

*better tools, better harvests, better lives*



Ms Nancy Muchiri, Communications and Partnerships Manager, AATF, explains the *Striga* Control Project to His Excellency, President Mwai Kibaki and entourage during the 25th FAO Regional Conference for Africa held in Nairobi in June 2008

### Strides is...

a quarterly progress update by AATF for stakeholders in the *Striga* Control Project.

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## Promoting *Striga* control technologies in west Kenya

The *Striga* Control Project has embarked on activities aimed at increasing the uptake of *Striga* management technologies in west Kenya. The African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) is supporting an initiative that involves free distribution of inputs to farmers in small sample packs for demonstration purposes.

The demonstration pack, labelled *Striga* Technology Extension Package (STEP), consists of 0.25kg of StrigAway® maize (*Ua Kayongo*), 1kg of DAP and 0.5kg of CAN fertiliser and user instructions printed in English and Kiswahili. The package is intended for 0.01 ha of cropland severely infested with *Striga* and farmers are encouraged to combine the StrigAway maize with other management practices like legume suppression. Recipients of STEP are encouraged to plant the demonstrations on easily accessible plots, so as to increase the visibility of *Striga* management technologies.

The initiative aims at promoting increased use of StrigAway maize and legume suppression technologies in the management of *Striga* in west Kenya. Spot checks carried out in Busia, in Kenya, and Tororo, in Uganda, at the onset of the 2008 long rains season indicate that farmers' awareness level on the availability of *Striga* control technologies remains low.

This on-farm demonstration will introduce *Striga* management technologies to over 40,000 affected households in west Kenya. This initiative also includes educating farmers on good crop management practices, and crop performance assessment in relation to *Striga* incidences during the growing season. STEP will be distributed over the two cropping seasons of 2008.

During the 2008 long rains season, the *Striga* Control Project distributed 21,800 STEP packages in Nyanza and Western provinces of Kenya. At the same time, the project established 42 demonstrations in 12 districts of the two provinces. The demonstrations feature between two and four technologies with all showcasing *MBILI* system with StrigAway maize. *MBILI* system is based upon alternating every maize row with two rows of legumes.

The demonstration plots also feature the legume smother, where two grain legumes (soya beans and groundnuts) are grown together in the short rains season, and in rotation with maize in the

long rains season. The plots will be used for teaching purposes during the project's field days.

The demonstrations are being coordinated by the Forum for Organic Resource Management (FORMAT), the lead NGO in the *Striga* Control Project in west Kenya, in collaboration with the Kenya Ministry of Agriculture, local NGOs, farmer associations, community-based organisations and Maseno University.

## A new credit system

A new system that seeks to enable farmers access StrigAway maize and fertiliser on credit has been introduced in west Kenya. The inputs are presented in parcels labelled Farmer Investment in *Striga* Technologies (FIST) and can be acquired through purchase or on credit to be paid for using proceeds from the harvest. The FIST package contains 2.5kg of StrigAway maize and 5kg of DAP and 2.5kg of CAN fertiliser and should plant 0.1 ha of land. 800 FIST packs were issued in the 2008 long rains season. This credit system is being implemented by FORMAT.

## Raising awareness

The *Striga* Control Project engaged in intensive awareness creation events across Nyanza and Western provinces. In the period beginning March to June 2008, the project facilitated a series of farmers' field days and participated in exhibitions involving various farmer associations, community-based organisations, the government's extension services and agro-inputs companies.

AATF exhibited the project during the 1<sup>st</sup> National Conference and Exhibition for Research Results Dissemination held in Nairobi in May 2008 and at the 25<sup>th</sup> FAO Regional Conference for Africa held at the United Nations Offices in Nairobi (UNON) in June 2008. During the FAO meeting, AATF had the opportunity to present the *Striga* project to His Excellency, President Mwai Kibaki, and the Director General of FAO, Dr Jacques Diouf among other dignitaries.

Earlier, in March 2008, AATF exhibited the *Striga* Control Project, among others, at the Science with Africa exhibition hosted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

AATF is currently embarking on a programme to produce and distribute extension and educational materials targeting agro-dealers, extension workers and farmers in eastern Africa.