



AFSTA E-Review

An electronic newsletter of the African Seed Trade Association

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AFSTA Congress 2024 online registration opens

By Charles Nyachae | ICT, Protocol & Logistics | charles@afsta.org

Online registration for the AFSTA Congress 2024 is now open. The Congress will be held on 4th – 6th March 2024 at the Pridelnn Paradise Beach Resort & Spa in Mombasa, Kenya.

To register, one has to visit AFSTA website <https://www.afsta.org> and click on the AFSTA Congress 2024 logo, which will redirect one to various links on registration including the Online Registration Form.

Upon finalization of registration, delegates need to book accommodation at the earliest convenience in one of the hotels whose rates have been negotiated by the National Organizing Committee sitting in Nairobi. The official congress hotel is the Pridelnn Paradise Beach Resort, Convention Centre & Spa.

“Delegates need to take advantage of our **early bird** registration discount which ends on 31st January 2024,” said Wellington Wasike, NOC Chairman in an email to the E-Review team.

He added that non-members do not require a code to register. For AFSTA members, a code has been sent to them



by the AFSTA Secretariat to aid them in registering as they enjoy AFSTA membership discounted rates.

You are also welcome to book a web advert on AFSTA's website on the homepage for only 400USD for members and 500USD for non-members.



The African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) wishes you a Merry Christmas & A Happy New Year 2024

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AFSTA CONGRESS 2024 CHARGES

There would be a **Golf Tournament** on Sunday 3rd March 2024 at Nyali Golf Club while the Congress will be held at the **Pride Inn Paradise Beach Resort & Spa, Mombasa, Kenya**. You can register for the golf tournament on the Congress Online registration form by selecting “YES”.

When registering online, **Non-AFSTA** members do not require a registration code. For AFSTA members and other categories, the Congress registration code will be given to you by AFSTA Secretariat. The registration fees for the Congress 2024 are as follows:

| Category | Early Bird | Late Registration | Onsite Registration |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | Before 31st January 2024 | From 1st February 2024 | From 1st March 2024 |
| AFSTA Members | 680 | 730 | 950 |
| AFSTA Member Spouse/Child | 330 | 380 | 495 |
| AFSTA Non-members | 1,100 | 1,250 | 1,625 |
| Non-Member Spouse/Child | 450 | 500 | 650 |
| Kenyan civil servants | 450 | 450 | - |
| Exhibitors | 400 | 400 | - |
| Trading Table (AFSTA members) | 400 | 400 | - |
| Trading Table (non-members) | 500 | 500 | - |
| Exhibition Booth (3 x 2 X 2 m) | 1,230 | 1,230 | - |

Register online by visiting the AFSTA website www.afsta.org for more details.

TRADING TABLES

Delegates can reserve a trading table upon registering for the AFSTA Congress 2024. The price for a reserved trading table with four chairs is **400 US\$** for AFSTA members and **500 US\$** for non-AFSTA members.

2023 Seed Connect Africa: Deputy Speaker, House of Reps, Calls For More Investment

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

The Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives, Benjamin Kalu has called for more investments in the seed industry to ensure food security in the country.

Kalu who made the call in Abuja while declaring open the 6th Edition of Seed Connect Africa Conference & Exhibition 2023, stated that investing in research and innovation will empower farmers to produce more and contribute to a more food-secure and prosperous Nigeria.

With over 157 registered seed companies, Nigeria emerged as a regional leader in seed production and export. In 2019, the country accounted for 60% of the total seeds marketed in West Africa. This impressive export volume, the Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives, Benjamin Kalu said highlights Nigeria's capacity to contribute to regional food security efforts.

Commending the National Agricultural Seed Council for its unwavering dedication to the growth and development of Nigeria's seed



Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives, Benjamin Kalu captured during the sixth SeedConnect Conference in Abuja

industry, the minister of state for Agriculture and food security, Senator Abdullahi Sabi urged the participants to explore innovative solutions to address the challenges and opportunities in the seed industry.

With the theme "Global Declaration of Food Emergency – The Role of Seed Industry in Africa," participants called for urgent measures and determination to amplify the critical role of the seed industry in

addressing the pressing issues of food security in the continent.

