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AFRICAN AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY FOUNDATION RECEIVES FEED THE FUTURE FUNDING TO IMPROVE MAIZE PRODUCTION IN EAST AFRICA

Partnership project to upscale commercialisation of technology to control *Striga* weed infestation in maize launched

The livelihoods of smallholder maize farmers in East Africa are set for transformation with the launch of a new project that will upscale the commercialisation of StrigAway™ – an herbicide-resistant seed and treatment that controls the infestation of Striga – a parasitic weed that often results in total crop loss and even abandonment of arable land

NAIROBI, Kenya, 3 February, 2014: – The African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) today launched a partnership with Feed the Future Partnering for Innovation through a programme funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Feed the Future Partnering for Innovation funds off-the-shelf technologies to increase the productivity and competitiveness of smallholder farmers. With this grant, AATF will scale commercialisation of StrigAway™ – an herbicide-resistant seed and treatment – to improve productivity for maize, one of the most important food crops in East Africa. Funding provided through the award will help AATF and its partners, BASF, International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), and six local seed companies, promote the technology package in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda.

“This partnership is really about increasing the food security of thousands of smallholder farmers in East Africa. Farmers who have access to this technology will have better maize yields and higher earnings from the sale of excess produce,” said Denis T. Kyetere, the Executive Director, AATF.

StrigAway™ combats *Striga*, a parasitic plant that affects the agricultural productivity of approximately 1.4 million hectares in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. Commonly known as witchweed, this parasitic plant can cause a 20 to 80 percent crop loss in maize, leading many farmers to abandon fields with heavy *Striga* infestation. Maize, the staple food for the majority of East Africans, is especially susceptible to *Striga* and continuous cereal monocropping has intensified the *Striga* problem. *StrigAway™*, which includes conventionally bred herbicide resistant maize varieties and an herbicide seed coating, was developed by BASF and CIMMYT.

As part of the United States government's Feed the Future Initiative, Partnering for Innovation is expanding commercial access of transformational technologies to smallholder farmers to improve productivity and incomes quickly and sustainably.

“Large problems can't be solved alone, which is why this is Feed the Future Partnering for Innovation's largest grant to date, totaling more than US\$3 million. It involves multiple partners including an international NGO, a multi-national corporation, a research institute, and local private sector companies,” said Brenna McKay, Partnering for Innovation Grants Program Director.

By the end of the three-year performance-based grant, there will be a total of 4,000 demonstration plots and nearly 1,000 metric tonnes of seed sold to over 20,000 smallholders in the target countries. Technical support for local seed companies will ensure the seed is commercially multiplied, treated, and available for purchase through a vast network of agricultural input retailers for smallholder farmer customers. AATF will work with partner seed companies to promote *StrigAway*TM, including managing a discount programme for select agro-dealers, offering promotional seed packs to farmers, and leading a campaign to increase the understanding of the product.

About AATF (<http://www.aatf-africa.org/>)

The African Agriculture Technology Foundation (AATF) is a not-for-profit organisation designed to access, develop, adapt and deliver appropriate agricultural technologies for sustainable use by smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa through innovative partnerships and effective stewardship along the entire value chain. AATF provides expertise and know-how that facilitates the identification, access, development, delivery and utilisation of appropriate agricultural technologies. AATF works towards food security and poverty reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa, and its structure and operations draw upon the best practices and resources of both the public and private sectors. AATF is a registered charity under the laws of England and Wales and has been given a tax-exempt status in the USA. It is incorporated in Kenya and in the UK and has been granted host country status by the Government of Kenya where it is headquartered and is registered as a charity in Nigeria.

About Feed the Future Partnering for Innovation (<http://www.partneringforinnovation.org/>)

Feed the Future Partnering for Innovation spurs private sector investment to disseminate new agricultural technologies to smallholders in developing countries. Funded by USAID as part of the US government's Feed the Future initiative and implemented by Fintrac Inc., the program's goal is to put innovative agriculture technologies into the hands of smallholder farmers to improve productivity and incomes quickly and sustainably.

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