

PRESS RELEASE

Ethiopia approves high-yielding *DroughtTEGO*[®] Maize Variety for Commercial Release

The variety was developed through conventional breeding to withstand drought and is tolerant to Turcicum Leaf Blight disease



[Nairobi, November 4, 2020]: The Ethiopian government has approved registration and release of a new maize variety for commercialization to increase the national maize productivity in the country. The approval of the *DroughtTEGO*[®] variety was granted by the National Variety Release Committee in October 2020.

The new *DroughtTEGO*[®] variety, was developed by scientists at the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) in collaboration with other partners including Bayer Crop Science and CIMMYT under coordination of AATF.

Ethiopia becomes the second country in Sub-Saharan African (SSA) region after Kenya to commercialise this maize variety (WE7210) for use by farmers.

The scientists at EIAR and partners validated the variety performance and adaption in Ethiopian context by carrying out national variety trials and on-farm variety verification trials to determine the agronomic potential and adaptability of the new variety relative to those currently in the market.

AATF in partnership with EIAR and other partners have been working towards getting the drought-tolerant maize variety to farmers in Ethiopia to enhance food security in the country.

According to Dr. Sylvester Oikeh, the TELA Project Manager at AATF, the released maize variety provides 16 to 23 per cent yield advantage over the best commercial hybrid in the country.

“This means that adoption of this hybrid, which has been conventionally bred, has the potential to increase the overall maize productivity in Ethiopia,” said Dr. Oikeh.

Conventional breeding is done by crossing together plants with relevant characteristics and selecting the offspring with the desired combination of the features, because of genes inherited from the parents.

The hybrid maize variety has been developed to withstand drought and is protected against Turcicum Leaf Blight (TLB) disease. TLB is a major maize foliar disease in Ethiopia, causing yield loss of up to 61 per cent.

Dr. Oikeh explains that when high incidence of the disease and severity occur during maize production, the grains are altered, causing restrictive starch formation which results in chaffy grains and reduced yield.

“Ordinarily, farmers in Africa do not spray fungicides to control TLB. This means that they have no control of the disease when it hits the maize crops and the only solution is planting tolerant varieties,” he emphasized.

He further noted that the variety is capable of withstanding frequent drought events in the country.

“As in most parts of SSA, agriculture in Ethiopia is rainfed and smallholder farmers continue to face the increasing brunt of climate change with frequent drought events. Drought has had a huge impact on people's livelihoods and has caused a major food crisis in Ethiopia,” he explains.

The decision to release the variety means that farmers will have access to the seed that will considerably contribute to increasing the national maize productivity, which currently stands at an average yield of about 4 tons per hectare

Dr. Denis Kyetere, Executive Director of AATF, noted that Ethiopia’s move to release the variety for farmers shows the country’s commitment towards improving the livelihoods of smallholder farmers in the country.



“We are working towards empowering smallholder farmers across Sub-Saharan Africa with a wide choice of agricultural innovations that generate wealth and health for their families and communities,” said Dr. Kyetere.

According to Dr. Feto Esimo, the Director General of EIAR, the variety will be licensed to seed companies in Ethiopia to produce the seed and sell to farmers.

Launched in Kenya in 2013, DroughtTEGO® is a trademark for high yielding drought-tolerant maize varieties developed by the Water Efficient Maize for Africa Project to mitigate against moderate drought.

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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 EIAR

EIAR’s mission is to conduct research that will provide market competitive agricultural technologies that will contribute to increased agricultural productivity and nutrition quality, sustainable food security, economic development, and conservation of the integrity of natural resources and the environment. EIAR aspires to see improved livelihood of all Ethiopians engaged in agriculture, agro-pastoralism, and pastoralism through market competitive agricultural technologies.

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