During the opening ceremony, AFSTA Communication Officer told the gathering that the association was committed to ensure that the continent embraced production and trade in certified seed for better agricultural fortunes in the region.

On his part, the President of SEEDAN articulated their willingness to work together with AFSTA to create a critical mass of members who understand biotechnology as a science in order to work in tandem with the government's key policy decisions on the technology. Minister of State for Agriculture and Rural Development, Senator Aliyu Sabi Abdullahi, in turn acknowledged the President's speech and said that he is ready to work with SEEDAN's new leadership and enhance the seed sector's support to government efforts in the technology acceptance and in many other key government decisions made on the seed industry.



Over 89,000 Improved Seed Varieties Available for Planting in 2023 Cropping Season - Abubakar

By Gilbert Ekugbe

The Nigerian Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Dr. Mohammad Abubakar has announced that the Revised National Agricultural Seed Policy (RNASP) 2022 has enabled the availability of 89,512.10 metric tonnes of assorted improved seed varieties for planting by farmers in the 2023 cropping season.

Speaking at the launch in Abuja, Abubakar, said the new policy document is an investment geared toward building a better future for Nigeria's agriculture sector, explaining that seeds are critical inputs in enhancing farmer's productivity while also boosting the country's Gross Domestic Production (GDP).

Abubakar noted that the RNASP 2022 would help to ensure more access to improved quality seeds, boost food and nutrition security as well as encourage participation of women and youth in the seed value chain.

He noted that the enactment of the National Agricultural

Seed Act, No 21 of 2019 and the Plant Variety Protection Act, No 5 of 2021 have empowered new responsibilities and widened the scope of operations of the National Agricultural Seed Council (NASC).

The minister revealed that the present seed policy document represented the concerted efforts of NASC and other stakeholders who had made valuable inputs towards ensuring that farmers have unrestricted access to best genetics to enhance their productivity.

He noted that the council had also introduced additional innovations and technologies, which included Third Party Certification, Seed Tracker, NASC Seed Information Management Platform (NASIMP), NASC Electronic Survey Tool (NEST), e-Library, Molecular Diagnostics System to ease its functions of delivering quality seeds to the Nigeria's farming populace.

Earlier in his remarks, Chief of Party and Managing Director, USAID Feed - the

- Future Nigeria Agribusiness Investment Activity, (NAIA), Mr. Olumide Ojo, who was represented by Ms. Yvonne Isikuemen, stated that the policy was significant to the seed industry as it underscores the need to strengthen efforts for quality seeds production, address issues of seed fraud and improve healthy seed supply for the benefit of agricultural productivity and food security in Nigeria.

He said that the review process went through initial data gathering and desk review by an international authority on seed policy, with several stakeholder reviews and validations which culminated in the final approval of the policy in March 2023.

He further revealed that the Feed the Future Nigeria Agribusiness Investment Activity is a five-year USAID-funded programme, which aims to strengthen the enabling environment for agribusiness finance and investment in Nigeria.

Link to the story: <https://allafrica.com/stories/202305230061.html>

Sorghum seed sales profit and empower rural women in Tanzania

By Marion Aluoch and Mike Listman

After years of struggles, a group of women farmers in a remote rural area of Tanzania are finally profiting and forging an enterprise based on local farmers' high demand for certified seed of sorghum, a dryland crop first domesticated in Africa and used in food and drink, livestock feed and even building materials.

Based in Usoche village, Momba District, Songwe Region, Tanzania, the Jitegemee Women's Group was formed in 2018 to improve their livelihoods through sorghum production. In 2022 the group produced and marketed over 3 tons of certified seed, benefiting from access to foundation and certified seed with support from project partnerships and linkages to global and local initiatives.

"Through us, many women are now educated and motivated to engage in seed production," said Rodha Daudi Tuja, a representative of the Jitegemee group. "I think in the next season we are going to have many women seed entrepreneurs."

Based on seed companies' inability to fully satisfy farmers' high demand for quality seed of sorghum, the social and behavior change interventions component of the Dryland Crops program of CIMMYT, an international research organization with longstanding partnerships and impacts in eastern and southern Africa, worked with Tanzania's

Centre for Behaviour Change and Communication (CBCC) to encourage youth and women to engage in the seed business, including marketing. Banking on previous experience, the initiative helped the women raise awareness among farmers about the value of quality, improved seed, using fliers, posters, t-shirts and caps.

