:

Apart from the main business of discussions on seed matters, Rwanda deserves magnificent tourist sites, rich culture, colourful cities and a reputation for world class hospitality makes the country a tempting sanctuary.

[Register for AFSTA Congress 2025 here](#)

Ghana: NASTAG members trained on biotech and biosafety

By Aghan Daniel I AFSTA Communication Officer I daghan@afsta.org



A Ghanaian farmer marvels at her nice cobs. Recently the biotech committee at the national seed association was trained on crop improvement techniques such as conventional breeding and genetic modification as well as the development of pest-resistant crops and strategies for yield enhancement.

Following various advancements in biotechnology including the release of BT cowpea, the National Seed Trade Association of Ghana (NASTAG) members have undergone a three-day online training session on biotech and biosafety courtesy of support from AFSTA.

The first day of the training, which ran from 12th to 14th August 2024, mainly focused on increasing the participants' understanding of national and international regulatory requirements.

Mr Leeford Wristberg and Ms Regina Osei-Bonsu from the National Biosafety Authority outlined Ghana's regulatory framework for biotechnology, emphasising the roles of various national regulatory bodies, including the National Biosafety Authority and the Food and Drugs Authority. Their session also covered the procedures for obtaining permits and approvals for biotechnology research and commercialisation.

The duo also held an in-depth discussion on the Biosafety Act of Ghana, covering its objectives, scope, institutional framework and procedures for risk assessment and management.

They highlighted that public participation and transparency were key components of the Biosafety Act.

Dr. Daniel Osei Ofosu of the Program for Biosafety Systems introduced participants to international regulatory bodies such as the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The discussion included compliance with international standards and agreements, complemented by case studies on international regulatory compliance in biotechnology.

On the second day, Mr. Wristberg trained the NASTAG Biotech Committee members on biosafety regulations compliance. This session focused on the importance of compliance for successful biotechnology projects, including documentation, record-keeping, regular audits, and inspections.

A team from the Biotechnology and Nuclear Agriculture Research Institute also presented on biotech innovations in agriculture. This entailed crop improvement techniques such as conventional breeding, genetic modification, and CRISPR tools, as well as the development of pest-resistant crops and strategies for yield enhancement.

Dr. Richard Ampadu-Ameyaw of the Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology discussed the long-term profitability and sustainability of biotech crops while Dr. Ofosu addressed trade issues related to biotechnology, focusing on regulatory and market access challenges as well as trade agreements affecting biotech crops.

The third day focused on biotechnology and society. Dr. Ofosu led a comprehensive examination of the ethical considerations surrounding genetic modification

and biotech research. The session addressed how to balance innovation with ethical responsibilities, supported by case studies on ethical dilemmas in biotechnology.

He followed it up with a discussion on public perception of biotechnology, exploring strategies for improving public awareness and acceptance. He also emphasised the role of media and communication in shaping public perception. The session concluded with an exploration of the societal impacts of biotechnological advancements, focusing on the social implications for smallholder farmers and rural communities.

The discussions over these three days provided NASTAG members with a solid foundation in both the regulatory and societal aspects of biotechnology, preparing them for the subsequent sessions in the Africa Seed Trade Association (AFSTA)-led training program with support from Croplife International.



A maize farm in Ghana. A recent training by AFSTA and Croplife focused on the importance of compliance for successful biotechnology projects in the country.

Seed Trade Association of Kenya (STAK) establishes biotech committee

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

With the Support of AFSTA, the Seed Trade Association of Kenya (STAK) has embarked on steps that will facilitate the formation of its Biotech committee. The purpose of the Biotech Committee within the Seed Trade Association to provide guidance and advice to the seed sector players in Kenya, including the private sector, government, and public, on all matters related to biotechnology, particularly in the science-based policy decision-making and public information and community awareness creation.

The Committee will, among other things, identify and evaluate new and existing biotechnology opportunities, actively participate in assessing the risks and benefits of new biotechnology technologies, and disseminate unbiased science-based information to the Kenyan public.



A Bt Cotton farmer.

Zimbabwe seed inspectors tipped on OECD international seed certification scheme

By Catherine Lang'at | AFSTA Technical Manager | catherine@afsta.org



Seed inspectors in Zimbabwe pose for a group photo during a health break. They attended a two-week Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) seed certification training last September.

Zimbabwean seed inspectors have undergone a two-week Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) seed certification training. The training workshop which took place from 2nd to 13th September 2024, is hosted by the Zimbabwean government, Africa Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) and OECD Secretariat in collaboration with Bayer Crop Science and the Zimbabwe Seed Association (ZSA).

