



## AFSTA CONGRESS 2015 ENDS WITH POMP AND PAGEANTRY

By Aghan Daniel

It was song and dance the African way at the Elephant Hills Resort as curtains fell on the 15<sup>th</sup> African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) Congress. Yes, as Oliver Mutukudzi, the African star singer belted out his best tunes, all the delegates stood up and danced the evening, perhaps as a reminder to them all the mission – of hearing voices of African seed traders – had been achieved.

Held in the scenic town of Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, on 3 – 5 March 2015, the Congress, to say the least, another milestone for the African Seed Industry. It brought together 327 delegates from 19 African and 20 European, Asian and North American countries. And once again, perhaps to a new high, the event lived up to its billing of providing a platform for great interactions and networking for the good of the seed industry.

The congress took place against the background of a sterling performance of AFSTA and its affiliate NSTAs over 15 years and the milieu of awakening of Africa as new food basket for the world, quality seeds being a primary input for food production.

In his official opening speech the Zimbabwean Minister of Agriculture, Mechanization and Irrigation Development, Dr Joseph Made, stated that “the government appreciated the tremendous role that AFSTA plays in enhancing efforts to assure the continent of food security and fighting the scourge of hunger and diseases through the provision and promotion of trade in improved quality seed in Africa.”

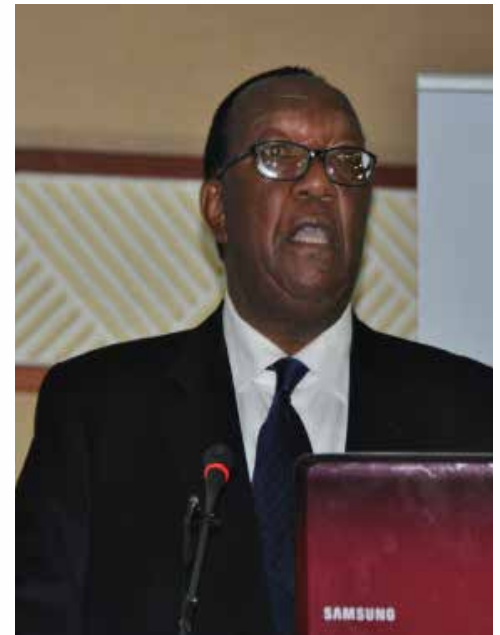
Fighting disease and hunger in Africa, he added required that AFSTA, and through forums such as the Congress, also critically looked at how best the seed industry can improve access

to affordable and reliable supply of high quality seeds; as well as promoting an increase in the number of profit making indigenous seed companies so that we ensure that the seeds that offered to farmers are suitable and relevant to their farming environments.

The AFSTA President, Mr. Nicholas Goble, during his opening speech, noted that huge opportunities exist for expanding agriculture and boosting employment as well as foreign currency earnings in Africa. He added that AFSTA has a big and important role to play in this pursuit. He encouraged the delegates to recognize that together with AFSTA, they are one critical link in a chain where every link must be strong if the greater good is to be achieved.

The congress was preceded by a half-day workshop which demonstrated areas of cooperation and how the International Seed Testing Association (ISTA), the Union for the Protection of New Plant Varieties (UPOV) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) work together to provide a framework for sustainable development of the seed sector.

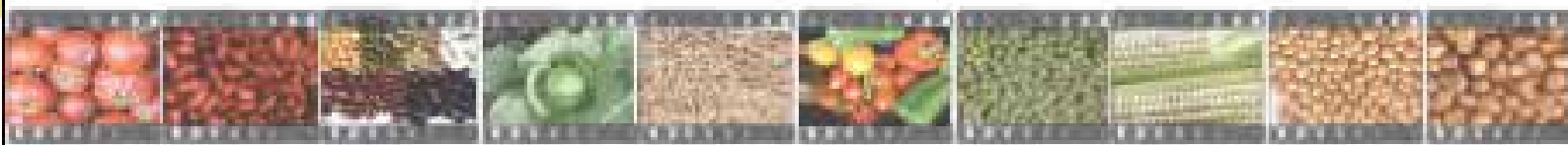
The congress discussed various important items for the African seed industry with a view to analyzing the current situation and charting out the way forward for the seed sector development. Some of the topics touched on use of new technologies for enhanced seed productivity; progress on the implementation of the harmonized seed regulations at the Regional Economic Communities level for the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)