"The CIMMYT behavior change interventions and CBCC reached us through youth champions who trained us on the features and benefits of improved sorghum seed," explained Tuja.

Especially important was training the women received to grow "quality declared seed" (QDS) at an event for 18 women and youth in Mbozi district conducted by The Tanzania Official Seed Certification Institute (TOSCI). QDS offers reliable quality in seed at an affordable price to farmers but is not formally inspected by official seed certification systems.

Immediately after the training, the group purchased 12 kilograms of foundation seed—genetically uniform seed that, when grown under controlled results, produces seed of ensured genetic purity and varietal identity—of the popular Macia sorghum variety from the Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute (TARI) at Hombolo. They multiplied that seed following meticulous quality protocols on a leased, 1.6-hectare farm.

A previous arrangement to grow seed for a local company had fallen through after one cropping season, and the Jitegemee group ended up recycling the seed and growing it for grain for sale. Still, the group realized that selling seed could be a lucrative business, if they could only gain access to foundation seed or certified seed. As part of growing pains during that period, the group lost half its members.

"Before our contact with the CIMMYT project we had a lot of challenges," Tuja said. "First, we did not know about improved seed, we couldn't access information about new farming technologies, and we were doing subsistence agriculture. However, after the project we were able to access seed and information at the Youth Quality Centres and through radio programs."

"I advise youth and my fellow women to join us because, before, we had no hope in sorghum production but now we are prospering. The demand for sorghum seed is very high, a lot of farmers are now demanding improved seeds, and our group alone cannot meet the growing demand for seed."

We gratefully acknowledge Florian Ndyamukama, Centre for Behaviour Change and Communication (CBCC), Tanzania, for contributing this story.

Link to the story: <https://www.cimmyt.org/news/sorghum-seed-sales-profit-and-empower-rural-women-in-tanzania/>

Rwandan government launches national roadmap to get rid of fake seed by 2030

By Staff Reporter



Rwanda through the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources in collaboration with the National Seed Association of Rwanda (NSAR), and the Private Sector Federation (PSF) has launched a roadmap to strengthen partnerships in getting rid of fake seeds by 2030.

"We are looking forward as government to work with the private sector to create this modern and improved business environment to deliver high-quality seed to our farmers, counter the risks of counterfeit, low quality and fake seed in the market," said Patrick Karangwa, the Director General for Agriculture Modernization at the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources yesterday during the launch.

Karangwa noted that the move would bring an improved livelihood to Rwandese farmers.

According to the 2020 African Seed Access Index which measures the top four grain and legume crops; maize, bean, wheat, and soya, satisfaction with regards to efforts to stamp out fake seeds was at 72 percent.

Karangwa revealed that inputs including seeds are currently underutilized by Rwandan farmers since only 37 percent of farmers use quality seeds.

He noted that Rwanda needs to increase its capacity to do high-quality seed production for future export opportunities.

Seed certification

To mitigate seed fraud, the officials revealed that the roadmap advocates for the creation of a National Seed Certification Agency to set standards, monitor seed quality, and enforce compliance.

"This will instill confidence in farmers and incentivize investment in seed production."

The plan will address the challenges in seed production by upgrading and expanding seed processing facilities, storage warehouses, and distribution networks as well as ensuring sufficient testing of new varieties is done to ready farmers for changes brought about by climate change.

The plan also includes genetically modified seeds.

"Rwanda currently prohibits the use of GMO seed types. It is obvious from numerous interactions that people are generally afraid of GMOs but are unaware of the technology and how it works. Some new developments in GMO testing have been reported," reads the plan.

Potential export market

According to Karangwa, three years ago, Rwanda used to import over 3,000 tonnes of maize, wheat, and soybean every year. But currently, he said, 9,000 tonnes are locally produced promising a potential export market.

However, the maize seed industry has demonstrated that it is possible to produce seeds of good quality locally. The success of the maize seed industry needs to be replicated for other commodities.

He urged the private sector to ensure that the improved seed brings additional value to the farmer to increase profitability.

We need to further modernize and capacitate our local seed industry players to be compliant with the new regulations that will be introduced.

