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**NEWS FROM THE SEED TRADE
ASSOCIATION OF MOROCCO (AMSP)**

Morocco is essentially an agricultural country though only 21% of the total surface is under farming. The production is very dependent on climatic risks. The main productions are cereals, Irish potato, olive trees, grapevines, date palms, and sugar beet. It produces a lot of citrus fruits (1,275,000 tons of which 940,000 tons are oranges, ranked 11th in the world) destined mainly for export with winter vegetables.

Seed activity in Morocco started in the 1920's. It has been developed and the country was for some time one of the main suppliers of improved seeds of food legumes, fodders, vegetables, etc. to the neighboring Mediterranean countries. During the decades of 70's and 80's, the heavy intervention of the Government substantially boosted national seed production especially cereals, of which commercialization was liberalized by the end of the 80's.

Currently, annual national certified seed production is on average 70,000 tons and essentially cereals (wheat and barley) representing 97% of this quantity. For the other species, Morocco imports certified seeds from Europe, USA and Australia. Exports concern especially standard seeds of pulse and green peas. Both Agronomic Research National Institute (INRA) and international companies represented in Morocco undertake plant breeding. The Moroccan official catalog has more than 1,800 varieties well adapted to various production regions of which 90% belong to the private sector.

Morocco has a seed legislation well adapted and regulations complying with the international regulations (ISTA, OECD, and EU). There is also a Plant Variety Protection Law in Morocco which came into force in 2002. This Law is aimed at making Moroccan Agriculture benefit from new technologies for variety creation, favoring access of Moroccan Agricultural products to export market and improving its competitiveness, complying with the economic international requirements and respecting the agreements in the World Trade Organization signed in Marrakech.

Commercialization of certified seed is done by the accredited establishments through an important distribution network. Most of these accredited establishments are members of the Moroccan Seed Association (AMSP) created in 1991 to organize the Moroccan seed sector in order to attain the objectives of quality and productivity from the producers to the end users.

The use of certified seed in Morocco remains relatively low except for sugar beets and vegetables (see table below).

Crops	Areas sown (in 1000 ha)	Utilisation Rate (in %)
Cereals	4,748	11
Spring Cereals	407	10
Food legumes	420	3
Fodders	360	10
Oilseeds	120	10
Irish Potato	56	30
Sugar Beet	65	100
Vegetables	174	65

Members of Moroccan Seed Trade Association have prepared for hosting the 8th AFSTA annual congress 2008, which would be held in the town of Marrakech located at the southern part of Morocco and approximately 200 km from the town of Casablanca. They will have the pleasure of receiving all the seed people in a friendly atmosphere in this beautiful town.

By Mr. Mohammed Saïdi, Executive Secretary of AMSP

CHALLENGES OF PLANT VARIETY PROTECTION IN AFRICA

Plant Variety Protection (PVP) is a form of intellectual property that gives a breeder of new plant variety exclusive rights to exploit the new variety for a limited period in order for the breeder to recoup some of the investments in research to produce the new variety. Most agricultural systems in Africa have, for a long time, depended on crop varieties bred by public sector research institutions. Information on such varieties is then passed on to farmers through massive national agricultural extension networks. Seed distribution in such cases, is done through public seed enterprises, using seed agents/distributors/stockist or through Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's). Such a seed system has created dependence, whereby the farmers may falsely believe that it is solely the duty of governments to avail new varieties to farmers, even at subsidized rates, and this in turn, has made most African farmers to view plant variety protection as an alien concept and as a ploy by multinational seed companies to exploit the farmers and to "own" what belongs to them.

The situation is fast changing and several African countries have liberalized or are in the process of liberalizing their seed industries. Liberalization has brought with it more private sector players in the seed industry and this in turn has resulted in more plant varieties being released by private breeders. With more private industry participation in variety development, there has also arisen a need for African governments to introduce PVP to support technology developers so that those wishing to go high-tech may have access to technology for which they may pay a royalty.

Why has Africa been slow in adopting PVP?

One of the reasons for slow adoption of plant variety protection in Africa lies in the fact that most farmers in the continent are poor and have not taken up agriculture as a business. Any policy change that may ultimately increase seed prices is therefore resisted and if such resistance received political sympathy, then PVP becomes an easy casualty.

It is noteworthy that in countries where farmers have taken up farming as a business e.g. in production of cut-flowers for the EU markets, such farmers usually pay royalties for improved cultivars. This in turn has forced governments to encompass PVP legislation to support growth in such a sector.

Such was the case in Kenya, where the country was forced to accede to the UPOV 1978 Convention in 1999 to facilitate the rapid growth in the horticultural sector which has over the last three years, overtaken tea as the most important foreign exchange earner in the country. Technology developers will only avail their superior cultivars if such technology is paid for.

What is AFSTA position on PVP?

