



# Partnerships

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## AATF and Nigeria's Ministry of Agriculture sign MoU



*Hon Dr Akin Adesina and Dr Denis T. Kyetere sign the memorandum of understanding document at the Ministry of Agriculture offices in Abuja, Nigeria as Hon Mrs Asabe Asmau Ahmed, Nigeria's Minister of State looks on*

**A**ATF signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in April 2014 at an event held at the Ministry's headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria. Dr Akin Adesina, the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, Nigeria and Dr Denis T. Kyetere, the Executive Director, AATF signed on behalf of the parties.

Nigeria remains a force to reckon with in Africa in many sectors including agricultural development. This makes it a strategic partner for AATF in the region as its current investments and activities in the country are key to the achievement of its mandate in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and that of Nigeria's agricultural transformation agenda.

"We see good prospects working with AATF, a charitable organisation designed to facilitate and promote public-private partnerships, to remove many of the barriers that have prevented smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa from gaining access to existing agricultural technologies that could help improve food security and reduce poverty" said Dr Adesina during the signing ceremony. "Our partnership with AATF opens an avenue for collaborative efforts to jointly identify and facilitate the transfer of appropriate technologies that meet the needs of farmers in Nigeria, in ways that address and resolve the concerns of technology providers and users" he added.

"AATF is a keen partner for agricultural transformation in SSA and we are looking forward to changing the livelihoods

of millions of smallholder farmers and agribusinesses in Nigeria through partnering with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development for wealth creation" said Dr Kyetere.

AATF with partners in Nigeria are collaborating on three projects, namely the Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology in Africa, the Pod-borer Resistant Cowpea and Cassava Mechanisation and Agro-processing Project. Other projects that will be of interest to the country in the future include Seeds2B, Hybrid Rice: Breeding by Design, Water Efficient Maize for Africa and the Nitrogen-use Efficient, Water-use Efficient and Salt Tolerant rice.

*For more information visit <http://www.aatf-africa.org/Improving-Food-Production-and-Security-In-Nigeria>* ■

## AATF Board commends development of disease resistant maize varieties

The AATF Board of Trustees commended the Water Efficient Maize for Africa (WEMA) project partners for taking action towards the development of maize varieties that are tolerant to the Maize Lethal Necrosis disease (MLND). Speaking during a field visit to the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) trial site in Naivasha, Kenya the board members expressed satisfaction at the efforts being made by the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center and KARI under the WEMA project to develop maize varieties that are able to withstand MLND.

The disease was first reported in Kenya in 2011 and is caused by the Maize chlorotic mottle virus and Sugarcane mosaic virus. MLND has also been reported in Uganda and Tanzania and is a serious threat to maize production where farmers experience extensive or complete crop loss.

The visit was held alongside their 23rd board meeting that was held in Nairobi in April 2014.

During the meeting the members reviewed AATF's project implementation



*Board members and staff during a visit to the Maize Lethal Necrosis disease trial site at the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute, Naivasha*

progress and the proposed 2014 plans. The members were satisfied with the progress and consequently approved the 2014 budget that will enable the continued implementation of plans and also approved the 2013 audited financial statements.

At the meeting, the terms of the Board Chair Prof Idah Sithole-Niang and the Vice-Chair Dr Stanford Blade were extended to serve for another one year effective April 2014 ■

## Projects report significant progress at annual review and planning meetings

The Pod-borer Resistant (PBR) Cowpea; Nitrogen-Use Efficient, Water-Use Efficient and Salt-tolerant (NEWEST); Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology (OFAB); and Hybrid Rice: Breeding By Design projects held their review and planning meetings in April where significant progress was reported.

The PBR Cowpea meeting was held in Accra, Ghana where it was reported that the project's product development component had successfully incorporated the insect resistant trait into farmers' varieties in Nigeria and Burkina Faso and that the transgenic farmers' varieties were showing control of the Maruca pest in Nigeria.

The NEWEST rice project meeting which was held back to back with the PBR Cowpea meeting reviewed data from the 2013 confined field trials conducted by partners in Uganda, Ghana and by the International Center for Tropical Agriculture in Colombia. Promising results were observed from the trials that showed that there were differences in plant growth between different levels of nitrogen and that four lines had performed better than the checks under low nitrogen input.



*NEWEST project partners visit the confined field trial site in Kumasi, Ghana*

The Hybrid Rice project held its first review and planning meeting in Malindi, Kenya where it reported that the first set of a 100 hybrid lines had been developed in readiness for testing by partners in 2014.

OFAB chapters held their annual review and planning meeting in Abuja, Nigeria

where it emerged that the Forum had gained significant brand recognition as a leading biotech advocacy programme in Africa. Participants at the meeting agreed to focus attention on creating awareness at the grassroots level and reach more farmers who are the end users of biotech products ■



## OFAB launches eighth chapter in Ethiopia

The Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology in Africa (OFAB) launched its eighth chapter in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in June 2014. The chapter which is a collaboration between AATF and the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) was launched at a ceremony officiated by Dr Fetahun Mengistu, the Director General, EIAR and Dr Emmanuel Okogbenin, the AATF Director of Technical Operations.

In his opening remarks Dr Mengistu, said that Ethiopia has embarked on an ambitious agricultural transformation programme whereby innovative technologies are playing significant roles and OFAB will enable the Ethiopian society 'to talk to each other more openly and credibly' about the benefits of new agricultural technologies, including modern biotechnology, and address concerns and challenges as well.

