

AFSTA E-REVIEW

An electronic newsletter of the African Seed Trade Association

www.afsta.org

INTERVIEW: AfSTA President Mr Clive Mugadza shares his Vision for The Association

Effective March 2026, Mr Clive Mugadza officially began his two-year term as President of the African Seed Trade Association (AfSTA). Clive succeeds Mr Amadou Sarr, who has led the Association since 2024. This interview by Brenda Kwamboka highlights Clive's vision for AfSTA as he steps into leadership.

I. What vision do you have for AfSTA and its role in shaping Africa's agricultural future?

My vision is to help build a transformed African seed ecosystem in which farmers have timely access to high-quality improved seed. I see that future being supported by a more harmonised and competitive environment across both the public and private sectors. To get there, AfSTA must strengthen its secretariat so it can more effectively drive policy harmonisation, empower national associations, accelerate innovation adoption and improve market access across the continent. I would also like to see AfSTA continue growing as the main umbrella body in the seed industry by bringing more national associations into the fold and helping develop them into stronger institutions in their own countries.

II. What do you see as the most urgent challenges currently facing Africa's seed sector?

The first is policy and regulatory fragmentation. We talk about harmonisation, but in practice the frameworks and their application remain uneven across countries. Beyond that, there are supply chain and product inefficiencies, especially because many production centres still depend heavily on rainfed systems. There is also a weak market and demand structure in many places, limited adoption of improved seed and technology, and the reality that many farmers at the bottom of the pyramid are operating under serious financial constraints. In many communities, farming is still largely subsistence-based, and that affects the speed of transformation.

III. Some farmers feel quality seed is becoming a luxury. How do you respond to that concern?

What is needed is better communication and even financial modelling of the value chain so that farming communities can more clearly see the value of genetics and the gains that improved seed can deliver. When that broader picture is understood, it becomes easier to see that the returns from quality seed can far outweigh the perceived price burden.



Mr Clive Mugadza, AfSTA President

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President Clive Mugadza Envisions a Thriving Seed Sector in Africa



Mr Clive Mugadza,
AfSTA President

IV. How can the seed industry improve access to quality seed for smallholder farmers across Africa, especially at scale?

We need system transformation. The first lever is regulatory harmonisation, because that helps seed move more efficiently from one country to another where agreed standards are already in place. We also need stronger market systems because illicit seed trade and counterfeit products continue to erode farmer confidence and cause real economic loss.

Farmers are using hard-earned resources to buy what they believe is genuine seed, only to discover that it is not true to type. That is why stronger deterrent measures matter. At the same time, we need to strengthen national seed traders' associations, so the collective voice of seed firms is heard more clearly in each market, increase private sector participation, and continue driving the adoption of improved technologies through government support and broader stakeholder alignment.

VI. What role can AfSTA play in strengthening regional seed trade and advancing regulatory harmonisation across the continent?

AfSTA must work through national seed associations because they are a critical lever in this process. Seed is, by nature, a sovereign product, and governments tend to listen most closely to their own domestic stakeholders. National associations are indigenous to their countries.

They have access to policymakers, constituencies and other key actors, and they are therefore best placed to influence acceptance and implementation. AfSTA's role is to support and strengthen those associations so that harmonisation is not only discussed at a continental level but also advanced in practical terms by actors within each country.

VIII. How has your role at Seed Co shaped the way you think about AfSTA's priorities and the wider needs of Africa's seed sector?

My experience has reinforced the importance of collaboration and partnership. AfSTA needs deeper engagement with national associations, private sector actors, crop care partners, non-governmental organisations and development partners working to promote sustainable agriculture.

It has also taught me that growth depends on the ability to resource a strategy properly. Operational and financial sustainability matter. If AfSTA is to strengthen its institutional capacity, mobilise knowledge and implement its plans effectively, it must have the resources to do so. Commercial experience has also shown me how important brand equity and stakeholder trust are.

A strong AfSTA brand is not cosmetic; it is part of building confidence, acceptance and stronger relationships across markets.

I would want AfSTA's recognition to be solidified across geographies

IX. At the end of your term, what outcomes would you want stakeholders to say AfSTA successfully delivered?

First, I would want AfSTA's recognition to be solidified across geographies so that no meaningful conversation about Africa's seed industry happens without AfSTA being part of it.

Second, I would want AfSTA to be seen as the first port of call for anyone seeking to engage in the seed arena, whether they are looking for market insight, information or a credible entry point into African farmer markets.

Third, I would want AfSTA to be known as a central knowledge hub for training, crop research and information. That is the AfSTA I would like to help build: influential, useful and trusted.

Mr Clive Mugadza currently serves as Group Operations Director for Seed Co Group Africa,

AfSTA Calls for Greater African Representation at the ISF World Seed Congress



In May 2026, when nearly 1,800 seed sector leaders from around the world gathered in Lisbon, Portugal, for the International Seed Federation (ISF) World Seed Congress 2026, one message from the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) was clear;

**“If we are not there,
others will decide
for us.”**

The words, spoken by AFSTA Secretary General Dr Yacouba Diallo, captured the central challenge facing Africa's agricultural future: ensuring that the continent is not merely a participant in global agriculture, but an influential voice shaping the policies, innovations and partnerships that will determine global food security.

The statement resonated throughout the congress, serving as a powerful reminder that Africa's future cannot be determined without Africa at the table.

Africa possesses nearly 60 per cent of the world's uncultivated arable land, yet the continent continues to import billions of dollars' worth of food every year. At the same time, Africa remains underrepresented in many of the global platforms where decisions affecting agriculture are made.

This is not simply about numbers; it is about ensuring that Africa's realities, priorities and innovations are reflected in global discussions.

Dr Diallo noted that fewer than 200 of the approximately 1,800 delegates attending the congress were from Africa.

Today's seed sector extends far beyond producing and distributing seed. It now intersects with biotechnology, artificial intelligence, digital agriculture, climate resilience, trade policy, genetic resources and major international research investments. Decisions taken in these areas have direct implications for African farmers, seed companies and national food systems.

