



THE MESSENGER

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AATF Mission & Core Business

To link needs of resource-poor, smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa with potential technological solutions through:

- ✘ Identifying and facilitating royalty free transfers of proprietary technologies through negotiation
- ✘ Entering into contractual agreements with existing institutions that will manage deployment of the technologies
- ✘ Ensuring that subsequent constraints after access are addressed

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Providing information to farmers

The Nairobi International Trade Fair is an annual agriculture-based exhibition that provides farmers in Kenya with current best practice. AATF participated in this year's fair in collaboration with other partners in agricultural research and dissemination to provide information on available agricultural technologies to farmers and other visitors at their "Biotechnology for Africa" pavilion.

Kirkhouse Trust funds cowpea meeting

The Kirkhouse Trust funded a three-day meeting in November 2004 to discuss how marker-assisted selection (MAS) can be used in breeding to develop improved varieties of cowpea. The meeting was held in Accra Ghana and was convened with the collaboration of AATF and the Network for the Genetic Improvement of Cowpea for Africa (NGICA). The development adaptation and dissemination of improved cowpea varieties was discussed with particular emphasis on genetic protection of cowpea against damage by the pod borer *Maruca vitrata*. The meeting was attended by 30 scientists from Africa and overseas.



Participants at the meeting

The Kirkhouse Trust is a Scottish charity set up in September 2000 to promote education and research in the natural sciences, particularly in the biological and medical areas.

Expanding partnerships

The Donald Danforth Plant Centre (DDPC) and International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) recently signed memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with AATF that set legal basis for collaboration on current and future project implementation. The MOUs were executed

in August and September 2004, respectively. The DDPC is a not-for-profit scientific research institute that engages in research to improve plants for the benefit of human health and sustainable agriculture. CIMMYT acts as a catalyst and leader in global maize and wheat innovation networks that serves the poor in developing countries. Through strong science and effective

partnerships, CIMMYT creates, shares, and uses knowledge and technology to increase food security, improve the productivity and profitability of farming systems, and sustain natural resources. AATF is currently collaborating with CIMMYT and other partners in the promotion of technological interventions for the control of *Striga* in African smallholder maize farms.

AATF appraises cassava technological needs



Mpoko Bokanga and some participants at the ISTRC meeting.

Mechanisation for planting and harvesting, conventional breeding for increased productivity and marker-assisted selection were identified as some of the technological needs for cassava development in Africa. The needs emerged during an appraisal exercise carried out by AATF in November, to identify priority areas for intervention. The exercise was attended

by over 70 scientists and development experts attending the 9th triennial symposium of the International Society for Tropical Root Crops-Africa Branch (ISTRAC-AB) in Mombasa, Kenya. Other priority areas that emerged included increased productivity through genetic engineering, development of the starch industry and conventional breeding for special quality traits. Improving the productivity of cassava is one of eight priority problem areas identified for AATF intervention. Cassava is a major food crop in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, but yields only 10-15% of the potential for the crop due to various constraints such as poor agronomic practices, inadequate postharvest processing, weak linkages to new and expanding markets, as well as pests, diseases, drought and low soil fertility. The results of the November exercise will be further discussed with stakeholders including sub-regional organisations (SROs) and the private sector to determine the priority areas of attention.



Cassava mosaic disease

Responding to famine

Severe drought and widespread crop failure resulted in food shortages for 3.3 million people in Kenya this year, many of them children. The government established a famine relief fund and sent out an appeal for help. AATF staff organised a bowling tournament dubbed "Bowling hunger out" to raise funds towards the fund. Staff from



ILRI, the media and business associates joined AATF staff in the effort to support the famine victims in parts of Kenya.

AATF staff member Nancy Okita "battles hunger out"

Progress review by donors

The second AATF Annual Donors meeting was held in Nairobi, Kenya on 16 September 2004 to review progress made since the Foundation's inception. The meeting was attended by representatives of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), the Rockefeller Foundation, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The donors were updated on the start-up progress of the foundation, its strategic direction, project status and five-year projection.

