

Partnering for Innovation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Nancy Muchiri
n.muchiri@aatf-africa.org
+254 20 4223700

Captain James Karanja
karanjaig@freshcoseeds.co.ke
+254 0722 5169 53

FRESHCO SEEDS COMMISSIONS TREATER TO PROCESS SEED FOR CONTROLLING STRIGA WEED INFESTATION IN MAIZE IN KENYA

Freshco Seeds and partners' commission seed processing facility that will see farmers access to herbicide-resistant maize varieties to combat Striga weed infestation and improve maize production and food security enhanced

NAKURU, Kenya 22 September, 2014: The Striga Control in Maize partnership has today commissioned a state of the art seed processing machine that will enhance the effectiveness of StrigAway™ a herbicide-resistant seed and treatment to improve the productivity of maize, one of the most important food crops in Kenya. The commissioning of the seed treater facility at Freshco Seeds in Nakuru, Kenya attended by members of the partnership - African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) and BASF - will facilitate the coating of maize seed with the StrigAway Imazapyr Resistant (IR) herbicide which kills the *Striga* seed as it germinates and before it can cause any crop damage.

“This partnership aims to improve the productivity of maize in Kenya and increase the food security of thousands of smallholder farmers in Kenya” said Dr Gospel Omanyua, the Senior Manager Projects Management and Deployment at AATF.

StrigAway™ combats *Striga*, a parasitic plant that affects the agricultural productivity of approximately 250,000 hectares in western Kenya. Commonly known as witchweed, this parasitic plant can cause a 20-80 percent crop loss in maize, leading many farmers to abandon fields with heavy *Striga* infestation. *Striga* is worst on farms in the Lake Victoria basin. Maize is especially susceptible to *Striga* and continuous cereal mono-cropping has intensified the *Striga* problem. StrigAway™, which includes conventionally bred herbicide resistant maize varieties and an herbicide seed coating, was developed by BASF and the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT).

“Seed treatment with StrigAway™ enables use of the full potential of the seed and therefore the largest possible benefit for the farmer” said Sammy Waruingi, the Striga Project Manager at BASF East Africa during the commissioning. “BASF is committed to ensuring the ability of StrigAway maize farmer to control *Striga* in their maize fields through stewardship and training” he said.

With best management practices, the use the StrigAway IR-maize technology to control *Striga* permits grain yields of up to 2 ton/ha higher than the average 0.5 ton/ha obtained from traditional maize varieties. In Kenya, a conservative estimate indicates that when adopted, the proposed technology can lead to an extra 375,000 tonnes (4.2 million bags enough feed 3.4 million people) of maize in western Kenya.

“The commissioning of the StrigAway seed treater today is a very significant milestone for our company as it will see us produce, process and distribute high quality StrigAway IR maize seeds to farmers in Kenya and contribute to the noble goal of enhancing food security for farmers and their families” said Captain James Karanja, the Managing Director of Freshco Seeds. “In line with our mission of delivering world-class agricultural technologies and food supply chain solutions to improve livelihoods, Freshco Seeds will ensure that our StrigAway maize variety FRC 425 IR delivers on that promise” he added.

The upscaling of the commercialisation of the StrigAway technology in Kenya is being supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as part of the US government's

Feed the Future initiative through AATF. Feed the Future Partnering for Innovation's goal is to find and commercialise agricultural technologies that benefit smallholder farmers around the world.

The Striga Control in Maize project in Kenya is a partnership between AATF, Freshco Seeds, Kenya Seed Company, CIMMYT, BASF and Feed the Future initiative.

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.

About Freshco Seeds (<http://www.freshcoseeds.co.ke/>)

Freshco was founded in 2000 with the primary objective of producing, processing and distributing high-quality seeds and planting materials to the farming community in Kenya and in East and Central Africa region. Its main products include; maize (corn) seeds, vegetables seeds, drought tolerant crop seeds, and tree seeds among other planting materials. Freshco sources its germplasm mainly from Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI), CIMMYT, AATF and other CGIAR organisations, under Material Transfer Agreements (MTA). It also obtains vegetable seeds from renowned world breeders, seed producers and suppliers.

About BASF (www.basf.com)

At BASF, we create chemistry – and have been doing so for 150 years. Our portfolio ranges from chemicals, plastics, performance products and crop protection products to oil and gas. As the world's leading chemical company, we combine economic success with environmental protection and social responsibility. Through science and innovation, we enable our customers in nearly every industry to meet the current and future needs of society. Our products and solutions contribute to conserving resources, ensuring nutrition and improving quality of life. We have summed up this contribution in our corporate purpose: We create chemistry for a sustainable future. BASF had sales of about €74 billion in 2013 and over 112,000 employees as of the end of the year. BASF shares are traded on the stock exchanges in Frankfurt (BAS), London (BFA) and Zurich (AN).

About CIMMYT (<http://www.cimmyt.org/>)

Headquartered in Mexico, CIMMYT is the global leader in research for development in wheat and maize and wheat- and maize-based farming systems. CIMMYT works throughout the developing world with hundreds of partners to sustainably increase the productivity of maize and wheat systems to improve global food security and livelihoods. Improved, CIMMYT-derived wheat is sown on more than 60 million hectares in developing countries – over 70 percent of the spring wheat area planted with modern wheat varieties in those nations. These wheat varieties are responsible for bigger harvests that bring annual added benefits to farmers of at least US \$500 million. Similarly, 50 percent of modern maize varieties grown in developing countries come from CIMMYT improved seeds. CIMMYT is a member of the CGIAR Consortium and leads the Consortium Research Programs WHEAT and MAIZE. CIMMYT receives support from national governments, foundations, development banks and other public and private agencies.

- ### -