Without meaningful representation, Africa risks having decisions made on its behalf rather than helping to shape them.

Throughout the congress, industry leaders emphasised the urgent need to build resilient food systems capable of withstanding climate change, geopolitical uncertainty and increasing pressure on global food supplies.

For Africa, these discussions are particularly significant. The continent faces some of the world's greatest climate vulnerabilities while simultaneously holding enormous potential to contribute to global food production through innovation and investment in improved seed systems.

Regional economic communities such as COMESA and ECOWAS have made significant progress towards harmonising seed regulations. However, in practice, moving seed across African borders remains slow, costly and administratively complex.

These barriers limit access to improved varieties, slow private-sector investment, and reduce farmers' ability to benefit from innovations developed across the continent.

Africa already has access to climate-smart crop varieties that can improve productivity, strengthen resilience to drought and pests, and enhance food security. The challenge lies in creating enabling systems that ensure these innovations reach farmers efficiently and affordably.

Achieving this requires stronger collaboration among governments, national seed trade associations, researchers, development partners and the private sector to improve seed production, regulatory harmonisation, market access and farmer awareness.

Africa cannot afford to remain on the sidelines. The continent's farmers, researchers, seed companies and policymakers have valuable knowledge and solutions to contribute. Ensuring their voices are heard is essential, not only for Africa's future, but for building resilient food systems that benefit the world.

Via the Africana Voice (Steve Mokaya)

AfSTA Congress 2027



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Strengthening Africa's Seed Systems Through Global Partnerships: AfSTA's Technical Mission to France



The African Seed Trade Association (AfSTA) undertook a technical mission to Angers Saint-Laud, France, on 15 June 2026, ahead of the OECD Seed Schemes Annual Meetings in Paris.

The mission, facilitated and coordinated by SEMAE, provided a unique opportunity to engage with some of Europe's leading institutions in plant variety protection, seed certification, variety testing, and seed business development. It also formed part of AfSTA's broader strategy to strengthen partnerships with international seed sector stakeholders, enhance technical knowledge among its members, and identify best practices that can support the development of competitive and resilient seed systems across Africa.

During the mission, AfSTA's Technical Lead Kennedy Mangwana visited the Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO), SEMAE's West Regional Office, GEVES, and TECHNISEM, each offering valuable insights into different components of a modern and well-functioning seed industry.

One of the first engagements was with the Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO), the institution responsible for administering Plant Variety Rights across the European Union.

Discussions highlighted the critical role that effective Plant Variety Protection (PVP) systems play in encouraging innovation, attracting investment, and rewarding plant breeders for developing improved crop varieties.

The visit also provided an in-depth understanding of the Distinctness, Uniformity and Stability (DUS) testing process and the importance of harmonised regional PVP systems in facilitating seed trade across multiple countries. For Africa, where regional organisations such as ARIPO and OAPI continue to strengthen PVP implementation, the lessons from CPVO demonstrated the value of robust intellectual property systems in stimulating long-term investment in plant breeding.

Discussions at SEMAE's West Regional Office focused on the organisation of the French seed industry and the mechanisms that have enabled France to develop one of the world's most advanced seed sectors. Of particular interest was SEMAE's role in bringing together public institutions, private seed companies, researchers, and policymakers to address common challenges while promoting innovation and maintaining high seed quality standards.



Kennedy Mangwana with Vincent Poupard, Regional Officer, SEMAE

The French experience clearly demonstrated that effective stakeholder coordination, combined with strong seed certification systems and continuous capacity development, creates an enabling environment for sustainable growth of the seed industry.

Another highlight of the mission was the visit to GEVES, France's official authority for variety testing and seed quality evaluation.

The technical lead was introduced to internationally recognised systems for DUS testing, Value for Cultivation and Use (VCU) assessments, and laboratory-based seed quality analyses.



The visit highlighted the importance of investing in scientific infrastructure and technical expertise to ensure that only high-performing and high-quality varieties reach farmers. Africa continues to make significant progress in strengthening its variety evaluation systems, and the experience at GEVES reinforced the need for increased investment in laboratories, testing facilities, and human capacity to support variety release, seed certification, and Plant Variety Protection across the continent.

AfSTA Technical Mission to France

The mission concluded with a visit to TECHNISEM, a subsidiary of the Novalliance Group and one of the leading vegetable seed companies operating across Africa. The discussions focused on vegetable breeding, research and development, seed processing, quality management, and the company's extensive engagement with African seed markets.

The visit highlighted the importance of continuous investment in innovation, robust quality management systems, and customer-focused product development to meet the changing needs of farmers. It also illustrated the significant role that private sector investment plays in expanding farmers' access to improved varieties and strengthening regional seed systems.

Beyond the technical knowledge gained, one of the most valuable outcomes of the mission was the strengthening of partnerships. Throughout the visit, there was a shared recognition that the future of seed sector development depends on stronger collaboration among research institutions, regulatory authorities, seed companies, professional associations, and international organisations.

These relationships provide opportunities for joint capacity-building programmes, technical exchanges, collaborative research, and knowledge sharing that can accelerate innovation and improve seed system performance across Africa.

Several overarching lessons emerged from the mission. Strong Plant Variety Protection systems create incentives for innovation and investment. Science-based variety testing and seed certification systems build confidence in seed quality and facilitate market development. Public-private partnerships are indispensable in creating dynamic and sustainable seed industries.

Capacity building remains essential to strengthening technical competencies across the seed value chain, while regional cooperation and regulatory harmonisation continue to be key drivers of cross-border seed trade and market integration. For AfSTA, the mission directly supports its strategic priorities of promoting effective Plant Variety Protection systems, strengthening seed quality assurance, supporting regional harmonisation initiatives, building strategic partnerships, and enhancing the technical capacity of its members.



Kennedy Mangwana with the TECHNISEM team

AfSTA is keen to deepen collaboration with CPVO, SEMAE, GEVES, TECHNISEM, and other international partners in delivering joint capacity-building initiatives that respond to Africa's evolving seed sector needs.

