



AFRICAN AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY FOUNDATION
FONDATION AFRICAINE POUR LES TECHNOLOGIES AGRICOLES

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Announcement of the first foundation seed production entity for Africa

Nairobi, Monday; 30 January 2017: The African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) has announced establishment of the first Early Generation (foundation) seed production entity in Sub-Saharan Africa to effectively and efficiently supply high quality foundation seed for small and medium enterprise (SME) seed companies on the continent. The entity, to be known as QualiBasic Seed, will be based in Nairobi, Kenya, and has received an initial five year investment of US\$ 8.4 Million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Making the announcement at a media briefing in Nairobi, the AATF Executive Director Dr Denis Kyetere said that QualiBasic was established to address the acute technical, infrastructural and financial challenges the seed companies face in the maintenance, multiplication and timely supply of quality foundation seed, critically essential to improve farm productivity by small holder farmers. Low access and use of poor quality foundation seed by seed companies result in low crop yields and crop failure in some cases for the small holder farmers, affecting sustainable food production and costing the continent a valuable development opportunity.

‘80% of the SME seed companies, who can reach more than 60% of smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa have difficulties with production and maintenance of high quality foundation seed due to technical, infrastructural and financial challenges,’ said Dr Kyetere.

Enock Chikava, Deputy Director - Agricultural Development at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation said the foundation’s investment in QualiBasic helps small holder farmers, especially women, realize the full genetic gains of climate resilient crop varieties developed through public research and development.

‘Huge investments have been made by donors through various global public crop improvement programs for the benefit of African farmers. These breeding programs have released high yielding and very adaptable crop varieties, for example, maize hybrids, that offer high productivity opportunities. However, the benefits of these products are yet to be realized by smallholder farmers due to delayed seed production in some cases and low quality seed in others,’ said Chikava.

Chikava added that the Foundation is pleased to partner with AATF and its collaborators in this venture ‘...that will ensure integrity of the quality of foundation seed availed to seed companies that will in turn increase the productivity of land and labour, increase incomes and

nutrition for the small holder farmers and hence trigger the much needed agricultural transformation process in Africa.’

According to Dr Kyetere, operating a functional foundation seed production system could cost a company, regardless of size, about US\$ 0.5 million per year which is expensive for many SME seed companies. Therefore, investing a similar amount to operate a centralised system that services the foundation seed needs of various seed companies would make foundation seed production more effective and efficient, benefiting from economies of scale and use of the most ideal agro-ecologies and seasons.

‘To satisfy this need, QualiBasic will be set up as a centralized production system to serve the foundation seed needs of a large number of seed companies which will make it more affordable for users,’ said Dr Kyetere, adding that similar models have been successful in other parts of the world such as the United States of America and India.

Under the partnership, AATF will help establish and nurture QualiBasic into a professional fully-fledged, independent and sustainable private sector driven business within five years. QualiBasic operations will start with foundation seed for maize in East and Southern Africa then grow to serve other cereals and legumes across SSA when fully functional. Three foundation seed production hubs with seed processing and storage facilities will be established in Kenya, Zambia and South Africa by the second and third year of operations, in order to meet demand for products in a timely manner, and avoid lengthy delays in seed movements.

About AATF (www.aatf-africa.org)

AATF is a not-for-profit organisation established 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.