The Chairperson of the National Seed Association of Rwanda (NSAR), Innocent Namuhoranye, said that the new strategy is a public-private partnership for developing and sustaining a robust and responsive seed industry.

"A vibrant open seed industry delivering high yielding, good quality seed to the Rwandan farmer and its export markets will be the key measurement of success," Namuhoranye said.

Link to the story: <https://farmersreviewafrica.com/rwandan-government-launches-national-roadmap-to-get-rid-of-fake-seeds-by-2030/>

Agric stakeholders call for enhanced efforts to improve farmer access to certified seed

By AFSTA Secretariat | afsta@afsta.org

Agricultural sector stakeholders have called for enhanced efforts to improve farmer access to certified seeds in Ghana. They say this is important if farmers can improve productivity and help the country deal with its food insecurity challenges.

Speaking at the 4th National Seed Business and Networking Forum (Seedlink 2023) in Tamale, Ghana country director of AGRA, Dr. Betty Annan said although the country has witnessed growth in the development and availability of improved and locally adopted seed varieties, there is still a huge gap that needs to be filled.

"The adoption is still marginal with only about 30% of the farmers using improved varieties. The slow pace of adoption is linked to inadequate compliance with seed legislation by seed value chain operators and disregard for seed certification and standard regulations here in Ghana," she observed. "AGRA with the support of USAID is committed to strengthening the Ghana seed system to enhance quality seed delivery to farmers," she added.

The forum was organized by the National Seed Trade Association of Ghana (NASTAG), National Seed Council, AGRA, Feed the Future Ghana Market Systems and Resilience, and PolicyLINK. The theme of the two-day forum was "Harnessing Resources, Cultivating Success and Fostering Synergy in the Seed Industry."

The forum sought to deepen engagement among stakeholders within the seed industry. About 100 participants from key seed stakeholder institutions including the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, district assemblies, academia, development partners, and farmers are participating in the forum.

Dr. Annan expressed concern that the current global economic crisis has hindered farmer access to quality seeds and fertilisers. "There is therefore an

urgent need for industry players to act in unison to strengthen the seed sector and scale up the use of improved seeds to boost productivity and transform the food systems," she said.

"AGRA by its design supports the drive towards inclusive transformation and sustainable food systems. We support smallholder households to transform their agriculture into profitable businesses," she added.

Deputy Minister for Food and Agriculture Alhaji Mohammed Tufeyru agreed that there remains substantial room for growth in Ghana's seed sector. He said local companies have struggled to provide enough certified seeds to supply the government's Planting for Food and Jobs initiative. Mr. Tufeyru cited an instance where local seed companies could not meet demand for the supply of seeds despite a \$28.8 m funding from African Development Bank to bolster the seed sector in the Savannah region.

"Unfortunately, only AGRA rice and soya, could be supplied. The maize, we had to import them from South Africa and other countries. Some \$11 m on seeds alone. Only rice and soya that we could get from local sources," he said.

Kelvin Fath who is Deputy Office Director at USAID Ghana told the forum the seed sector is crucial if Ghana can improve food security, sustainably manage natural resources, and generate economic growth. "It (seed) is also critical to the life and aspirations of every farmer in Ghana. High-quality certified seeds are essential for farmers to be able to produce the food they need, and feed their families and communities," he said.

Mr. Fath said the US government is working side by side with partners in Ghana's public and private institutions to improve food security. He said in 2022, the US provided Ghana with about \$32 million in agricultural

assistance.

"Our initiatives implemented through AGRA in partnership with NASTAG have improved the performance of the seed sector. This includes the production of nearly 1,800 kg of breeder seeds and 18 metric tonnes of foundation seeds," he disclosed.

"This ensures that 130,000 smallholder farmers had access to high-quality, climate-smart seeds last year. These investments and other investments by the government of Ghana and other donors have been instrumental in increasing agricultural productivity and competitiveness," Mr. Fath added.

In his address to the delegates, NASTAG President, Dr Amos Azinu Rutherford said that, "The theme of this year's SEEDLINK 'Harnessing Resources, Cultivating Success and Fostering Synergy in The Seed Industry' was all about creating a better future for all, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs and aspiration. It is about investing in research, biotechnology, seed production, seed processing, storage, and distribution channels."