Mission Pictorials



AfSTA Participates in ARIPO Symposium on Plant Variety Protection in Lesotho

Reaffirming its commitment to strengthening Plant Variety Protection (PVP) systems across Africa, the African Seed Trade Association (AfSTA) participated in a Symposium on the Protection of New Varieties of Plants held in Maseru, Lesotho, organised by the African Regional Intellectual Property Organisation (ARIPO) in collaboration with the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Board member Matome Ramokgopa represented AfSTA in the two-day symposium, which took place from 20–21 May 2026. The symposium brought together policymakers, plant breeders, legal experts, and seed sector stakeholders to advance robust plant variety protection frameworks across the continent.

A key focus of the discussions was the **Arusha Protocol for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants**, which provides a regional framework for granting and protecting breeders' rights among ARIPO Member States. Participants explored progress made by countries in ratifying and implementing the protocol, while also examining opportunities to harmonise national legal and regulatory frameworks with regional standards.

For this particular discussion, participants underscored the need to balance breeders' rights with the interests of farmers while ensuring that legal frameworks support innovation, seed system development and broader agricultural transformation.

For the African continent, strengthening institutional capacity, raising awareness of Plant Variety Protection, and improving cooperation among governments, research institutions and the private sector were identified as important priorities for advancing effective implementation across the continent.

Effective Plant Variety Protection is essential for encouraging the development of improved crop varieties that can address some of Africa's most pressing agricultural challenges, including climate change, food insecurity, emerging pests and diseases, and increasing demand for nutritious food.



Participants at the symposium.
Picture courtesy of ARIPO

The symposium also explored the relationship between intellectual property rights and agricultural innovation, emphasising that well-functioning PVP systems provide incentives for both public and private plant breeders to invest in research and variety development. Such investments are critical to delivering improved seeds that offer higher yields, better resilience to environmental stresses and enhanced nutritional value.

The Arusha Protocol for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants provides a regional framework for granting and protecting breeders' rights among ARIPO Member States.

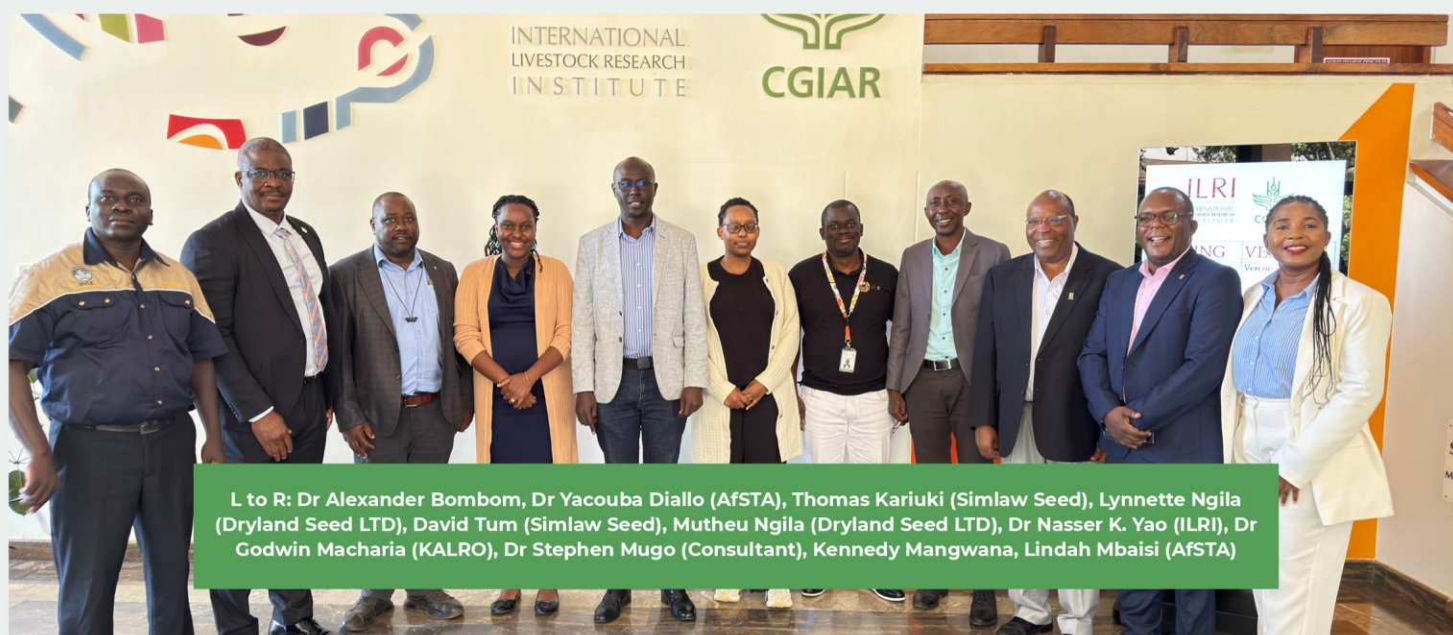
As African countries work toward modernising their seed systems and increasing agricultural productivity, stronger Plant Variety Protection frameworks will remain an important component of creating competitive and resilient agricultural sectors. The Maseru symposium provided an important opportunity for stakeholders to exchange experiences, build consensus and reinforce regional collaboration in advancing Plant Variety Protection for the benefit of breeders, farmers and future generations.

By engaging in regional policy dialogue, AfSTA continues to support efforts aimed at strengthening legal frameworks that promote innovation while contributing to food security, sustainable agriculture and economic growth across Africa.



AfSTA Board Member Matome Ramokgopa at the Symposium in Maseru, Lesotho

AFSTA Leads “Sormaize” Commercialisation Efforts to Advance Resilient Agriculture in Africa



L to R: Dr Alexander Bombom, Dr Yacouba Diallo (AfSTA), Thomas Kariuki (Simlaw Seed), Lynnette Ngila (Dryland Seed LTD), David Tum (Simlaw Seed), Mutheu Ngila (Dryland Seed LTD), Dr Nasser K. Yao (ILRI), Dr Godwin Macharia (KALRO), Dr Stephen Mugo (Consultant), Kennedy Mangwana, Linda Mbaisi (AfSTA)

AfSTA is leading the Sormaize commercialisation initiative by fostering collaboration between the private sector, National Agricultural Research and Extension Systems (NARES), research institutions and industry partners.

