

PRESS RELEASE

The TELA Project holds its first virtual Annual Review and Planning Meeting

The project is working towards commercialization of transgenic drought-tolerant and insect-protected maize varieties



Nairobi, Tuesday, 14 July 2020: The TELA Maize Project held its second Annual Review and Planning Meeting (ARPM) from 13–14th May 2020, to review the progress and achievements attained in the second year of project implementation and prioritize areas of focus for the third year. The two-day online meeting was organised by the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) and brought together seventy-seven participants from nine countries in Africa, Asia and the USA.



The meeting was originally scheduled to take place in Maputo, Mozambique from 13–18th April 2020 but was cancelled due to the current COVID-19 related travel restrictions. In his opening remarks, Dr. Denis Kyetere, the AATF Executive Director applauded the countries’ commitment to the project and their participation in the meeting during “this unusual COVID-19 situation whose impact is felt on a global scale”.

He urged the participants to share strategies that would help steer the project activities during the prevailing travel restrictions, while at the same time calling on them to observe their respective government directives and protocols to combat the spread of the disease. The meeting saw the country teams present progress reports including results on the successful confined field trial in Ethiopia, and commencement and continuation of the same in Nigeria and Tanzania, respectively. South Africa was hailed for the successful deployment of TELA maize varieties to farming communities that had earlier abandoned their farms due to fall armyworm infestation.

On his part, Lawrence Kent, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation representative incharge of the TELA project thanked all the participants for working hard during the COVID-19 pandemic that had made working increasingly difficult. He thanked the project partners for the impressive results, attributing it to persistence and determination by everyone even with COVID-19 restrictions. “The TELA project team should continue their commitments towards getting TELA maize varieties to farmers to help improve agriculture in Africa,” he said.

According to Dr. Tracey Powell of USAID, the diverse tools that the project employed to align regulatory and outreach objectives have immensely contributed to the progress achieved. “I wish to congratulate all the country representatives for their stamina in realizing the progress achieved in the year,” said Dr. Powell. She called for alignment with other partners in seed systems to create synergies that would ensure successful delivery of the Bt maize to farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The TELA Maize Project is a public-private partnership coordinated by AATF and that is working towards commercialization of transgenic drought-tolerant and insect-protected maize varieties to enhance food security in Sub-Saharan Africa. The project builds on progress made from a decade of excellent breeding work under the Water Efficient Maize for Africa (WEMA) Project.

WEMA’s purpose was to develop drought-tolerant and insect-protected maize varieties for farmers to produce more reliable harvests under moderate drought conditions and protect maize from insects. The long-term goal of the TELA Maize Project is to make



drought-tolerant and insect-protected maize varieties available royalty-free to smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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About AATF (<https://www.aatf-africa.org/about-us/>)

AATF is an African-led not-for-profit organization that is working towards agricultural transformation to address food and nutrition security and generate health and wealth for smallholder farmers through access and delivery of innovative and fitting agricultural technologies. AATF believes that farmers in Africa will become globally competitive through use of the best technology, optimal agricultural practices, strategic product value addition and boosted access to efficient markets within and outside Africa.

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Funders

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