Zimbabwean Minister of Agriculture, Mechanization and Irrigation Development, Dr Joseph Made making remarks during the official opening ceremony of the Congress

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## cont... AFSTA CONGRESS 2015 ENDS WITH POMP AND PAGEANTRY



Delegates follow keenly the proceedings of the 15<sup>th</sup> AFSTA Annual Congress at Elephant Hills Resort, Victoria Falls

and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). Others included comprehensive approach for the strengthening of the National Seed Trade Associations in Africa; the role of the African seed industry in making the African Green Revolution (AGRA) profitable by farmers and Proposal for automating seed import/export documentation to facilitate seed trade.

Two special interest groups on “Vegetables” and “Field Crops” also made presentations on the work they had done since being launched in 2013 in Mauritius. A colloquium on “Vegetables” was held and following topics were discussed - harnessing

the potential of vegetable seed industry in Africa – locally developed varieties vs. imported ones; What can be done to expedite

Agriculture Organization (FAO), Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA), West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (WECARD), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO).

Seed companies had many delegates visiting their exhibition booths and the trading rooms which witnessed a lot of activities.

The annual congress 2015 ended with a sentiment of general satisfaction in all its aspects. The delegates looked forward to the next congress 2016, which will be held in Nairobi, Kenya from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2016.

The traditional hand over of the AFSTA flag from Zimbabwe to Kenya represented by Mr. Walter Chigodora, Chairman of the National Organizing Committee of Congress 2015, took place and was led by the AFSTA Secretary General of AFSTA, Mr. Justin Rakotoarisaona and the Chairman of the Seed Trade Association of Kenya, Mr Azariah Soi.

commercialization of improved varieties and the role of agrodealers/ businesses in vegetable seed commercialization in sub-Saharan Africa and the critical linkages in sustainable seed supply.

Several representatives of regional and international seed organizations attended the congress 2015 namely International Seed Federation (ISF), Asia Pacific Seed Association (APSA), International Seed Testing Association (ISTA), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Union for the Protection of New Plant Varieties (UPOV), Food and



# CIMMYT SENDS OUT CALL FOR HAPLOID INDUCTION-DH LINE PRODUCTION IN KENYA

By Aghan Daniel

**T**he Maize Doubled Haploid Facility for Africa in Kenya is inviting interested indenter-parties from the public (National Agricultural Research Systems) and private sectors (Small and Medium Enterprises) of the Sub-Saharan African region to participate into the 2015-2016 Haploid Induction-DH line production in Kenya.

In an interview with E-Review, the in charge of the Centre, Mr Sotero Bumagat, said that all countries in sub-Saharan Africa are eligible to apply except for those based in South African and Equatorial Guinea adding that only Agricultural Research Council of South Africa is eligible for DH service provision according to the terms of this Agreement).

He added that a total of no less than 100,000 DH lines production is earmarked from two (2) waves of submissions of a total of 824 source (donor) populations to the 2015 haploid induction. The first wave, totaling 412 source populations has to be planted in two batches. The first batch of 412 populations has to be planted in May 2015; the second batch of 412 should be on the ground by August 2015. DH lines deliveries from this first wave spreads from December 2015 through February 2016. Seed materials for first wave of induction must be received not later than February 28, 2015. The second wave of source population submission should be received by June 30, 2015 for August-September 2015 planting. DH line deliveries from this second wave are anticipated to spread from August through November 2016.

Allocation size (number of source populations per indenter) depends on the total count of indenters, adhering to the principle that the DH service should be extended to the widest spectrum of users as much as possible. Admission into the DH service program is limited and is on a first-come, first-served basis.

All populations submitted into the DH program are subjected to tests of the two maize lethal necrosis (MLN)-causing viruses [(maize chlorotic mottling virus (MCMV) and the sugar cane mosaic virus (SCMV)] during the quarantine period at arrival in Kenya.

Only populations free of any of the two viruses will be accepted into the DH program. Any population detected of the presence of any of the two viruses will be destroyed upon the joint notification by CIMMYT and the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS), he added.