Sormaize is an innovative wide cross between sorghum and maize that combines the climate resilience and agronomic strengths of sorghum with the preferred eating qualities of maize.

As climate change continues to challenge agricultural production across Africa, the crop offers considerable potential to improve food security, enhance farmer resilience and create new market opportunities for the seed and grain industries.

AfSTA believes that strong partnerships are essential for transforming scientific innovations into commercially viable technologies that address the continent's food security and climate adaptation challenges.

The meeting brought together a diverse group of stakeholders representing research institutions, seed companies, agricultural organisations and industry from ILRI, Simlaw Seed Company, Dryland Seed Limited, East African Breweries PLC (EABL) / East Africa Maltings Ltd and AfSTA

The consortium meeting builds on a series of strategic engagements aimed at accelerating the commercialisation and adoption of this promising technology. While significant progress has been made in research and development, participants agreed that the next phase requires coordinated action to ensure that farmers can access the new crop and benefit from its unique characteristics.

Together, the consortium reviewed the progress made to date and outlined practical steps required to advance commercialisation.

Discussions focused on strengthening collaboration across the value chain, addressing regulatory requirements, supporting seed multiplication, creating market demand and ensuring that farmers are equipped to adopt the new technology successfully.

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.

Sormaize is expected to play an important role in helping farmers adapt to increasingly unpredictable weather patterns while maintaining productivity in challenging environments. By combining the drought tolerance and hardness of sorghum with the consumer-preferred qualities of maize, the crop has the potential to support more resilient farming systems and diversify income opportunities throughout agricultural value chains.



Presentation by Dr Alexander Bombom

By Linda Mbaisi, AfSTA Communications

Beyond the Conference Hall: Why the AfSTA 2027 Congress and Field Visits Matter

The AfSTA Annual Congress has become Africa's premier platform for advancing dialogue, innovation, and partnerships across the seed industry.

As preparations gather momentum for the AfSTA 2027 Congress in Nairobi, Kenya, delegates can look forward to much more than technical presentations and networking sessions. The Congress will offer a unique opportunity to experience Kenya's agricultural innovation ecosystem firsthand through carefully planned field visits and strategic engagements with leading research institutions.

One of the key highlights of the 2027 Congress will be AfSTA's collaboration with the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organisation (KALRO). As Kenya's National Agricultural Research and Extension Systems (NARES) institution, KALRO plays a central role in developing improved crop varieties, advancing agricultural technologies, and supporting sustainable food systems.

Recognising the growing need to better integrate research and innovation into the Congress programme, AfSTA has established this partnership to strengthen collaboration between research institutions, the private seed sector, policymakers, and development partners. The partnership aims to create meaningful platforms where scientific research translates into commercial application, fostering dialogue, knowledge exchange, and strategic partnerships.

By bridging the gap between research and industry, AfSTA seeks to accelerate the commercialisation and adoption of improved crop varieties and technologies, ensuring that innovations developed by research institutions ultimately reach farmers through vibrant, competitive, and resilient seed systems across Africa.

An equally exciting component of the Congress will be the post-congress field visits to KALRO Seed in Kandara and KALRO Tigoni that will be held on 19th March 2027.

These visits will provide delegates with an immersive learning experience beyond the conference venue.



AfSTA Secretary General Dr Yacouba Diallo (Middle) with the KALRO team

Participants will have the opportunity to observe ongoing research programmes, seed production systems, breeding activities, technology demonstrations, and innovations that are shaping the future of Kenyan agriculture.

Field visits are an essential feature of international seed congresses because they bridge the gap between theory and practice. While conference sessions provide valuable insights through presentations and discussions, visiting research centres allows delegates to witness innovation in action.

For seed companies, field visits present opportunities to identify potential partnerships for variety licensing, seed multiplication, technology transfer, and collaborative research.

Researchers gain valuable feedback from industry players on market needs and commercialisation pathways, while policymakers and development partners obtain a firsthand appreciation of the investments and scientific work required to strengthen resilient seed systems.

The AfSTA Secretariat recently visited KALRO Tigoni to assess the facilities and jointly plan the post-congress programme.

The visit confirmed the institution's capacity to host delegates and provide meaningful learning experiences that showcase Kenya's achievements in agricultural research and seed innovation.

Through strategic collaborations with institutions such as KALRO, AfSTA is creating opportunities that strengthen research partnerships, accelerate innovation, promote knowledge exchange, and contribute to resilient, productive, and sustainable seed systems for the continent.

Delegates are encouraged to be part of this transformative experience and join the conversations, partnerships, and field experiences that will help shape the future of African agriculture.



Field Visit to KALRO Tigoni

Key Outcomes from AfSTA's Participation in the OECD Seed Schemes Annual Meetings

The OECD Seed Schemes are among the world's most respected international frameworks for seed certification, facilitating the production and trade of high-quality seed across participating countries.

With an increasing number of African countries implementing or seeking accession to the Schemes, AfSTA's participation in the OECD Seed Schemes Annual Meeting and Technical Working Group Sessions held from 15th to 19th June 2026 in Paris, France ensured that the interests and perspectives of Africa's private seed sector were represented while enabling the Association to monitor emerging developments relevant to the continent.

One of the dominant themes throughout the OECD meetings was the continued digitalisation of seed certification systems. Discussions focused on the development of the OECD Seed Hub, governance arrangements, financing mechanisms, and legal recognition of digital certification processes. Digital systems are increasingly recognised as powerful tools for improving traceability, reducing counterfeit seed, enhancing transparency, and lowering certification costs.

