

PRESS RELEASE

AfDB and AATF Host Talks to Implement and Harmonise Seed Regulations in Eastern and Southern Africa

Nairobi, Friday, 14 December 2018 – Leading organisations in agricultural policy, trade, and technology transfer met in Nairobi from 13 -14 December 2018 to identify bottlenecks in the implementation of harmonised seed regulations within the Eastern and Southern Africa region and develop an action plan towards eliminating these challenges. The action plan developed after two days of deliberations will accelerate seed variety release and deployment, making it easier for seed varieties to be deployed in areas with similar agro-ecological conditions without necessarily going through lengthy procedures. This will also boost regional trade in seed and agricultural produce.

The 2-day consultation workshop was organised by the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) in collaboration with the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA). It brought together delegates from 21 member countries of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

“There is urgent need to push for harmonisation of existing policies, regulations and protocols through regional policy dialogue and consultation workshops to assess what exists, identify gaps and support required reforms on the part of Bank’s regional member countries to accelerate policy harmonisation,” said Nnenna Nwabufo, the Deputy Director General, Deputy Director General, East African Regional Hub at the African Development Bank.

Experts at the meeting completed: a status report on the progress of COMESA Seed Harmonisation Implementation Plan (COMSHIP) at regional and country level; a costed action plan identifying technical and financial support required for evidence-based policy review and harmonisation; a road map and work plan to help fast-track the implementation of COMSHIP in COMESA member countries; a country by country work plan to ensure in-country policies and regulations are updated to meet regional standards for harmonisation of seed policies.

“The injection and utilisation of new innovative technologies – especially technologies that address the dual goal of increasing production and productivity while ensuring responsible management of the environment and responding effectively to climatic changes and other variables – are key to Africa’s food security,” said Dr. Denis Kyetere, Executive Director, AATF. “Getting these technologies into farmers’ hands in good time will not only ensure returns on the heavy investment already made but will also ensure Africa has the ability and means to reap from its agricultural potential,” he added.

The meeting highlighted the need for partnerships, as this will be key to successful elimination of the barriers to the harmonisation of existing policies, regulations and protocols, and technologies reaching small holder farmers.

“There is need for public-private partnerships that will not only ensure that technologies reach farmers and stimulate innovation but also encourage growth of agriculture as a business, nurture private sector growth, which will in turn grow interest and employment opportunities for youth and support women’s participation,” Kyetere said.

The African Development Bank launched the Feed Africa Strategy to support regional member countries to produce their own food. Subsequently, the Bank commissioned the Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT) as a flagship program of Feed Africa and a major global initiative designed to boost agricultural productivity in Africa by rapidly delivering proven technologies to tens of millions of farmers to enhance their productivity that has been on the declining trend in recent years.

“For most varieties, the process of variety release takes at least 2 years. That implies if the same variety must be released in 10 countries, this will take at least 20 years. Africa clearly cannot wait this long.” Nwabufo, said.

“Much ground has already been covered towards full implementation of COMSHIP. With the current partnership of the AfDB through the TAAT policy enabler and other associated organisations, we are hopeful the COMSHIP dream will soon be fully realised” said Dr. John Mukuka, the acting CEO of ACTESA.

“Clearly, delivery of productivity-enhancing technologies at the scale envisaged by TAAT program will require streamlining of national policies, laws and regulatory frameworks so that varieties/breeds released in one country could be utilised in other countries with similar agro-ecological characteristics. This will speed up regional seed harmonisation efforts currently gaining momentum, albeit at different paces,” Dr. Francis Nang’ayo, the TAAT Policy Enabler Compact Leader/Head of Regulatory Affairs, AATF, said.

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About AATF (www.aatf-africa.org)

Founded in 2003 to address Africa’s food security prospects through agricultural technology, AATF believes that the agricultural sector is a key foundational pillar as Africa consolidates its economic growth and carves out its new position as a major global economic powerhouse and the next growth market in the world. It was formed in response to the need for an effective mechanism that would facilitate and support negotiation for technology access and delivery and formation of appropriate partnerships to manage the development & deployment of innovative technologies for use by smallholder farmers in SSA

About the African Development Bank Group

The African Development Bank Group (AfDB) is Africa’s premier development finance institution. It comprises three distinct entities: the African Development Bank (AfDB), the African Development Fund (ADF) and the Nigeria Trust Fund (NTF). On the ground in 37 African countries with an external office in Japan, the AfDB contributes to the economic development and the social progress of its 54 regional member states.

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