In total, 113 seed inspectors (25 from the government and 88 from the private sector) in Zimbabwe were trained. The training targets 30 of these inspectors and covers three main objectives including understanding OECD standards, building capacity between private and public authorities and promoting collaboration and networking.

The workshop was officially opened by the Permanent Secretary (PS), Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development, Prof. Obert Jiri, who underlined the importance of seed security as the success factor in agriculture.

He observed that seed security proceeds food security, rural transformation and ultimately economic growth, particularly in Zimbabwe and, by extension, in Africa.

"As the foundation of food security, seed continues to contribute to agriculture development and biodiversity," Prof. Jiri said.

He mentioned that adhering to OECD seed certification standards is crucial to building trust among farmers regarding the quality of the seeds they receive.

The PS was accompanied by the chief director of Agricultural Research Innovation and Specialist Services (ARISS), Dr. Dumisani Kutuywayo. The Zimbabwe Seed Association was represented by its Chairman, Dr. John Makoni, the Secretary, and the Secretary-General, Mrs. Patience Nyakanda. Catherine Lang'at, the Technical Manager, represented the AFSTA secretariat.

The training contributes to the African Union-led African Seed and Biotechnology Program (ASBP), a strategic framework for developing the seed sector in Africa. The programme is based on an interrelated set of components that collectively provide a strategic approach to address the main barriers and challenges to improve the seed sector in Africa, component on seed quality assurance and certification, seed policy and regulations as well as research, variety development and seed production. AFSTA leads the private sector cluster of the ASBP.

The trainers were from different countries, Gerry Hall (UK), Eddie Goldschagg (South Africa) supported by Nathan Phiri (Zambia) and Simon Maina (Kenya).

Rijk Zwaan, a global horticulture seed company celebrates 100th anniversary

By Charles Nyachae | charles@afsta.org



Charle Nyachae of AFSTA at the Centenary celebrations of Rijk Zwaan in Arusha, Tanzania

On July 1, 2024, Rijk Zwaan, a Dutch-owned company and a member of AFSTA, marked its 100th anniversary of progressive work in producing certified seed.

The company operates large-scale commercial horticulture and research in more than 30 countries worldwide. In Tanzania, Rijk Zwaan owns two sister companies: Rijk Zwaan Q-Sem, which produces hybrid vegetable seeds and provides breeding support, and Rijk Zwaan Afrisem, which breeds and develops products for African tropical crops.

During a follow-up party held on August 21, 2024 held in Arusha, Tanzania, the company shared its history, having begun as a seed store in Rotterdam, to 100 years later, its status as an international breeding company with 4,000 employees spread across all continents.

The event included short learning tour of Rijk Zwaan activities and a dinner gala.

The AFSTA Board, members and the Secretariat wishes the company immense success in its endeavour to provide relevant seed globally.



A field tour to a site by Rijk Zwaan: The company began as a seed store in Rotterdam 100 years ago.

LCIC unveils new seed variety

By Amos Rutherford | amosrutherford@gmail.com

The AFSTA member seed business in Ghana, Legacy Crop Improvement Centre (LCIC), has unveiled its novel seed technology, Legacy 26, a climate-smart seed maize with high pro-vitamin A content, to the public. This early maturing variety possesses a high grain yield potential of 8 tonnes per hectare.

The new variety was launched recently at the 2024 This is Ghana Exhibition, a platform that aims to showcase the best seed business Innovation.

The exhibition was organized jointly by Channel One TV and CitiFM, drew thousands of visitors eager to experience the rich tapestry of Ghanaian culture, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

The 2024 edition was held at the Forecourt of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly from August 31 to September 1, 2024.

Vendors from across the country showcased their products, making the exhibition dynamic and featuring a wide array of locally made unique goods and services.



Her Excellency, Samira Bawumia, wife of the Vice President of the Republic of Ghana, interacts with the writer at the Legacy Crop improvement Centre stand where the company unveiled a new seed variety, Legacy 26.

The event was a testament to Ghanaian creativity and entrepreneurial spirit from fashion and agriculture to technology and crafts. The energy remained high for the two days, with vendors and buyers forging new connections, forming partnerships and making significant sales.

AFSTA SG calls for collaboration to improve status of African seed sector



Dr. Yacouba Diallo gives some remarks during a meeting with stakeholders for the African Cereal and Legume Breeding Consortium (ACLBC) in partnership with TAAT after the NSAR Rwanda Congress in Kigali, Rwanda at the Kigali Serena Hotel.

With only 1 out of 5 farmers adopting improved seed varieties, collaboration is crucial to realizing the seed sector's potential on the African continent.