For Africa, where counterfeit seed continues to undermine farmer confidence and productivity, digital certification offers an opportunity to modernise seed regulatory systems while facilitating cross-border seed trade. AfSTA recognises the need to support member countries in understanding these systems and promoting their adoption across the continent.

Another important area of discussion was seed traceability and varietal purity. As international seed markets become more integrated, the ability to verify varietal identity and maintain traceability throughout the seed value chain has become increasingly important.

The OECD Technical Working Groups reviewed advances in traceability mechanisms and approaches for expressing varietal purity standards. These discussions are highly relevant to African seed systems, where challenges relating to seed authenticity, counterfeit products, and quality assurance remain significant.



Delegates at the OECD Seed Schemes Meeting

The meeting also highlighted growing international interest in the application of biochemical and molecular techniques (BMTs) for variety identification and seed quality assurance. Molecular markers are becoming indispensable tools for protecting plant breeders' rights, verifying varietal identity, resolving seed disputes, and improving certification systems.

Collaboration between OECD, ISTA, and UPOV is advancing harmonised approaches in this field. For Africa, this presents an opportunity to strengthen laboratory infrastructure and build technical expertise in molecular technologies as part of modern seed quality management.

Capacity building remained a central pillar of the discussions. The OECD Secretariat presented updates on initiatives such as the G7-OECD Project on Strengthening Seed Certification Capacity in Africa, currently supporting countries including Senegal, Burkina Faso, and Togo.

These programmes demonstrate the growing international commitment to strengthening seed certification systems across Africa and provide valuable opportunities for expanding technical support to additional countries.

On the sidelines of the OECD meetings, AfSTA convened a consultation meeting bringing together African delegates to identify common priorities and opportunities for collaboration.

Five strategic areas emerged where AfSTA can play a leading role: capacity building on OECD Seed Schemes implementation, harmonisation of seed certification procedures, technical support for countries pursuing OECD accession, promotion of digital certification and traceability systems, and coordination of African positions on international seed policy matters.

Participants strongly endorsed AfSTA as the continental platform for technical dialogue and cooperation among African countries participating in the OECD Seed Schemes.

Drawing on the mission outcomes, AfSTA has identified several strategic priorities for the coming years and remains committed to supporting member countries in achieving internationally recognised seed certification standards.

By AfSTA Technical Lead,
Kennedy Mangwana

Pamela Afokpe of East West Seed Honoured with Prestigious Norman Borlaug Award

Pamela Afokpe, a Beninese plant breeder and Regional Head of Product Development for Africa at East-West Seed, has been awarded the prestigious Norman Borlaug Award for Field Research and Application in recognition of her outstanding contributions to agricultural innovation and food security in Africa.

Named after Nobel Peace Prize laureate Dr Norman Borlaug, the award celebrates exceptional scientists under the age of 40 whose work has significantly improved agriculture and livelihoods through practical, field-based research. Afokpe's recognition highlights the growing importance of developing resilient, nutritious, and market-oriented indigenous African crops that have long been overlooked by the global seed industry.

For decades, research and investment in plant breeding have largely focused on globally traded staple crops, while many traditional African vegetables have received limited scientific attention despite their nutritional richness, climate resilience, and cultural significance. Determined to change this narrative, Afokpe dedicated the past eight years to unlocking the commercial and agricultural potential of indigenous West African leafy vegetables.

Her work centred on crops such as Gboma (*Solanum macrocarpon*), Amaranthus, and Corchorus (commonly known as jute mallow), which play an important role in the diets and livelihoods of millions of people across West Africa. Through innovative breeding techniques and extensive field research, she developed the groundbreaking "Sika Gboma" variety, marking a significant milestone in African vegetable breeding.

The Sika Gboma variety is the first commercial Gboma cultivar bred for tolerance to bacterial wilt, one of the most destructive diseases affecting production. In addition to improved disease resilience, the variety offers an extended shelf life, a feature that delivers substantial benefits to women who dominate vegetable trading in local markets.

Longer-lasting produce reduces post-harvest losses, improves marketability, and increases household incomes for small-scale traders and farming families.

The impact of Afokpe's work has been remarkable. Within just three years of its release, the Sika Gboma variety generated approximately 2,000 tonnes of commercial produce and reached between 10,000 and 40,000 smallholder farming families across West Africa. These achievements demonstrate how targeted plant breeding can strengthen food systems, enhance farmer resilience, and create new economic opportunities while preserving traditional crops that are deeply rooted in local food cultures.

Beyond the field, Afokpe's research has also influenced international agricultural policy.

Pamela has been awarded the prestigious Norman Borlaug Award

Her work has contributed to discussions within the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and informed the U.S. State Department's Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils (VACS) initiative, which advocates for greater investment in underutilised and climate-adapted crops capable of improving global nutrition and agricultural sustainability.

Pamela Afokpe's achievement represents more than a personal milestone; it is a powerful recognition of the value of African science, innovation, and indigenous crops in addressing some of the world's most pressing food security and climate challenges. Her success demonstrates that investing in locally adapted crops and empowering African plant breeders can transform agricultural systems while improving the livelihoods of thousands of smallholder farmers.

As Africa continues to strengthen its agricultural sector, Afokpe's work serves as an inspiring example of how scientific excellence, innovation, and a commitment to local communities can drive sustainable development and shape the future of food systems across the continent.



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Growing Better Cabbage: Why Seed Quality and Smart Choices Matter



Why Radio Works

East-West Seed, in collaboration with Farm Radio International, recently shared cabbage growing techniques through a radio drama series. Most smallholders work in fields during the day. Radio comes to them while they work, in their local language, often woven into a story that makes the information stick.

A drama about a farmer solving cabbage problems is more memorable than a technical bulletin. Radio is how information actually reaches the people who need it most. This is what we learned from those conversations, and what works on the ground:

Start with the Right Variety

Most hybrid cabbages mature in 75 to 90 days after transplanting. But you can find early types ready in 60 days, or late varieties that take 120 days. This matters because it affects your cash flow and your harvest windows. Early varieties let you get to market faster and plant multiple crops in a season. Late varieties are perfect for off-season production when buyers pay premium prices.

