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AATF Reclassifies its Priority Problem Areas



AATF Board members at the 14th Board meeting held 3-4 November 2009 in Abuja, Nigeria

The AATF Board of Trustees has given notional approval to the Foundation's management to adapt a revised and reclassified priority areas list that defines the AATF areas of intervention for its future activities towards addressing agricultural productivity constraints for Sub-Saharan African farmers.

The approval follows a review carried out by management to enhance consistency of AATF priority areas with the current key constraints to agricultural

productivity as defined by the Sub-Regional Organisations and the current global trends along the food-energy climate change nexus.

The review has broadened the original AATF scope of work under six themes. These are:

- Impact of climate change on agriculture that will address climatic change, drought, water use efficiency and irrigation;
- Pest management that will address yield losses of staples and high value crops;

- Soil management that will include fertiliser use efficiency and integrated natural resource management;
- Improved breeding methods that will address access to plant breeding tools;
- Mechanisation that will cover land preparation, harvesting, agro-processing and irrigation;
- Nutrition enhancement in foods that will look at micronutrient enhancement in major staple crops.

The reclassification will ensure that AATF continues to fulfill its mandate of negotiating for access to and delivering proprietary agricultural technologies for use by smallholder farmers.

In addition to reviewing and reclassifying the problem areas, the AATF management also highlighted the key factors that enable the realisation of successful technology access and transfer. These include best management practices, value chain addition and agro-processing, market linkages, information and knowledge management and marker assisted selection.

Towards Safer Maize - AflaSafe™ Offers Hope

Farmers will soon have an effective method to significantly reduce aflatoxin contamination in maize using AflaSafe, a biocontrol product developed by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA).

The technology is undergoing farmer field trials on about 85 hectares of farmland across Nigeria where farmers have reported improved grain quality on application of the product.

Aflatoxins are chemical poisons produced mainly by the fungus *Aspergillus flavus* in maize, groundnuts, cassava, and yam chips. These toxins are potent causes of cancer and suppress the immune system causing greater susceptibility of humans and animals to diseases.

According to Dr Ranajit Bandyopadhyay of IITA, aflatoxins affect the health of both children and adults and AlfaSafe is expected to eliminate the source of aflatoxin contamination. Dr



A farmer spreading AflaSafe in a maize field in Nigeria

Bandyopadhyay said that a reduction in aflatoxin contamination will ensure better food and health.

High levels of aflatoxin contamination in agricultural products also affect international trade since agricultural

products that have more than permissible levels of contamination are rejected in the global market.

The field trials are supported by AATF and the European Union's FP7 MycoRed project.

Capacity Strengthening in Confidentiality and Communication for WEMA Partners

The Water Efficient Maize for Africa (WEMA) partners held a four-day workshop in August on confidentiality and communication, key aspects of public/private partnership projects.

The workshop elicited a lot of discussions bringing to the fore the different operating styles of the private and public sectors and the importance of understanding and appreciating each other for the success of joint projects.

The workshop on confidentiality was organised by the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) and conducted by the CGIAR Advisory Services on Intellectual Property (CAC-IP) and Monsanto. Key issues relating to private sector confidentiality requirements especially regarding information management and the public good responsibility of the public sector were discussed. Participants discussed what

confidentiality is, the confidential elements in WEMA, steps towards maintaining confidentiality and the importance of confidentiality to the WEMA project.

The workshop on communication was facilitated by the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) and emphasised risk communication and how to work with the media. Participants were taken through effective biotech communication, how to address biosafety issues raised by stakeholders and how to maintain sound relations with the media.

AATF Registered as Corporate Body in Nigeria

AATF has been registered as a corporate body with the Corporate Affairs Commission of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This effectively recognises AATF as an association of persons established for charitable purposes and gives it authority to transact business in the country.

The registration was finalised in November 2009 and marks progress towards the Foundation's quest for host country status in Nigeria.



Dr Daniel Mataruka (right) when he paid a courtesy call on the Hon Minister for Science and Technology, Dr Alhassan Bako Zaku. On the left is Prof BO Solomon, CEO of NABDA.

Trinidad and Tobago High Commissioner to Kenya Visits AATF

HE Mr Patrick Edwards, the High Commissioner of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to Kenya, paid a courtesy call on the AATF Executive Director in October 2009 to discuss possible areas of collaboration between AATF and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The discussion revolved around possible collaboration in sharing learnings and experiences between AATF and the Department for Biotechnology, Agriculture and Food Production Technology of the University of Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean Industrial Research Institute (CARIRI).



HE Mr Patrick Edwards, High Commissioner Designate to Kenya, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (center), when he visited AATF on 25 October 2009.

Bill Gates Visits AATF

Bill Gates, the Co-chair and Trustee of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation visited the AATF offices in December 2009 and held discussions with AATF and CIMMYT on the Water Efficient Maize for Africa and the Drought Tolerant Maize for Africa projects funded by his Foundation to address drought tolerance in maize for Africa.

