



THE AFRICAN SEED TRADE ASSOCIATION

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PRESS RELEASE FOR AFSTA CONGRESS 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AFSTA Congress 2017 attracts 300 delegates from around the World

DAKAR, Thursday March 3, 2017 – The 17th African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) Annual Congress which kicked off on February 28, 2017 at the King Fahd Hotel in Dakar, Senegal with nearly 300 delegates representing the seed sector, ended on March 2, 2017 with a resounding success. The delegates came from 47 countries from all over the World.

The congress being a gathering of top seed traders and producers traditionally cover a wide spectrum of issues in the seed value chain. This year, the Congress gave considerable time to regional and international issues that have scientific and technological implications on seed production and trade.

Such included; plant breeding, seed treatment, phytosanitary issues, biotechnology, global actions for improving access by African farmers to quality seeds, strengthening vegetables production through quality seed trade in Africa and update on technologies for African agricultural transformation.

“The 2017 Annual Congress was an excellent and perfect platform for seed people to connect and discuss how they can contribute to current challenges facing the seed industry,” said Mr Denias Zaranyika, AFSTA President.

In a speech delivered in the Congress’ opening ceremony, the President noted that AFSTA sees a future for seed trade and through it answers to the problems of hunger, nutrition, markets and production. He added that the association sees opportunity for partnership and collaboration with other input suppliers, farmer organisations, agricultural policy makers and output market players.

“AFSTA sees openings to make a difference because we are committed to Africa's agriculture-led development agenda. Where others see increasing hunger in Africa, we see an opportunity to contribute to increasing food production and feeding Africa's growing population through improved access to better seed,” said Mr Zaranyika.

Delivering the key note address to the delegates, the President of the International Seed Federation (ISF), Mr Jean Christophe Gouache urged AFSTA to continually raise its voice about issues affecting the African seed sector. He regretted that many organizations whose mandate is not seed have found space in Africa with confusing messages on various technologies in an effort to set the agenda for farmers in the continent.

“The time is now for AFSTA to raise its voice above those coming from outfits which are out to derail the work and mandate of seed companies and associations in the continent,” he added.

He went on to say that cutting edge innovation has to be given chance to thrive among the seed sector to allow the seed players to feed the continent.

While officially opening the Congress, Senegalese Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Equipment, Dr Dogo Seck, praised the good work AFSTA does and asked the leadership to continue advocating for sound methods of seed production that can help Africa solve its food security needs.

Offering a solid framework for exchange between the major players of the African private seed sector, the AFSTA Congress is a key event for the seed industry to discuss current issues affecting seed production in Africa which include climate change, the role of pulses, vegetables and cereals in impacting food security in the continent.

Like in the past, the Dakar Congress once again acted as a magnificent forum to explore more seed businesses and strengthen the network among the seed stakeholders.

The association was started in 2000 in Lilongwe and it meets annually in the first week of March. It has a membership of 36 seed companies, 27 national seed trade associations and 44 associate members worldwide.

The congress was preceded by a half-day workshop on seed treatment which discussed management of MLND and use of “Cruiser”, a new technology used in tackling storage pests among others.

Several representatives of regional and international organizations participated at the congress namely the International Seed Federation (ISF), CropLife International (CLI), the International Seed Testing Association (ISTA), Union for the Protection of New Plant Varieties (UPOV), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA), West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF/WECARD) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Twenty (20) seed companies exhibited their work during the Congress.

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About AFSTA: AFSTA is a not-for-profit membership association which champions the interests of private seed companies in Africa. It is registered in Kenya as an International Organization.