In this meeting, a presentation by a member of the Biotech Committee was made on Updates of Biotech in Africa under the CLI-AFSTA Project. The presenter, Dr Daniel Ofori noted that NASTAG had shown the way by the formation of the Biotech Committee that will propel uptake of the technology in the region.

Dr Ofori was referring to the recently formed committee by the association that seeks to foster an understanding of key fundamental issues in biotechnology in the country.

Link to the story: <https://thebftonline.com/2023/11/08/agric-stakeholders-call-for-enhanced-efforts-to-improve-farmer-access-to-certified-seeds/>

Kenya to give farmers GMO maize seed next year – KALRO

By Agatha Ngotho



Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) director general Eliud Kireger during a media briefing on GMO update in the country.

The government will release genetically modified maize seed to farmers in next year, the Kenya Agriculture and Livestock Research Organisation has said.

Director general Eliud Kireger said on Tuesday the seeds will be given to farmers for free for demonstration.

"The seeds will be planted by farmers on 500,000 acres across mid altitude agro ecological zones as demonstrations pending full commercialisation by private companies," he said.

He spoke while briefing the media on genetically modified organism in the country.

Kireger said 11 metric tons of certified GMO maize seed will be released during the 2023 long rains planting season.

On October 3, President William Ruto lifted the ban on GMO after ten years in accordance with the recommendation of the Task Force to Review Matters Relating to Genetically Modified Foods and Food Safety.

The ban prohibited the open cultivation of genetically modified crops and the importation of food crops and animal feeds produced through biotechnology innovations.

This followed authorisation for open cultivation and importation of white GMO maize.

But since then, civil society groups have been up in arms with the government citing lack of public participation prior to lifting of the ban.

Anne Maina, national coordinator, Biodiversity and Biosafety

Association of Kenya (BIBA) said GMO crops are heavily dependent on synthetic fertilisers and toxic pesticides like RoundUp that have been linked to cancer and other toxic pesticides.

"With climate change, GMOs cannot survive with water. The switch to GMOs will lead to biodiversity loss having a negative impact on nutrition," she said.

But Kireger said the ban was as a result of a real need to ensure food and feed security and to safeguard our environment.

"Climate change and severity of drought and emergence of new pests such as fall army worms and maize stalk borer and diseases such as Maize Lethal Necrosis pose a real threat to food, feed and nutritional security," he said.

He said these pests are very expensive to control with farmers spending up to Sh12,000 per acre on pesticides alone.

"These pesticides are also harmful to human health and the environment, especially water. They significantly contribute to low production that currently stands at seven to ten (90kg) bags against the potential of 22 to 35 bags per acre.

"We lose about 13 million (90kg) of maize to stock borers alone annually valued at Sh32.5 billion," said Kireger, adding that maize borers attack also increases aflatoxin contamination, which is a health hazard," Kireger said.

Kenya to give farmers GMO maize seed next year – KALRO

He further explained that GMOs have been grown for almost 30 years with no verified health problems being reported.

Scientifically, Kireger said, GMO is proven to be safe for food, feed and the environment and is currently approved for cultivation in about 70 countries worldwide.