Hybrid varieties cost more than open-pollinated seeds, but here is why they are worth it. Buyers want uniform heads, all the same size, all harvested at once. Hybrids deliver that consistency. One acre needs 12,000 to 15,000 plants. Buy 150 to 200 grams of quality seed to account for germination losses and nursery failures. East-West Seed offers sizes from 5g right up to 100g, so you can match your planting scale.

Give seedlings 3 to 4 weeks in the nursery before transplanting. They are ready when they have 4 to 6 true leaves and stand about 10 to 15 centimetres tall. This patient approach prevents transplant shock and sets up strong plants.

Spacing matters more than you might think. Small-head varieties need 45 by 45 centimetres. Market-standard large heads need 60 by 60 centimetres, or 60 by 45 centimetres. Poor spacing kills airflow, which invites fungal diseases and rots.

Cabbage is thirsty. It needs 2 to 3 irrigations per week, depending on soil and weather. Inconsistent watering creates two problems: stressed plants that never reach full size and head cracking at harvest that ruins your crop. Always water at soil level, never overhead. Wet leaves sitting there for hours invite disease.

The diamondback moth is the pest that keeps cabbage farmers awake at night. Here's the smart way to handle it: scout your field twice a week. If you see pests, spray. If you don't see them, don't spray. This simple rule saves money and prevents the moth from developing resistance to your chemicals.

Use Integrated Pest Management. Rotate away from other brassicas like kale and broccoli. Set up pheromone traps to catch the problem early.

Cabbage is a staple. People buy it year-round, but demand peaks during school terms and the dry season when rainfall drops. If you manage water and pests well, you can harvest during these gaps and get premium prices.

Technical knowledge means nothing if it doesn't reach farmers. Radio drama proved effective because it met farmers where they are: in fields, in local languages, at times they are actually listening. The cabbage principles shared through radio aren't complicated, but they need to be heard and remembered.

With 12,000 heads per acre from a well-managed field, cabbage is genuinely profitable.

By Maya Muller, East West Seed

Consultation On Advancing the Integration of Neglected and Underutilised Crop Species



AfSTA at The Regional Consultation on Opportunity Crops

Accra, Ghana: The Regional Consultation on Opportunity Crops in Africa took place from June 9-11, bringing together policymakers, researchers, development partners, farmer organisations, private-sector representatives, civil society and regional institutions to chart a new course for Africa's food systems by promoting neglected and underutilised indigenous crops.

The three-day meeting was organised by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) in collaboration with the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA). The African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA), represented by its Secretary General, Dr Yacouba Diallo, participated in the high-level consultation alongside key stakeholders from across the continent.

The consultation focused on advancing the integration of neglected and underutilised crop species, now increasingly referred to as opportunity crops, into national and regional food systems. These include crops such as millets, sorghum landraces, fonio, bambara groundnut, indigenous vegetables and numerous other traditional species that have sustained African communities for generations but have received limited attention from research institutions, policymakers and commercial markets.

Although these crops are deeply embedded in Africa's agricultural heritage and food cultures, they remain under-researched, under-invested and inadequately represented within formal seed systems, food value chains, agricultural research programmes and policy frameworks.

Organisers believe that unlocking their potential could significantly contribute to building more resilient, nutritious and sustainable agrifood systems across the continent.

The consultation comes at a critical time for Africa, where food insecurity, climate change and environmental degradation continue to threaten livelihoods and economic development.

According to the conference concept note, approximately one in every five people in Africa experienced hunger in 2024, while more than one billion people across the continent were unable to afford a healthy diet. These challenges are compounded by rapid urbanisation, biodiversity loss and increasing dependence on imported food commodities.

Beyond nutrition, these crops offer significant economic opportunities for smallholder farmers, women and youth by creating new value chains and expanding market opportunities. Their cultivation also supports climate adaptation, biodiversity conservation and the preservation of indigenous knowledge systems that have guided African agriculture for centuries.

For AFSTA, participation in the consultation reflects the critical role of the seed sector in unlocking the potential of opportunity crops. Strong seed systems are essential for ensuring that farmers have access to high-quality seed of improved and locally adapted varieties.

Expanding investment in seed production, certification, distribution and innovation will be fundamental to increasing production while maintaining the valuable genetic diversity of these crops. **Photo courtesy of FARA**

By Lindah Mbaisi, AfSTA Communications

Building Africa's Biotechnology Future: AfSTA and AATF Strategic Collaboration



Accelerating Agricultural Innovation

The African Seed Trade Association (AfSTA) is deepening its strategic partnership with the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) following a high-level courtesy visit by the AfSTA Secretariat to AATF headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, in June 2026.

As a valued member of AfSTA, AATF plays a pivotal role in developing, facilitating access to, and promoting innovative agricultural technologies that improve crop productivity, strengthen resilience to climate change, and enhance food and nutrition security across Africa.

The discussions reaffirmed the shared commitment of both organisations to ensuring that scientific innovations translate into tangible benefits for African farmers through strong, efficient, and sustainable seed systems. Further, a shared vision is to expand farmers' access to improved agricultural technologies by fostering stronger collaboration between research institutions, the private seed sector, policymakers, and development partners.

Both AfSTA and AATF recognise that successful technology deployment depends not only on scientific breakthroughs but also on enabling policy environments, effective seed systems, and coordinated engagement among stakeholders across the agricultural value chain.

It is important to bridge the gap between research and commercial application. By connecting innovation, policy, and the private seed sector, AfSTA and AATF aim to ensure that improved crop varieties and other agricultural technologies reach farmers efficiently and at scale, contributing to increased agricultural productivity and greater resilience in the face of climate change.

A key area of collaboration will be leveraging AfSTA's extensive network of national seed trade associations and seed companies to accelerate the dissemination and adoption of AATF-developed technologies across Africa. This partnership is expected to enhance awareness, increase technology uptake, and support the delivery of quality seed to farming communities.

