



# THE AFRICAN SEED TRADE ASSOCIATION

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## PRESS RELEASE FOR AFSTA CONGRESS 2018

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### *AFSTA Congress 2018 attracts 450 delegates from around the World*

**CAIRO, SATURDAY, MARCH 3, 2018** – The 18<sup>th</sup> African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) Annual Congress once again ended two back with a resounding success confirming its importance as a must attend gathering for seed industry players in the continent.

Held at the El Nile Conrad Hotel in Cairo, Egypt, the Congress saw 450 delegates from 50 countries from all over the world attend the most successful gathering of seed merchants in the continent.

While making his official remarks, Mr. Mohammed Soliman Mohamed, the Deputy Chairman of the Agricultural Research Institute of Egypt, who represented His Excellency Dr. Abdelmoniem El Banna, Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation challenged the seed companies to ensure that breeders continually selected correct genotype as a means of unlocking food insecurity in Africa. He added that this should be followed by excellent crop management. “For me that is the work that seed companies must do for the continent’s agriculture.”

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 biotechnology, regional and international issues that have scientific and technological implications on seed production and trade.

“Given that African farmers have big dreams and hopes, despite their various stations in life, AFSTA members will continuously work to give farmers high performing seeds they value. Our breeding efforts are geared at incrementally improving harvests, addressing their needs and contributing to the transformation of Africa rural farmers from subsistence to commercial farmers,” said out-going AFSTA President, Mr Denias Zaranyika.

He added that the Congress had showcased the fact that AFSTA members invest breeding, product development and extension efforts to demonstrate how the potential of their products can be optimised and competitively meet farmers’ needs.

He also stated that the Congress once again provided an excellent opportunity for members to trade with one another and find out how to avail better seeds and make it accessible to all category of farmers in Africa.

“Our products must be visible, competitive and attractive. We should make it easy for our farmers to make the right seed purchase for profitable farming decisions. Our breeding efforts, should be complemented by our distribution efforts to ensure that our seed is placed early in the market, in the right places and priced just to meet the farmers’ need,” he noted. “That is why we were in Cairo,” he concluded.

According to Dr Hennie Groenewald, the Executive Manager of Biosafety South Africa, it was unsettling that to date, Africa has not taken advantage of the benefits of biotechnology. He urged seed companies to explore ways of developing their own biotech products to meet the rising needs of food in the continent amidst the devastating effects of climate change.

The congress was preceded by a half-day workshop on seed treatment which discussed management of the fall armyworm (FAW).

“AFSTA Congress remains an organized effort for exchange between the major players of private seed sector and to discuss current issues affecting seed production in Africa, which include climate change, the devastating effect of the fall armyworm, the continent’s involvement in the access and benefits sharing in the framework of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) among many other issues,” said Mr. Justin Rakotoarisaona, the AFSTA Secretary General.

Several representatives of regional and international organizations participated at the congress namely CropLife International (CLI), the International Seed Federation (ISF), the International Seed Testing Association (ISTA), Asia and Pacific Seed Association (APSA), Union for the Protection of New Plant Varieties (UPOV), African Intellectual Property Organization (OAPI).

The association was started in 2000 in Lilongwe and it meets annually around the first week of March. It has a membership of more than 114 seed companies, 26 African national seed trade associations and more than forty associate members worldwide. Twenty seed companies exhibited their work during the Congress.

The next AFSTA Congress will held **from 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> March 2019** at the PrideInn Paradise Hotel in Mombasa, Kenya.

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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.