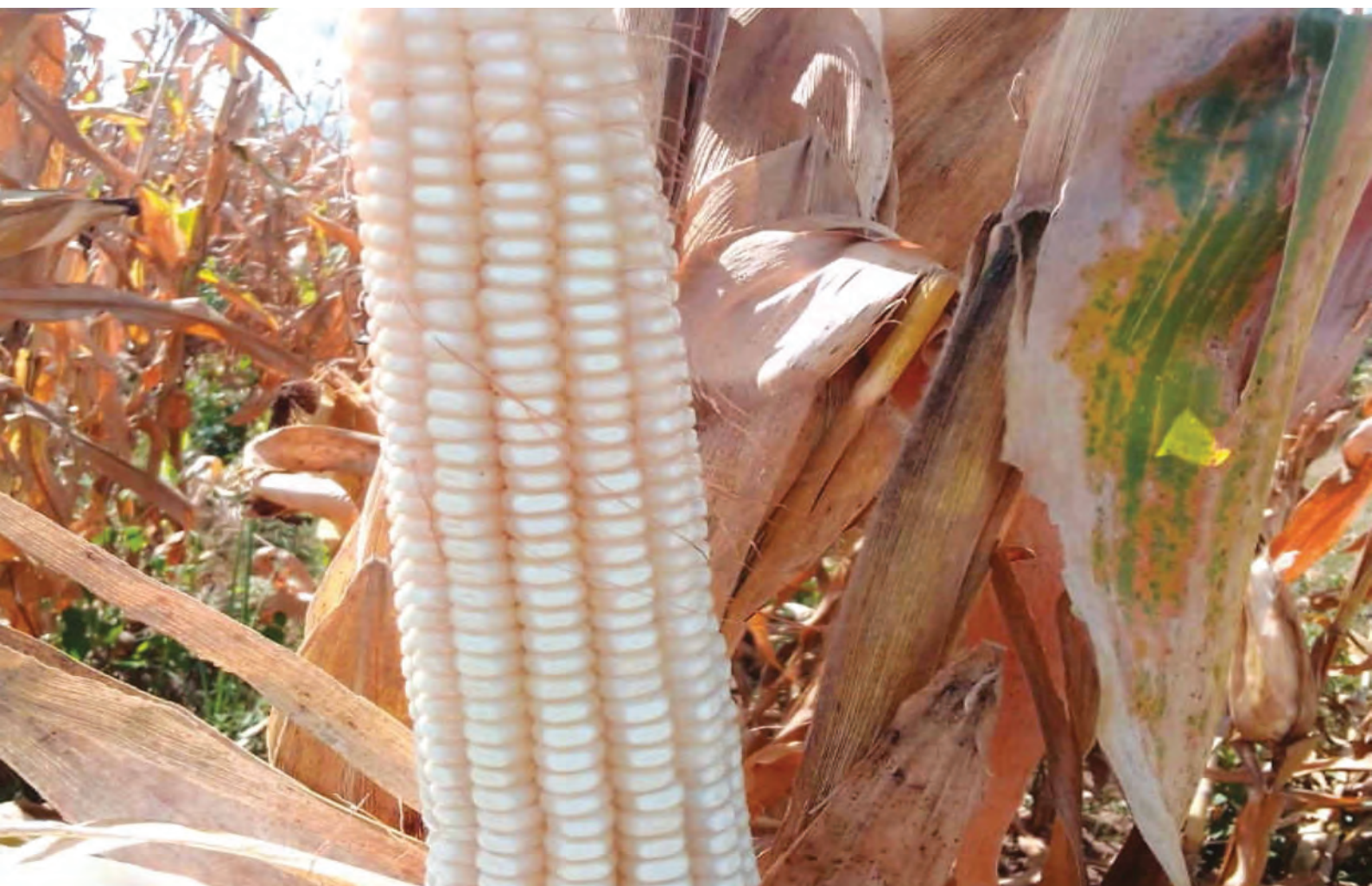
“Kenya has a fully robust and functional policy, legal and institutional framework

for governing use of GMOs. After a decade of successful research three Bt maize varieties - WE1259B, WE3205B and WE5206B - were recommended for release by KEPHIS but the final release and placement to the market was pending cabinet decision,” he said.

Kireger assured Kenyans that the Bt maize is safe as conventional varieties for food, feed and the environment.

The DG said KALRO and its partner, African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF), have worked with regulatory agencies like the National Biosafety Authority (NBA), National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) and Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) on the various steps of the research process, as required by law.

Link to the story: <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2022-10-18-state-to-give-farmers-gmo-maize-seeds-next-year-kalro/>





AFSTA Congress 2024

Kenya



AFSTA Congress 2024

4-6 March, 2024,
Mombasa, Kenya





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Your logo will be linked to your website or if you want to advertise a particular product you can send us artwork to be linked to your logo. The cost of the website advert is US\$ 300 for AFSTA members and US\$350 for Non members for a period of one year.

Contact : Charles Nyachae, ICT & Logistics Officer on: charles@afsta.org

UPCOMING EVENT

1. 4th - 6th March 2023: AFSTA Congress 2024, Mombasa, Kenya
2. 27th - 29th May 2024: Ahoy Rotterdam Netherlands
3. 30th Januueary 2024: OECD's Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Renewable Power Infrastructure, Nairobi - Kenya

EDITORIAL:

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Disclaimer:

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