This is according to the Secretary General of the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA), Dr Yacouba Diallo speaking on behalf of the President of the Association's Board of Directors at the National Seed Association of Rwanda (NSAR) Congress 2024 in Kigali, Rwanda in August.

He noted that inconsistent national policies and regulations, cumbersome procedures for variety release and cross-border seed movement, inadequate infrastructure and facilities are some of the challenges that have led to the African seed sector's underperformance.

“No single country can completely fulfil all of its farmers’ seed demand exclusively through its domestic production. Collaborative efforts from multiple countries may be necessary to ensure adequate supply,” he said.

He added that, “This is why the global seed market and international seed movement are continuously growing, leading to intensive breeding and faster commercial processes driven by the private sector.”

He observed that AFSTA has been working with governments and Regional Economic Communities to establish incentive-based regulatory frameworks and policies that helps the seed industry thrive on the continent.

“These efforts are aimed at strengthening seed systems, promoting collaboration among different players in the seed value chain, and facilitating the smooth movement of high-quality seeds,” Dr Diallo said.

In 2024, the African seed market is valued at \$3.12 billion, and a predicted growth rate of 5%, potentially reaching \$4.18 billion by 2030.

To realize this potential, the SG outlined several areas of focus including implementing robust policies and regulations that adhere to international standards. This will help in attracting investment and facilitating seed trade.

Others include cultivating innovative public-private partnerships (PPPs) and promoting both domestic and foreign direct investment in the industry, and strengthening seed trade associations to bolster industry competitiveness.

Additionally, he advocated for coordinating the endeavours of governments, international organisations, the private sector, and NGOs to establish indispensable seed systems for all farmers.

NIGERIA: SEEDAN members trained on agricultural biotech

By Stephen Adigun I adigunoludapo@gmail.com



Dr Rose Gidado, the Director of the Agricultural Biotechnology Department at the National Biotechnology Research and Development Agency (NBRDA).

In an effort to educate and enhance the knowledge of its members on agricultural biotechnology, the Seed Entrepreneurs Association of Nigeria (SEEDAN) organized a two-day training program for its Biotech Committee members with the support of the African Seed Trade Association. The training sessions took place on June 13 and July 3, 2024, respectively.

The first day of training consisted of two sessions. The first session was conducted by Dr. Rose Gidado, the Director of the Agricultural Biotechnology Department at the National Biotechnology Research and Development Agency (NBRDA).

This session, titled "Types of Biotechnology and Key Terminologies used in Biotechnology," provided an introduction to biotechnology and its basic terminologies. It aimed to enlighten the committee members about the history and evolution of biotechnology, emphasizing its multifaceted nature and its far-reaching implications across various sectors such as modern medicine, agriculture, the environment, and industrial applications. The session concluded by highlighting the promise of biotechnology in offering innovative solutions to challenges in health, agriculture, industry, and the environment as it continues to evolve.

The second session of the day, "Steps in Biotechnology," was facilitated by Prof. Samuel Olakojo, a Professor of Plant Breeding and Applied Genetics at the Faculty of Agriculture, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. The session walked the trainees through the principles of biotechnology, including DNA extraction, fragmentation, isolation, ligation of desired DNA fragments into the vector, and recombinant DNA transfer to the host. It also covered steps in agricultural biotechnology and preventive measures in the breeding and release of GMOs. Prof. Olakojo emphasised the need for education, mass enlightenment, and adherence to biosafety regulations, suggesting that there is nothing inherently wrong with GMO or gene-edited crops.

The second day's first session was on "Background and Challenges of Commercialization of Biotech Products in Nigeria," conducted by Prof. Johnson Onyibe, a Professor at the National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Services (NAERLS) and a Technical Advisor to SEEDAN. During this session, the traditional use of biotechnology throughout human history to address food production, health services, and environmental preservation was highlighted, alongside the major gains of seed biotechnology were explained to the trainees.



Alhaji Yusuf-Ado Kibiya, the President of SEEDAN.

Challenges affecting the commercialisation of biotech in Nigeria, such as labelling requirements, anti-GM campaigns, climate change vulnerability, funding, and implementation, were also discussed. Concerns and controversies related to environmental impact, human health, and ethical and economic issues were identified. In the end, a recommendation for a holistic approach involving research, education, regulation, and stakeholder collaboration to promote biotech crops in Nigeria was prescribed.

The final session provided an update on research and commercialisation of biotechnology in Nigeria and Africa by Dr. Rose Gidado. It offered insights on the development of Bt Cotton, TELA Maize, and Bt Cowpea in Nigeria and other African countries.

The session emphasized the potential contribution of GM crops to Africa's economic growth and food security if regulatory frameworks and public engagement efforts are adequately addressed.