Recognising the growing importance of innovation in addressing Africa's agricultural challenges, the two organisations also explored opportunities to advance modern biotechnology and other science-based solutions that can contribute to climate-resilient agriculture. They further discussed the development of joint knowledge management initiatives to improve access to credible, science-based information and strengthen awareness of emerging agricultural technologies among stakeholders.

The meeting reaffirmed the complementary roles of AfSTA and AATF in driving agricultural transformation. While AATF continues to facilitate the development and deployment of innovative agricultural technologies, AfSTA provides a strong platform for connecting the seed industry across the continent, promoting policy dialogue, strengthening seed systems, and facilitating the movement of improved seed to farmers.

In Photo:
AfSTA Secretary General, Dr
Yacouba Diallo and Dr Canicius
Kanangire, Executive Director, AATF

AfSTA Member Spotlight

Burkina Faso Advances Digital Seed Access with Launch of Sima-Yaar Platform at Third Certified Improved Seed Fair

Burkina Faso has taken another significant step towards strengthening its seed sector following the successful hosting of the 3rd Certified Improved Seed Fair in Ouagadougou by the **National Union of Seed Producers' Cooperatives of Burkina (UNPS-B)**, a member of the African Seed Trade Association (AfSTA).

A key highlight of this year's event was the official launch of Sima-Yaar, an innovative digital seed sales platform developed to improve the marketing and distribution of certified seed across the country. The platform marks an important milestone in the digital transformation of Burkina Faso's seed system by connecting seed producers directly with buyers through an accessible online marketplace.

Sima-Yaar is expected to address some of the longstanding challenges facing the seed sector, including limited market visibility, difficulties in connecting producers with customers, and inadequate access to quality certified seed. By providing a digital marketplace, the platform enables farmers, agro-dealers and institutional buyers to identify available seed varieties, connect with certified producers, and make informed purchasing decisions more efficiently.



The initiative also offers seed enterprises new opportunities to expand their customer base, improve sales, and increase the visibility of their certified products. Through greater transparency and easier access to market information, the platform is expected to contribute to a more efficient and competitive seed market while promoting trust among buyers and sellers.

Improving farmers' access to certified improved seed remains one of the most effective ways of increasing agricultural productivity and strengthening resilience to climate change. High-quality seed forms the foundation of successful crop production, enabling farmers to achieve better yields, improve crop performance and enhance food security.

Digital innovations such as Sima-Yaar therefore represent an important tool for accelerating the adoption of improved seed varieties and supporting sustainable agricultural development.

As African seed systems continue to evolve, digital solutions are increasingly becoming critical drivers of efficiency, transparency and market growth. Platforms such as Sima-Yaar demonstrate how technology can strengthen seed value chains by improving information sharing, expanding market opportunities and making certified seed more accessible to farmers.

The African Seed Trade Association (AfSTA) congratulates UNPS-B on launching the Sima-Yaar platform. This achievement reflects the growing commitment within Africa's seed sector.



USTA Champions Digital Tracking System to Help Farmers to Identify Fake Seeds



Advancing the Protection of New Plant Varieties in Africa

The Uganda Seed Trade Association (USTA) is leading efforts to combat counterfeit seeds through the rollout of the Seed Tracking and Traceability System (STTS), an innovative digital platform designed to help farmers verify the authenticity of certified seed before planting.

The initiative is expected to strengthen confidence in Uganda's seed sector while protecting farmers from significant yield losses caused by fake seed. The STTS provides an end-to-end digital solution that tracks certified seed from production through processing and distribution to the farmer.

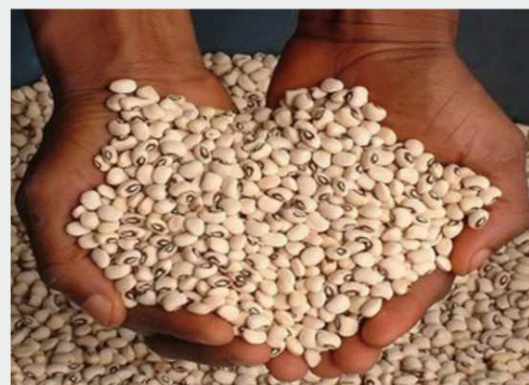
Each certified seed package carries a unique verification number, allowing farmers to confirm its authenticity by dialling a USSD short code on any mobile phone without requiring internet access. The system instantly verifies whether the seed is genuine and traceable within Uganda's national seed system.

According to USTA, counterfeit seed remains one of the biggest challenges facing the agricultural sector, with an estimated 30 to 40 per cent of seed on the Ugandan market believed to be fake. The problem costs African farmers hundreds of millions of dollars annually through poor germination, low yields, and lost incomes.

By introducing the STTS, USTA aims to empower farmers to make informed purchasing decisions while safeguarding the investments made by legitimate seed companies.

The digital platform was developed by Uganda's National Seed Certification Service under the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, with financial and technical support from AGRA and in collaboration with the Uganda Seed Trade Association (USTA). Through its support, AGRA has contributed to strengthening Uganda's seed certification and traceability systems, helping protect farmers from counterfeit seed while promoting confidence in the formal seed sector.

By combining digital innovation with farmer education and stronger regulatory enforcement, USTA is setting a new standard for seed quality assurance. The STTS represents a significant step toward building a transparent, trusted, and resilient seed system that enhances agricultural productivity and food security across Uganda.



Digital traceability is not just about technology; it is about safeguarding farmers' investments, improving productivity, and strengthening food security.

By Lindah Mbaisi, AfSTA Communications

SANSOR Strengthens Seed Sector Preparedness Through National Plant Pest Outbreak Simulation

The South African National Seed Organisation (SANSOR) recently participated in the National Plant Pest Outbreak Simulation Exercise held at the University of Pretoria, reaffirming its commitment to strengthening plant health, biosecurity, and the resilience of South Africa's seed sector.

The simulation exercise was hosted by the National Biosecurity Hub in collaboration with South Africa's National Department of Agriculture and the Agricultural Research Council (ARC). It brought together government agencies, researchers, industry representatives, and technical experts to test the country's preparedness and response mechanisms for potential plant pest outbreaks.