During the one hour meeting, key aspects of the projects relating to the science, policy and impact were discussed.

The AATF team was led by the Executive Director Dr Daniel Mataruka while the CIMMYT Team was led by the Director for CIMMYT's Global Maize Program Dr Marianne Banziger.

OFAB Kenya Committee Meets with AATF Executive Director

The OFAB Kenya Programming Committee held a consultative meeting with Dr Daniel Mataruka to discuss the forum's management and future development.

The committee was led by its Chairperson Dr Margaret Karembu, the Director of the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA)



Africenter. The committee briefed Dr Mataruka on its progress towards providing credible information and knowledge on agricultural biotechnology through the monthly meetings and publications. It also discussed its plans to expand OFAB activities in Kenya beyond Nairobi.

Nigeria Biosafety Bill Public Hearing Held

The public hearing of the Nigeria Biosafety Bill took place in December 2009 and was attended by key stakeholders who presented varied views on the bill.

The hearing follows two successful readings at the House of Representatives where it was introduced in February 2009 as a private member bill by Hon Gbenga Makonjuola, Chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture.

Dr Nompumelelo Obokoh, AATF manager for the *Maruca*-Resistant Cowpea and Nitrogen Use Efficient Rice projects, together with key project partners represented AATF at the hearing.



It is expected that the report of the public hearing will be presented to the house and if passed will be sent to the Senate where a further three readings will take place before final passing.

WEMA Supports Media on Science Reporting

In recognition of the important role the media plays in informing and educating people on advances in science, the Water Efficient Maize for Africa (WEMA) project organised a three-day workshop for journalists from East Africa in January 2010.

The workshop focused on building the capacity of journalists to report on science and agricultural biotechnology. The journalists were introduced to the WEMA and Drought Tolerant Maize for Africa (DTMA) projects that are developing drought tolerant maize varieties for smallholder farmers in Africa. The WEMA project is being coordinated by AATF while the DTMA is a project of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT). Resource experts shared with participants their knowledge on the science behind biotechnology and the regulatory and political aspects that influence its development.

The workshop held in Nairobi attracted over 25 journalists from print, television and radio from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. A similar workshop was held in November 2009 for journalists from South Africa and Mozambique, the other country partners in the WEMA project.



AATF Board Member Josephine Okot is Woman Entrepreneur of the Year - Uganda



Josephine Okot, the Founder and Managing Director of Victoria Seeds Ltd in Uganda, was awarded Woman Entrepreneur of the Year in October 2009. Her company, Victoria Seeds, scooped the Share Holder Value Champion following a survey conducted by The Monitor publications Ltd and KPMG Uganda in mid-2009 to identify, recognise and celebrate Uganda's fastest growing Small and Medium Enterprises.

Josephine was recognised for her efforts in improving the livelihood of rural women by promoting commercial agriculture and linking these smallholder farmers to markets.

The Woman Entrepreneur of the Year award comes to Josephine only four months after she was awarded the

prestigious Business for Peace Award in Oslo which recognised seven most distinguished CEOs growing their business in a financially and socially responsible way. Josephine was the only woman among the seven honorees.

Josephine is a member of the AATF Board of Trustees where she chairs the Program/Product Development Committee that advises the Board on the relevance of AATF activities and on their complementarity with those of national programs and other institutions. The committee also ensures that the Foundation has effective strategies for its projects including an effective system for program monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment.

Staff Appointment

Alhaji Tejan-Cole joins AATF as Legal Counsel

Alhaji Tejan-Cole joined AATF in November 2009 as Legal Counsel. Alhaji will be responsible for intellectual property issues, legal matters and also serve as the Board secretary.

He holds a LL.M degree in Legislative Drafting from the University of the West Indies and a LL.M degree in Intellectual Property Law from the University of South Africa. He has served as Legislative Counsel in Sierra Leone and in the Caribbean nation of Belize where he helped draft the country's World Trade

Organization/Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (WTO/TRIPs) implementing legislation. In 2003, he was appointed Deputy Registrar for Intellectual Property in Belize, a position which he held until his recent appointment with AATF.

Alhaji has authored several publications on intellectual property law, and has served as legislative drafting consultant for the World Intellectual Property Organization. He is a citizen of Sierra Leone.



Melissa Lloyd joins AATF as Chief Resource Mobilisation Officer

Melissa Lloyd joined AATF in January 2010 as Chief Resource Mobilisation Officer to build the organisation's new resource mobilisation (RM) initiatives. Prior to joining AATF Melissa worked as a consultant across Africa, based in Kenya, with leading agriculture development organisations such as Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa as well as grassroots initiatives.

Melissa's career has focused on agriculture and rural development, ranging from

mobilising resources, advocacy, program management, research and policy analysis. This career includes work with noted organisations such as Dalberg Development Advisors, Dan Church Aid, US Meat Export Federation and National Cattlemen's Beef Association. She holds an agriculture degree from Texas A&M University and a master's from the University of Leicester focusing on culture and community development.