Article 27.3 (b) of World Trade Organization's TRIPS Agreement of 1994 provides for the "... protection of plant varieties either by patents or by an effective *sui generis* system or by a combination thereof". Most African countries do not support patenting of life forms as they consider this God-given. AFSTA members took a position on Intellectual Property Rights during their Annual General Assembly, held in Yaoundé, Cameroon on 18th March 2005, during which the Assembly agreed among other things on:

- Development of a suitable *sui generis* system with novelty, distinctness, uniformity, stability and suitable denomination as pre-requisites for grant of protection. (This is in conformity with the PVP requirements in the UPOV 1991 Convention).
- Use of farm-saved seed within reasonable limits and subject to the safeguarding of the legitimate interests of the breeder

- Commercially available plant variety protected by PVP contains patented traits, it should remain freely available for further breeding in accordance with the breeder's exception provided for in the UPOV or UPOV-like PVP systems
- Upholding the principle of essential derivation

During its General Assembly in Cairo in March 2001, AFSTA had resolved that the African Union's Model Law on plant variety protection is not compliant with Trips Agreement as some of its elements do not encourage breeding and thus seed industry development and food security.

It is important that Africa is not left behind in adoption of technology as happened during the Green Revolution in the 1970's and that farmers should be encouraged to take up farming as a business and for the farmers to gain access to improved varieties through a system that encourages breeders to also benefit from their breeding and to encourage further breeding.

Update on variety release in East Africa

The countries of East Africa have agreed on common procedures for variety evaluation and release. This has led government and regulatory offices to hold more frequent variety release committee meetings, resulting in several varieties being released particularly by private sector breeders. In Kenya for example, 14 varieties of maize suited to various agro-ecological zones were released by Kenya's Minister for Agriculture, Hon. Kipruto Arap Kirwa on 30th May 2006. Thirteen of these varieties were from four private seed companies i.e. Western Seed Co. (7); Agri Seed Co. (3); Pioneer Seed Co (2); Pannar Seed Co. (1). Only one variety, with tolerance to *Striga* weed, was from public sector (Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI)/CIMMYT).

Regional Variety List has been published for East Africa, and this led to official gazetting of the National Variety List in January 2006 for the first time for Kenya.

By Mr. Obongo Nyachae, Chairman, AFSTA Harmonization Committee

FIRST WORKSHOP ON FOUNDATION SEED ENTERPRISE



Participants in the workshop for business plan writing in Bamako, Mali from 8th to 12th May 2006

The workshop on the promotion of Foundation Seed Enterprise in the 9 francophone countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, and Senegal) in Sub-Saharan Africa was held at Grand Hotel, Bamako, Mali from 8th to 12th May 2006. The General Director of the Institute of Rural Economy, representing the Minister of Agriculture of Mali, presided over the opening ceremony. Each country was represented by one representative of the National Agricultural Research Institute, one representative of the National Seed Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, and one representative of the private sector (National Seed Association).

The objectives of the workshop were:

- To understand the concept of the Foundation Seed Enterprise and its environments in order to conduct a wider consultation with the seed stakeholders in each country;
- To provide participants with the basic tools to write a business plan in order to support the Regional Seed Alliance in West Africa;
- To strengthen partnership between agricultural research, national seed service, and private seed sector with a view to harmonizing actions to set up the Foundation Seed Enterprise;
- To create a communication network among the nine participating countries to develop and reinforce cooperation in seed matters.

At the end of the workshop, the participants expressed their willingness to initiate the Foundation Seed Enterprise (FSE) while

expressing challenges that this initiative and its practical implementation in each country should face.

To do so, the participants agreed on:

- Allowing for the importance of improved seeds to ensure the increase of agricultural productivity on which livelihoods of farmers forming 60 to 70 % of our population depend, with a view to achieve food security;
- Allowing for the national seed systems that need to be improved especially in the area of commercial seed supply in comparison with other regions in Africa and in the world;
- Considering that the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) efficiently contributes to the emergence and the empowerment of private seed sector in the seed industry, which is vital for agricultural development in Africa;
- Convinced that this workshop is one of the rare workshops organized at regional level where public and private seed actors met for fruitful discussions with a view to setting up a Foundation Seed Enterprise in each participating country, with the support of all the actors of the seed systems;
- Considering the on-going harmonization process of seed certification and seed quality control as well as common regional catalogue in Africa in general and in West Africa in particular under the aegis of ECOWAS, WAEMU, and CILSS;
- Considering the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the adoption by the Heads of African States in 2003 of the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) and its fourth pillar on agricultural research and technology dissemination, and the declaration on seed of the summit of the Heads of States of the African Union held in 2005;
- Being aware of the consequences of the absence of quality seed on the diminution of crop productivities, the decrease of farmers' revenue and food insecurity;

The workshop recommended that:

- A national consultation takes place in which all the seed stakeholders of each country actively participate with a view to defining and

understanding the principle and the functioning mechanism of the Foundation Seed Enterprise;

- Each country develops an appropriate strategy understood by all the seed stakeholders to set up the Foundation Seed Enterprise within four months with the technical assistance of AFSTA and in partnership with SCOSA (Sustainable Commercialization of Seed in Africa) and WASNET (West African Seed and Planting Material Network);
- Each country writes a business plan for the Foundation Seed Enterprise, which will be presented, discussed and validated during a second regional workshop that will take place within four months.