Disqualified populations may be replaced with other populations, however, subjected to the same certification process. Likewise,

all DH lines generated from the program and are exported to other countries are subjected to MLN testing and certified free of the two viruses before these are released to their respective indenter-owners. All costs associated with testing and certification and shipping should be assumed by the indenter.

To produce a minimum of 100 DH lines per population [(equivalent to 1 DH Unit (DHU)] , indenter must submit 400 kernels for each population for induction, plus 30 kernels for MLN testing and retention for quality check (matching of the genetics of the submitted material) in the event of a contested outcome of the DH process. If an indenter desires 200 to 299 DH lines, he/she should indent for 2 DHU and submits 830 kernels.

He clarified that transgenic materials (GMOs) are strictly not accepted into the DH program.

For more clarifications and cost of the applications, please send an email to [S.Bumagat@cgiar.org](mailto:S.Bumagat@cgiar.org).



# SPECIALISTS DISCUSS GAINS MADE IN BIOTECH COMMUNICATION

By Brigitte Bitta

Delegates from 30 countries from around the world, attending an international Agri-biotech and Biosafety Communication conference in Nairobi have called on the Kenya Government to lift a 2-year ban on GMO imports. Addressing the delegates comprising of farmers, scientists, policy makers, private sector, the media and science communicators, the Principal Secretary in Kenya's Ministry of Industrialization and Enterprise Development, Dr. Wilson Songa emphasized the role of agricultural biotechnology in propelling the country towards prosperity. "To harness this potential the GMO import ban must be lifted," he said. In addition, he said that Kenya has adequate capacity to develop and ensure safety of GMO products. Members of Parliament present, called upon the government to release a report by a taskforce constituted after the ban by the ministry of health to look into the safety of GM foods.

The ABBC conference brought together organizations and networks involved in agri-biotech and biosafety communication across the world to take stock of the progress and dynamics of biotech communication over the past two decades. It was organized by ISAAA, African Agricultural Technology Foundation, National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation and partners.

One of the key lessons was that agri-biotech and biosafety communications must be simplified and messages delivered in appropriate languages for different stakeholders to make impact.



A group photo of the participants during the conference

The delegates came up with the Nairobi Declaration 2015, which reads as follows:

We, the participants of the International Conference on Agri-Biotechnology and Biosafety Communication, held on 12-14 April 2015 in Nairobi, representing the academic and research community, civil society, law makers and policy advisors, the media, farmers and other stakeholders drawn from 30 countries across the world, collectively issue the following statement resulting from this conference:

#### Whereas:

1. The world faces unique and particular food security challenges in future, as the human population increases towards a likely 9.6 billion by 2050 and climate change raises additional problems for agriculture in terms of water and temperature stress, increased disasters and extreme weather;
2. Some progress has been made in meeting the Millennium

Development Goals on extreme poverty, malnutrition, infant mortality and food security. Much work remains to be done to ensure that citizens of all countries enjoy the full opportunity of healthy and sustainable access to food;

3. Biotechnology and genetic engineering, while not being the only solution to these challenges, offers great potential in addressing many specific concerns in food production, including micro-nutrient deficiencies, productivity and yield gaps, pest and disease problems;
4. There exists an international scientific consensus that the "genetic modification" process itself does not raise any risks over conventional breeding approaches
5. The debate around genetically modified products continues and is often characterized by emotive and misleading information about purported



## CONT...BIOTECH SPECIALISTS MEET IN NAIROBI TO DISCUSS GAINS MADE IN BIOTECH COMMUNICATION

By Brigitte Bitta

- dangers that are not supported by any scientific evidence;
6. Highly restrictive policy and regulatory environments exist in parts of the world, greatly hampering the capacity of farmers to access innovations that will improve farm productivity, household incomes and food security;
- Hereby declare our commitment and determination:**
- i. To work collectively to improve the communications environment, including the use of the latest as well as traditional communication strategies to ensure effectiveness.
  - ii. To work inclusively, with all stakeholders, including those opposed to this technology, in an effort to build consensus and common understanding.
  - iii. To promote choice, so that farmers, consumers, and other end-users can make informed decisions that reflect their best interests .
  - iv. To address the concerns of people at all levels, to ensure the widest participation possible.
  - v. To demonstrate how agricultural production challenges can be tackled using biotechnology, and how it can directly contribute to food and nutrition security, poverty alleviation, job creation and sustainable economic development.
  - vi. To support credible scientists who are most trusted by the public and governments, to be effective communicators and to have a closer relationship with media and policymakers to ensure that scientifically-informed messages reach target audiences.
- In particular, we gratefully acknowledge the active participation of Members of the Kenya National Assembly (KNA), and many senior government representatives who participated in this conference, and welcome their invaluable inputs to ensure the current ban on importation and consumption of GM foods in Kenya is lifted.