The exercise focused on key aspects of outbreak management, including rapid and coordinated emergency response, early detection and accurate identification of plant pests, strengthening field surveillance systems, implementing appropriate biosecurity and trade measures, and enhancing preparedness across the grains and seed industries.

As the leading representative body for South Africa's seed industry, SANSOR's participation ensures that the seed sector remains an integral part of national biosecurity planning and emergency response efforts.

The organisation plays a critical role in representing the interests of seed companies while promoting collaboration between industry, government, and research institutions to safeguard agricultural production.

Participation in simulation exercises such as this offers significant benefits to the seed sector. It helps protect seed production systems from emerging pest threats, improves coordination between public and private sector stakeholders during emergencies, safeguards farmer livelihoods and agricultural productivity, and contributes to stronger, more resilient seed systems.

In addition, effective plant health preparedness supports South Africa's ability to maintain confidence in its seed exports and preserve access to regional and international markets.



Dr Miekie Human,
Science and Policy Manager at SANSOR

SANSOR's engagement reflects the growing importance of proactive biosecurity measures in protecting agricultural value chains from increasingly complex pest risks driven by global trade and climate change.

AFSTA encourages National Seed Trade Associations across Africa to actively participate in similar national biosecurity initiatives. Such collaborative platforms strengthen preparedness, build institutional capacity, and contribute to resilient seed systems that support sustainable agricultural growth, food security, and regional trade.

The simulation exercise was hosted by the National Biosecurity Hub in collaboration with South Africa's National Department of Agriculture and the Agricultural Research Council (ARC).



Photo Credit: National Department of Agriculture

Spotlight on the National Inter-professional Federation of Seeds and Plants, Morocco

The National Inter-professional Federation for Seeds and Plants (FNIS), established in 2009, brings together private and public sector operators involved in the production, certification, packaging, storage and marketing of seeds and plants in Morocco.

FNIS Mandate:

- To represent and defend the interests of the seed sector in dealings with public authorities and national and international partners.
- To contribute to the development of national policies and strategies relating to seeds, seedlings and plant variety protection (PVP).
- To promote the use of certified, high-quality seeds to improve national agricultural productivity.
- Encourage investment in variety research and seed innovation.
- Promote the expertise and skills of Moroccan seed operators

The FNIS maintains cooperative and consultative relationships with all public and private institutions operating in the Moroccan agricultural sector, primarily the ministries responsible for agriculture, the National Office for Food Safety (ONSSA), which is responsible for variety certification, the accreditation of operators and the protection of plant varieties, as well as research institutes and agricultural education establishments.

The FNIS has developed strategic partnerships with the world's leading organisations in the seed sector; it is a member of the ISF and AfSTA and maintains regular contact with UPOV, ISTA, the OECD, the FAO and other partners (SEMAE France, Euroseeds).

The National Inter-professional Federation for Seeds and Plants (FNIS) was established in 2009.



الفيدرالية الوطنية البيمهنية للبذور والشتاتل
Fédération Nationale Interprofessionnelle
des Semences et Plants

The FNIS is active across the entire spectrum of crop species grown in Morocco, covering field crops as well as vegetable, fruit and industrial crops. It comprises all professional stakeholders in Morocco's seed value chain. It is organised into several categories of members representing the various links in the sector:

Member Categories	Description & Role Within the Sector
Basic seed producers	Public and private organisations producing foundation seed (pre-basic and basic) from certified varieties.
Certified seed multipliers	Approved farmers and companies producing certified seeds (C1 and C2) for farmers.
Packagers	Companies specialising in the cleaning, sorting, processing and packaging of seeds.
Distributors and Traders	Marketers, wholesalers and retailers specialising in seeds and plants.
Breeders and Selectors	Companies and research institutions developing new varieties protected by plant breeders' rights (COV/DPV).
Importers and Exporters	Companies involved in the international trade in seeds and propagating material.

Upcoming Consortia Workshops



AVBC
ANNUAL
Workshop

8-10 SEPTEMBER 2026
COTONOU, BENIN

REGISTER:

www.afsta.org

The African Vegetable Breeding Consortium (AVBC) will host its annual workshop from 8 to 10 September in Benin.

The workshop provides a valuable platform to share the latest research and breeding advancements, strengthen partnerships across the vegetable seed sector, explore solutions to improve vegetable productivity, resilience, and nutrition and connect with experts shaping the future of vegetable breeding in Africa.



ACLBC
ANNUAL
Workshop

28-29 SEPTEMBER 2026
KADUNA, NIGERIA

The African Cereal and Legume Breeding Consortium

www.afsta.org

Join leading stakeholders in cereal and legume breeding at the African Cereal and Legumes Breeding Consortium (ACLBC) Annual Workshop, to be held on September 28th - 29th in Kaduna, Nigeria.

This is an opportunity to learn, showcase innovations, and strengthen collaboration to advance resilient and productive cereal and legume breeding across Africa.

Stay tuned for updates on registration.

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.

Upcoming Events:

- **Africa Cereal and Legumes Breeding Consortium (ACLBC) Annual Workshop:** August, Kaduna, Nigeria
- **Seed Business Convention, Melbourne, Australia, 18 - 20 August 2026**
- **Africa Food Systems Forum** from 1-5 September in Kigali, Rwanda
- **Africa Vegetable Breeding Consortium (AVBC) Annual Workshop,** 8-11 September, Cotonou, Benin
- **AMCHAM Business Summit, 9-10 September, Nairobi, Kenya**
- **The 2nd India- Africa Seed Summit 2026, 10-12 September, Hyderabad, India**
- **West Africa Agri Show, 29-30 September, Ghana**
- **Inaugural Africa Seed Summit 5- 7 October 2026, Eswatini, Mbabane**
- **Euroseeds 2026 Congress, 25 to 28 October, Valencia, Spain**
- **Seed Trade Association of Kenya (STAK) Congress: 4-5 November 2026, Nairobi, Kenya**
- **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: 31 December 2026

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

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