While giving their final remarks, Pastor Femi Olonilua, the SEEDAN Biotech Committee Chairman, and Alhaji Yusuf-Ado Kibiya, the President of SEEDAN, thanked AFSTA for the initiative, observing that the discussions had added a lot of value to the uptake and understanding of biotech among the members.

Another set of two-day training for the SEEDAN Biotech Committee members take place before the end of September 2024.

African Cereal and Legume Breeding Consortium (ACLBC) launched

By Atâyi Opaluwah | TAAT Communications Specialist | a.opaluwah@cgiar.org



Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT) program has established African Cereal and Legume Breeding Consortium (ACLBC) led by Dr Solomon Gizaw (in red cap).

Delegates at the just-concluded Africa Food Systems Forum attended the Side event on the launch of the African Cereal and Legume Breeding Consortium (ACLBC) on September 3, 2025, in Kigali, Rwanda.

The launch heralded a significant milestone in advancing cereal and legume breeding across Africa. Established by the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) under the Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT) program, ACLBC is set to drive innovation in breeding, facilitate the sharing of genetic resources and support the scaling of seed technologies.

The launch offered a unique opportunity to engage with leading experts, explore cutting-edge breeding technologies, and discuss collaborative efforts to advance agricultural development in Africa.

AFSTA Secretary General Dr Yacouba Diallo represented the association during the pivotal event and engaged in a panel discussion on the strategy of AFSTA in promoting the ACLBC amongst AFTSA members and improving access to certified seeds and the use of these crops amongst smallholder farmers.

New report vouches for increased investment in the seed sector

By Aghan Daniel | daghan@afsta.org

A new report on the performance of the seed sector in Africa has called for increased investment in seed systems to bolster agricultural productivity and sustainability.

The 2023 Seed Sector Performance Index (SSPI) Status Report for Africa notes that although there are some bright spots and consistent high performers to highlight, the report's findings stress the urgent need to invest more resources in the seed industry in most countries.

The report was disseminated at the just concluded African Food Systems Forum's 2024 Summit on 2 September in Kigali, Rwanda.



Michael Waithaka (TASAI), Ed Mabaya (Cornell University), Lauren Good (BMGF), Jane Ininda (AGRA) pose for a photo at the launch of the SSPI Africa Report (2023) during the Africa Food Systems Forum in Kigali, Rwanda on 2 September 2024.

The SSPI is a new, single score-based measurement tool that provides “a bird’s eye view” of the health of national seed systems across the continent. The SSPI was developed by TASAI Inc., in partnership with AGRA and the African Union Commission.

According to the study, the overall SSPI score for the continent across all indicators and all countries is “fair” at 4.8 out of 10.

Yacouba Diallo from AFSTA commented on the indicator on seed trade associations, saying, “Effective seed sector transformations require the representation of the private seed sector in the seed development agenda at national, regional, and global levels.”

He added that National seed trade associations play a critical role in the development of the seed industry on the continent by addressing some key challenges faced by the African seed industry. These include seed trade barriers due to outdated seed laws and regulations that adversely affect the ability or desire for private-sector

investment in the seed industry and the low capacity of local seed companies to deliver quality seeds, among other issues.

He called on partners to join with AFSTA to support the establishment and strengthening of national seed trade associations to effectively contribute to the development of the seed industry in Africa.

The side Event launching the SSPI was moderated by Enock Chikava former AFSTA President and who is now Director of Agricultural Delivery Systems at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). He praised the index as an important step towards providing more precise measurement of the status of national seed sectors across the continent.

“A seed system is the journey that an improved seed variety takes from a breeder’s hands to the farmer’s field. This new report is valuable in pinpointing the critical stages along this journey that currently hinder access to improved seed varieties across Africa,” noted Chikava.

National seed trade associations play a critical role in the development of the seed industry on the continent by addressing some key challenges faced by the African seed industry.



AFRICAN UNION



AU-IAPSC



Webinar Invitation

28 NOV 2024



The African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) in collaboration with The African Union Inter-African Phytosanitary Council (AU-IAPSC) cordially invites you to a webinar on the recently launched **Plant Health Strategy for Africa**. Please mark your calendars on **28th November 2024** between 12h00 - 15h00 (EAT)

To register for the online meeting kindly click on the button below

REGISTER NOW!

MORE INFORMATION

- **Strategy Document**
- **Programme**



Dr. Saliou Niassy
African Union; Inter-African Phytosanitary Council (IAPSC) Coordinator



Dr. Diana Akullo Ogwal
African Union; Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)



Dr. Yacouba Diallo
Secretary General - AFSTA



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