## FARMERS IN TANZANIA FEAR MAIZE LOSSES COULD REACH CATASTROPHIC LEVELS

By Anthony Muchoki

Tanzania's farmers are facing the prospect of seeing their bumper harvest turn into a bumper post-harvest loss, unless urgent measures are taken.

The use of improved seeds, better management techniques and ideal climate conditions has given Tanzania's farmers a 'good year problem' more grain than market options and storage solutions.

The bumper harvest is a sign the Kilimo Kwanza initiative, which was launched by President Jakaya Kikwete in 2009, as a central pillar is achieving the country's Vision 2025.

Kilimo Kwanza (meaning Transforming Agriculture), has received significant investment from the government, donors, and private sector. This investment is paying off, with the production of staple crops such as maize, cassava and rice all increasing. While the initiative is starting to bear fruits, the lack of markets and access to adequate storage solutions could mean much of this fruit goes to waste.

The National Food Reserves Agency (NFRA) has capacity to buy 240,000 metric tons of grains (including maize and rice) and Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives Minister Christopher Chiza has admitted that the NFRA cannot afford buy all of the surplus maize and rice.

The MP for Kigoma North & Chairman of Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC), Hon Zitto Kabwe, has put the value of the surplus maize at \$470m and says that it is more than the combined value of cotton, tea, cashew and coffee exports. He has called on the government to do away with export permits, so that farmers can freely sell their produce abroad.

Despite Kenya, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) offering a ready market for the produce, the access to these markets remains problematic, with farmers' groups unable to exploit them on their own.



## cont... FARMERS IN TANZANIA FEAR MAIZE LOSSES COULD REACH CATASTROPHIC LEVELS

By Anthony Muchoki

During a recent media tour organized by Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) in the Southern highlands, farmers alleged that the few traders with export permits, were buying at exploitive prices.

"Farmers' groups lucky enough to have sold to NFRA even at low prices are better off. Those of us who have not managed have to depend on middlemen with export permits buying at below NFRA rates. If this continues I would rather plant trees on my land," said Danford Nyagawa of Mambegu village in Wanging'ombe district, who has been desperately trying to sell his 50 bags of maize that were not bought by NFRA.

Thanks to the surplus production, prices for maize have plummeted. According to Famine Early Warning Network, food prices are low in both unimodal and bimodal areas.

In Rukwa and Katavi a 100 kg bag of maize is now being sold at Tsh15,000 (\$9) from Tsh45,000 (\$27).

According to the Chairman of Ruvuma Farmers Association, Tito Mbilinyi, maize has started to rot, and if markets access continues to a problem, in the future farmers will only produce for self- consumption.

Reacting to the big harvests, lack of market access and inadequate warehousing, the Communication

Director for Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), Mrs. Sylvia Mwachuli, called for urgent steps to ensure Tanzania becomes a net exporter of food crops the country is best suited to producing.

"Tanzania faces an unprecedented opportunity in becoming regional net exporter of maize and allied products. The public and private sectors need to unite and use the opportunity to make a lasting improved economic prospects for smallholder farmers," Mwachuli said.

2014 saw the country have overwhelming maize harvests in breadbasket regions, and amidst limited access to markets and shortage of warehousing. This has left smallholder farmers to store their produce in improvised warehouses and open fields, exposing the produce to destruction unless bought out quickly.

Since 2007 AGRA had invested over USD45 million in support of the green revolution drive in the country, including support of introduction of new maize varieties by government owned research intuitions. Many other donors, including USAID, Bills and Melinda Gates Foundation, also some western governments have invested substation support to make Kilimo Kwanza work, for the good of the rural farmers.