Dr Mengistu also noted that public awareness, understanding and positive attitude towards biotechnology, especially transgenic crops, are crucial for sustainable deployment of innovative biotechnology crop varieties to small-scale farmers in Ethiopia whose yields have been compromised by diseases, pests and vagaries of weather.

Dr Okogbenin, hailed OFAB as a good platform for creating awareness on biotechnology and managing issues, concerns and people's perceptions. He praised the government of Ethiopia for taking the initiative to review its biosafety law to make it more evidence-based, adding that this would give breeders opportunity and freedom to innovate cutting-edge technologies to deal with intractable plant and animal diseases



*Dr Emmanuel Okogbenin, AATF Technical Director, Mrs Nancy Muchiri, AATF Senior Communications and Partnerships Manager, and Dr Fetahun Mengistu, Director General Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research cutting the cake to mark the official launch of OFAB Ethiopia, in Addis Ababa*

and pests, not to mention the vagaries of weather that have defied conventional breeding methods.

The activities of OFAB chapters are planned and promoted by a country based Programming Committee (PC) made of individuals drawn from like minded organisations who are interested in biotechnology. The OFAB-Ethiopia PC's membership is drawn from the EAIR, Ethiopia Agricultural Transformation Agency, Ethiopia Society for Advanced Technologies, Ethiopia Academy of Sciences, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Science and Technology, the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center and University of Addis Ababa's Institute of Biotechnology.

The Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology in Africa (OFAB) is a platform that brings together stakeholders in biotechnology and enables interactions between scientists, journalists, the civil society, industrialists, lawmakers and policy makers. It provides an opportunity for key stakeholders to know one another, share knowledge and experiences, make new contacts and explore new avenues of bringing the benefits of biotechnology to the African agricultural sector.

Other OFAB chapters in Sub-Saharan Africa include Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Zimbabwe.

*For more information contact OFAB Coordinator (d.otunge@aatf-africa.org) ■*

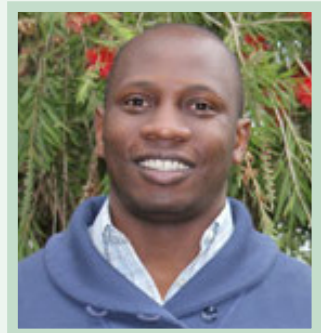
## New staff



**Jotham Maroa** has been recruited as the Head of Human Resources. Jotham who has a Masters of Arts degree from the University of Nairobi and a Bachelor of Arts (Economics & Administration) from the Moi University, Eldoret Kenya formerly worked for Management Sciences for Health, World Vision International and Kenya Post Office Savings Bank among

others. He also holds a Higher National Diploma in Human Resources Management from the Institute of Human Resources Management.

**Edgar Wavomba**, has joined AATF as the Coordinator of the Seeds2B Project. He holds a Master's degree in Biotechnology and Business Management from the University of Warwick, United Kingdom and a Bachelor's degree in Biochemistry, with specialisation in Biotechnology and Molecular Biology. Before taking up the role, Edgar was an associate at AATF's Projects



Management and Deployment Unit. Prior to joining AATF, he worked within a multidisciplinary team that provided all-round support to research and teaching activities in Chemistry and Biotechnology at the University of Warwick.



**Regina Nderitu** has joined AATF as a Project Assistant for the Water Efficient Maize for Africa Project (WEMA). Regina has a Masters of Science (Agronomy) and Bachelor of Science in Agriculture degrees from the University of Nairobi. Before joining AATF she previously worked for Kilimo Trust, Uganda as a Technical Assistant and for the Ministry of Agriculture, Kenya as a District

Crops Development Officer. Regina who is based in Embu, Kenya is responsible for overseeing field work activities for the WEMA conventional drought-tolerant maize hybrid known as DroughtTego™ WE1101 in the central and upper eastern regions of Kenya.



**Caleb Adede** has joined AATF as the Project Officer for the Striga Control in Maize Project. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture (Agronomy) from Egerton University, Kenya. With over 18 years experience, Caleb joined AATF from the USAID/KAVES project where he held a Monitoring and Evaluation portfolio for the Western Kenya Value Chain Project. Prior to

that he worked with smallholder farmers in several organisations including World Concern International, Mastermind Tobacco Ltd and Inter Diocesan Christian Community Services. Caleb is based in Kisumu, western Kenya and coordinates the activities of the Project in six counties.

**Bonface Okute** has been recruited as a Project Assistant for the WEMA Project, Western Kenya region. Boniface who holds a university diploma in Horticulture from Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kenya is responsible for the promotion of the WEMA conventional drought-tolerant maize hybrid DroughtTego™ WE1101 in the region. Prior to joining AATF, he worked with CARE International in Kenya, World Council of Credit Union and the Kenya Red Cross in various capacities.



**Emily Injete** has joined AATF as a Project Assistant for the WEMA Project covering Machakos county in Kenya. Emily is a holder of a Master of Science degree in Agricultural Resource Management and a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Education and Extension both from the University of Nairobi, Kenya. Emily has previously worked for CIMMYT and Egerton University among others and is responsible for the promotion of the WEMA conventional drought-tolerant maize hybrid DroughtTEGO™ WE1101 in the county.



**William Omoro** joined AATF as a Project Assistant for the WEMA Project. He holds a Masters in Rural Development and Food Security from Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences, Wageningen, Netherlands, Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies and Community Development from Kenyatta University, Kenya and a Diploma in Project Management from Kenya Institute of Management. William previously worked for TARA-Trust for African Rock Art and Kenya Wildlife Service. William is currently working in Nakuru, Narok and Bomet counties in Kenya to promote the commercialisation of the WEMA DroughtTEGO™ hybrid WE1101.