

A progress update by the African Agricultural Technology Foundation for stakeholders in the *Striga* Control in Maize Project

In this issue



**Pg1:** *StrigAway* maize technology: a huge business opportunity for seed companies in East Africa



**Pg3:** I see hope in IR maize seed - Namumbia Khadija



**Pg3:** Pictoria

News

## *StrigAway* maize technology: a huge business opportunity for seed companies in East Africa

Seed companies in East Africa have been urged to take advantage of the huge business opportunity created by the introduction of Imazapyr resistant (IR) maize technology, also known as *StrigAway* maize technology for control of *Striga*.

"With over 1 million hectares infected with *Striga* in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, there is a huge business opportunity for seed companies to service unmet demand for and grow their business through production, treatment and sale of *StrigAway* seed," Arielle Kleinman, Programme Assistant, Feed the Future Partnering for Innovation (FTF-P4I) told participants at the Second Annual Review and Planning Meeting of the *Striga* in Maize Control Project.

The meeting, organized by AATF and FTF-P4I in collaboration with Nalweyo Seed Company (NASECO) was held from 2-3 December, 2015 in Kampala, Uganda to share experience, expertise and learning and plan for Year 3. It was attended by partners drawn from AATF, FTF-P4I implementing partners CIMMYT, BASF and Fintrac, and the seven partner seed companies: FreshCo, Kenya Seed and Elgon Seed from Kenya; Tansed and Meru Agro from Tanzania; and NASECO and Victoria Seeds from Uganda.

Reiterating the call to exploit the untapped business opportunity, Gospel Omany, the *Striga* in Maize Control Project Manager noted that the seed companies had so far produced 241 tonnes out of the targeted 955 tonnes of IR



Arielle Kleinman of Feed the Future Partnering for Innovation speaking during the IR planning meeting in Kampala, Uganda.

maize seed. "The efficacy of the technology in controlling the noxious weed and the shortfall in seed production targets to meet demands for the over 1 million hectares infested with *Striga* in the three countries should be major catalysts and motivators for seed companies to invest in the technology and grow their business through increased sales and income," stated Omany.

AATF and FTF-P4I assured seed companies of continued support in building and strengthening their capacities for effective production and delivery of the seed to farmers. They stated that it is the seed companies that will continue filling the gap and addressing demand in the existing market long after the project ends.

"After the project ends, sustainability of the commercialized technology will lie in the hands of the seed companies. AATF and FTF-P4I are looking to the seed companies to inform on what needs to be done in terms of providing extra or more specific support towards availing the seed to farmers," said Kleinman

Khadija Namumbia, one of the farmers from Uganda who attended the meeting, urged the seed companies to get these popular varieties to them on time. "The seeds come very late forcing many women to plant local varieties out of desperation. They don't harvest anything from the local varieties. *Kayongo go* maize seed should be available in early



Dr. Emmanuel Okogbenin, Director of Technical Operations, AATF speaking during the official opening ceremony of the two day meeting.



January ready for the first planting season and early July for the second planting season,” said Khadija.

Emmanuel Okogbenin, the Technical Operations Director, AATF reiterated the importance of the project to AATF saying, “AATF has a strong attachment to this project as it complements other work the organization is doing in maize. *Striga* is a big problem. Our work through the

partnership will help with productivity by way of access to the right products.”

Emmanuel thanked the project partners that include the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), BASF and seed companies for testing and getting the product to farmers; farmers for accepting and using the technology; and FTF-P4I and USAID for the financial support.

## I see hope in IR maize seed - Namumbia Khadija

The IR maize technology has given hope to Namumbia Khadija, 43 from Rwanika village, Nabukaru sub County, Bugiri District, eastern Uganda. The mother of six has been farming since she got married 25 years ago. And it has been 25 years of frustrations growing maize, courtesy of *Striga*, a very noxious weed in the region that has, in severe cases of infestation, wiped out entire maize crops. The only reasons Khadija has continued to grow maize are her passion for the crop and impulse.

However, over the last one year, her passion for maize is growing, being fuelled by prospects of better yields, this time round, courtesy of the IR maize technology, locally referred to as *Kayongo go*, that has demonstrated it can completely protect maize crop against *Striga*.

Khadija is one of the farmers supported by Africa 2000 Network (A2N), an AATF partner organization in Uganda. Besides creating awareness, A2N trains farmers on the best technologies to combat *Striga*.

To demonstrate the efficacy of IR maize technology against *Striga*, A2N helped Khadija and other 29 members of her farmer group *Omunaku ka wama* (which loosely translates to one who is miserable with no one to care for) to establish 10m x 10m demonstration plots. She was excited with the results: “The *kayongo go* demo plot was very good in that I planted 2 kgs and harvested two 90-kg bags. Compare this to the 80 kgs I got from my 2 acres where I had planted 30 kgs of our local maize,” stated an elated Khadija.

Buoyed by the performance of the *Kayongo go*, its resistance against *Striga* and high yields, Khadija planted the IR maize variety on one acre the following season.



Namumbia Khadija speaking at the 2nd Annual Review and Planning meeting of the *Striga* in Maize Control Project in Kampala, Uganda.

And she is not the only one impressed with the performance of *StrigAway*. “Our demos highly impressed other women groups who requested for *Kayongo go* seeds. So far, I have linked five other women groups to A2N officers who have assisted them to set up demonstration plots,” said Khadija.

These demos have indeed created demand for the IR seed from farmers who are reeling under the ravages of *Striga* infestation. The unfortunate part is that farmers cannot access the seeds on time, sometimes forcing them to revert to their local susceptible varieties, according to Khadija.

"The seeds come very late forcing many women to plant local varieties out of desperation. They don't harvest anything from the local varieties. *Kayongo go* maize seed should be available at A2N offices in early January ready for the first planting season and early July for the second planting season," urges Khadija.

To Khadija, the technology is a major breakthrough in the fight against *Striga*. "Kayongo was making us desperate farmers but we have found hope in *Kayongo go* maize seed variety. Farming is what feeds us, pays school fees for our children, and literally earns us a living. Maize is not just a food crop, it is our livelihood crop. *Striga* was turning our livelihoods upside down," said Khadija.



Khadija in her *Striga*-free maize farm planted with *Kayongo go*.



Dr. Gospel Omanyia, Senior Manager, Deployment and Commercialization, AATF and Anna Wamache of Feed the Future Partnering for Innovation when they visited Victoria Seeds Company in Uganda, a recipient of a seed treater supported by the *Striga* in Maize Control Project. The treater was supported by Feed the Future Partnering for Innovation.



Dr Gospel Omanyia, Senior Manager, Deployment and Commercialization, AATF, training Victoria Seed company officers on seed production and best management practices for IR maize in Uganda.



AATF, Feed the Future Partnering for Innovation and NASECO staff after a training on IR maize in Kampala, Uganda.