According to veteran agriculturist, Dr Mary Mgonja, who is also AGRA Country Head in Tanzania, the good harvests could be attributed to the awakening of farmers into innovations and technology, thanks to the increased investments by the government, donors and private sector to agriculture.

"More farmers have adopted use of new varieties and also use fertilizers," she said adding that without smallholders farmers' efforts, the government and development partners support can easily go down the drain. "I salute our small holder maize farmers, more than ever they are doing a great job. We need to ensure there are no road blocks to their prosperity," she added.

In Tanzania household post harvest maize losses are in the range of 15-40 per cent, which often forces households to sell their maize immediately after harvest, when prices are usually at their lowest.

Source: AGRA website: <http://agra.org/media-centre/news/farmers-fear-maize-losses-could-reach-catastrophic-levels/>



## LOW USE OF IMPROVED SORGHUM HYBRID SEEDS STIFLES PRODUCTION OF CROPS

By Milliam Murigi

**S**orghum is one of the most important cereal crops in arid areas though largely underutilised. In Kenya, sorghum is grown in the drought-prone marginal agricultural areas of Eastern, Nyanza and Coast regions.

The crop—one of the orphan crops can be an alternative staple food in hunger-stricken areas and ensure food security in the drought-prone regions of the country. But despite its suitability in the semi-arid areas, the area under sorghum production is still low with minimal yields, especially in Eastern Kenya.

According to the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), the reason for low productivity of highly nutritious traditional crops such as sorghum is partly low use of improved hybrid seeds arising out of poor distribution systems. Also, farmers hardly use inputs because of low incomes.

“Eastern region is a rich agricultural area and productivity could be improved by use of locally available germplasm. In Kenya, 230,000 hectares are under sorghum but only 25 per cent of the total is under improved variety—not because there are no such seeds but because of lack of accessibility,” said Dr Erick Manyasa, a crop breeder at ICRISAT.

He said the organisation has come up with 38 varieties of hybrid sorghum which have been proven to be adaptable and more productive by 15 to 40 per cent compared to open-pollinated varieties. “We focus on what impacts growers most, such as water management, stress management and overall plant health for each region, and the results of that research are reflected in these new hybrids for 2015,” said.

Manyasa. He said the crop is well-adapted to the environment in Eastern, Nyanza and Coast regions and varieties have been developed for the major ecological zones, with fast-maturing varieties for low rainfall areas, and slower ones for the wetter parts.

“These hybrids will offer sorghum growers strong yield

potential, improved agronomic performance, a wide range of defensive trait packages and adaptability to both irrigated and dry land acres,” added the scientist.

“There is high demand for sorghum mainly in the brewing industry to replace barley, yet the amount produced by farmers is too low to satisfy the market demand. I would urge more farmers to embrace this farming not only for commercial but also for food security.” He said ICRISAT is giving the seed traders in Kenya hybrid parent seeds for free to multiply so that they can have enough for their customers.

Source: People Daily Newspaper

<http://mediamaxnetwork.co.ke/peopledaily/141833/orphan-crop-turns-saviour/>



Dr Erick Manyasa, a scientist examines a sorghum line in Kiboko, Kenya



# PICTURE SPEAK







## AFRICAN SEED MAGAZINE

AFSTA is sending out calls for articles for the second edition of its flagship magazine – the African Seed Magazine due in March 2016. The deadline for receiving the articles is October 30<sup>th</sup> 2015. Please send all your articles to our communication officer – Daniel Aghan – [daghan@afsta.org](mailto:daghan@afsta.org)

## AFSTA WEB ADVERTISEMENT

This is a reminder that AFSTA Secretariat is offering online an advertising opportunity for all AFSTA members on a first-come first-served basis as the advertisement slots are limited. Your logo will be placed at the top right hand side and will flash alternately as it currently the AFSTA website ([www.afsta.org](http://www.afsta.org))

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 a period of one year.

Contact : [charles@afsta.org](mailto:charles@afsta.org)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

1. ISF Congress 2015: 25-27 May 2015, Krakow, Poland
2. ASTA Congress 2015 : 17-20 June, 2015, Washington, DC
3. APSA Congress 2015: 16-20 Nov 2015, Goa, India
4. AFSTA Congress 2016: 3-5 March 2016, Kenya

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### Disclaimer:

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