

## ECObasic launches 800 demonstrations to showcase hybrid maize varieties.



*One of the Demonstration fields in Kano state*

ECObasic Seed Company, a subsidiary of the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF), has launched a massive on-farm demonstration project involving 16 seed companies and hundreds of farmers in 800 locations across six states in Nigeria.

The demonstration, covering all the maize growing belts and ecologies of Nigeria, is aimed at showcasing the benefits of planting hybrid maize varieties as well as encouraging farmers to plant seeds instead of saved grains.

Despite the advantages of hybrid over Open Pollinated Varieties (OPVs), the adoption of hybrid seeds in Nigeria is very low and stands at about 10 percent, compared to East African countries like Kenya, which has an adoption rate of about 90 percent, making it difficult for Nigeria to meet the national requirement for maize grain.

Mr Brighton Karume, ECObasic's Managing Director noted that hybrid maize seeds have improved genetics, a higher production potential, and unique trait combinations to combat diseases. "They are uniform in colour and maturity, and with good agronomic practices, they can yield more than five metric tons per hectare," Mr. Karume noted.

"To accelerate hybrid adoption and help Nigeria achieve food security, ECObasic Seed Limited, producer of quality hybrid maize foundation seeds is supporting selected seed entities producing certified maize in scaling up hybrid maize demonstrations across the country. These demonstrations will help showcase the

many benefits of hybrid maize seeds to farmers which in turn will spur the demand for certified hybrid maize seeds by farmers and foundation hybrid seeds by seed companies,” he explained.

According to Mr. Karume, the 800 demonstration fields are in Kano, Kaduna, FCT, Benue, Jigawa and Niger states with thirty Seed companies participating in what is regarded as one of the biggest demonstrations to be embarked upon by a seed company in the country.

“The participating seed companies were provided with all necessary inputs to establish 0.05 ha (500 square meters or one-twentieth of a hectare) in prominent locations. The seed companies/out-growers will maintain the fields until maturity, and the proceeds from the fields will belong to the seed companies/out-growers,” he stated.

He pointed out that the demonstration plots have been planted and plans have advanced for the hosting of 80 Brown Field Days that would bring farmers and other stakeholders to see the hybrid maize plant on the field, adding that The Brown Field Days would serve as an avenue for farmers and stakeholders in the 80 locations to learn about the benefits of hybrids and good agronomic practices (GAPs) for increased adoption.

Mr Kehinde Jimoh, AATF’s Seed System and AgriBusiness Expert supervising the demonstration said the project has the capacity to increase the adoption rate from the current 10 percent if farmers have the opportunity to compare the difference between OPVs and hybrid maize performance.

“The demonstration which is the largest hybrid maize demonstration in Nigeria is expected to spur the demand for certified hybrid seeds by farmers and foundation seeds by seed companies and also increase visibility for ECOBasic Seed within the seed sector as a producer of top-quality foundation seed,” Jimoh said.

He is confident that the exercise will be beneficial to farmers as they would be opportune to learn or update their knowledge on agronomic best practices that lead to increased production.