The second follow-up workshop will be held in Dakar, Senegal from 11th to 15th September 2006 during which the Business plan for each country will be finalized.

In West Africa the business plan training is being done in support of the Seed Industry Alliance being supported by USAID, which is aimed at promoting viable seed enterprises in West Africa.

Final Communiqué of the workshop adopted by the participants

BIRTH OF NATIONAL SEED ASSOCIATION OF IVORY COAST

Being aware of the fact that the economy of Ivory Coast is based on agriculture, various governments have given particular importance to seeds since independence. However, the production and use of improved seeds remain low. The private seed sector realized that they should play a crucial role to improve agricultural productivity by increasing the use of improved seeds. To be more efficient, Ivorian seed people took the initiative to set up a national seed association to be a platform of discussion and exchange of views in order to define, in partnership with the public seed sector, a general strategy to create an enabling environment that will allow them to work appropriately. This association, which regroups all the seed actors, will be therefore the interlocutor for the other partners such as seed service, farmers, international and regional organizations, etc.

The association is created at the right time to help the harmonization process of seed policy

and regulations initiated by West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) in the sub-region. It will closely collaborate with the public sector to implement the technical standards adopted by the sub-region. Indeed, during the meeting of seed people, a report on the status of the harmonization of standards for seed production and variety release was done. Likewise, representatives of Ivory Coast who participated in the workshop on the setting up of Foundation Seed Enterprise in 9 francophone countries (including Ivory Coast), which was held in Bamako, Mali from 8th to 12th May 2006 reported the outcome and the way forward with a view to informing all the seed stakeholders.

The opening ceremony was held on 22nd June in which about sixty seed people participated and was graced by the Director of food production and diversification, M. Apia Edmond N'dri, representing the Minister for Agriculture. The coordinator of West African Seed and Plantation Material Network (WASNET), M. Norbert Maroya and the Secretary General of the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA), M. Justin Rakotoarisaona attended the workshop. After the speech of M. Babany Coulibaly, Interim President of the association, who explained the mission and objectives of the association, the Secretary General of AFSTA and the coordinator of WASNET stressed on the necessity of having seed association to defend the interests of the seed industry and to work in partnership with all the seed stakeholders. The representative of the Minister for Agriculture also insisted on the importance of quality seed for a sustainable production before opening the workshop.

M. Justin Rakotoarisaona stated the key elements for the good functioning of seed association and gave practical advice for its management. For instance, he insisted that the association should consider as a priority the establishment of a Secretariat, which is crucial for the success of the associations according to the experiences in the other countries. This workshop was an opportunity for seed people to ask questions about AFSTA in general and about seed associations in the other African countries in particular that he responded to satisfactorily.

The articles of the association were adopted and the Board composed by 9 members chaired by Mr. Babany Coulibaly, Commercial Director of "Semivoir" was elected.

The association is planning to join AFSTA to receive information on seeds and to actively participate in AFSTA activities. One of its members, FLEOCI, offered an office to accommodate the future Secretariat of the association. The workshop was funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France through the African Seed Trade Association. The Secretary General of AFSTA thanked the French support to the African seed industry during his opening speech. *By Mr. Jean Essé Kouadio, Under-Director for seeds and inputs, Ministry of Agriculture*

Upcoming events:

- **11th to 15th September 2006:** Second AFSTA workshop on business plan writing for seed representatives from francophone African countries in West Africa Dakar, Senegal.
- **25th to 29th September 2006:** First AFSTA workshop on business plan writing for seed representatives from Anglophone countries, Nairobi, Kenya.
- **17th to 18th October 2006:** AFSTA training on Advocacy and communication, Nairobi, Kenya.
- **19th to 20th October 2006:** AFSTA Board meeting, Nairobi, Kenya.
- **13th to 16th November 2006:** APSA congress, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Editorial team:

- *Justin Rakotoarisaona, AFSTA Secretary-General*
- *Susan Miyengi, Personnel Assistant of AFSTA*

Disclaimer:

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The African Seed Trade Association
Postal address: P.O Box 2428 – KNH Nairobi – Kenya
Tel: (+254 – 20) - 272 7860 / 272 7853
Fax: (+254 – 20) – 272 7861
E-mail: afsta@afsta.org
Website: www.afsta.org