

NaCRRI July 2017 Bulletin

Stakeholders convene for Cassava Seed System end of Project Review with a message to sustain production of clean planting materials



Several stakeholders of the BMGF funded Cassava Seed System Project (CSS) convened at NaCRRI on July 5, 2017 for end of project review and chart way forward on sustaining a successful cassava seed system. This was a model project to develop sustainable seed system for a vegetative propagated crop and mitigate effects of economically important cassava diseases such as cassava brown streak and cassava mosaic largely spread by dissemination of infected planting materials.

The Institute Director, Dr. Godfrey Asea during the Meeting described this project as a model with a unique partnership of both private sector and public institutions that have successfully created awareness about importance of clean planting materials, hence created demand and commercialized cassava planting materials. He noted that, "Even though this was a pilot project, farmers were now appreciating the value of clean seed and the project had created market for clean seed, ".

Dr. Anthony Pariyo, the Project Coordinator revealed that it has optimized the production of Pre Basic seeds by producing over 31,000 plantlets, way beyond what was planned.

He also indicated that the implementation of this project has established and tested a complete seed chain and facilitated a tested inspection and certification system. "MAAIF was now mandated to issue permits that are to be used to trace the origin of the planting materials, to support the current system of quality control strategy for clean seed production," he emphasized.

While closing the meeting, the Commissioner, Seed Inspection and Phytosanitary Services, emphasized the need for the continuity of the project to address the overwhelming demand for seed (80,000 bags) as compared to the current supply of 26,000 bags. "With a gap of about 60,000 bags it was still difficult to convince farmers to purchase planting materials from only certified sources," she noted.

She also implored NARO to join other stakeholders to participate in amending the seed policy recently referred by Parliament to cater for the vegetative seed.

Minister of State for Agriculture launches the 2016 Global Status of Commercialized Biotech Crops Report



The Minister of State for Agriculture, Hon. Christopher Kibazanga launched the 2016 Global Status of Commercialized Biotech Crops Report on July 6, 2017 at Hotel Africana in an event attended by several biotechnology stakeholders. This event was organized by Uganda Biosciences Information center (UBIC).

In his remarks, the Minister said Together with conducive and harmonized regulations, crop biotechnology innovations can help increase food production to address the needs of the growing global population, especially those in the developing countries like Uganda.

The ISAAA report highlights the trends of adoption of GM crops since their first commercialization in 1996, the global economic impact of GM crops, progress of GM crops research and commercialization, as well as prospects for the future of biotech crops in Africa and beyond.

Hon. Kibazanga reiterated the Government's commitment to pass the National Biotechnology and Biosafety Bill into law, in order to facilitate safe development and application of biotechnology in Uganda. The Minister engaged the Members of Parliament to speed up the process of passing the National Biotech and Biosafety law so that farmers can access products of regulated biotechnology. "Any resistance against science in any field means that you are only telling your people to remain poor," Hon. Kibazanga said.

The event was attended by media, scientists, and policy makers. The launch happened at a time when the country is still dealing with a precarious food security situation due to unpredictable rain patterns and an unprecedented refugee crisis from neighboring South Sudan.

President Museveni launches nutritious beans and cassava varieties while lauding efforts by research in developing other climate resilient technologies



President Yoweri Museveni officially launched the recently released bio-fortified bean varieties (NAROBAN 1, 2, 3 4C & 5C) rich in iron and zinc and the two popular cassava varieties (NAROCAS1 and NAROCAS2). He was officially opening the Annual source of the Nile Agricultural and Trade Show held July 17 to 23 in Jinja.

The three bush bean varieties and two climbers were developed in partnership with HarvestPlus, CIAT and USAID-Feed the Future as solution to micronutrient malnutrition especially in children and expectant mothers.

The two cassava varieties are high-yielding, aromatic, sweet in taste, pest resilient, and are rich in food and high dry matter. They are also resistant to Cassava Mosaic Disease and tolerant to Cassava Brown Streak Disease. These two diseases are currently the biggest constraints to cassava production in Uganda and can cause significant yield loss valued at US \$24.2million annually.

The Agricultural show attracted hundreds of exhibitors along the value chains and thousands of farmers and other show goers. The theme for this year was **“Managing the challenges of climate change for sustainable agriculture”**

In his remarks, the President also decried the delay in passing the National Biotechnology and Biosafety Bill, which has been in Parliament for six years. He likened the delay that is affecting progress to a Pope who believed the earth was flat and excommunicated a scientist who insisted that the earth was round.

The Bill is meant to provide a regulatory framework to ensure safety in research and development of modern biotechnology in Uganda and the commercialization of genetically modified organisms and related matters. The President also hailed scientists for developing high yielding crops that are drought tolerant.

Stress Tolerant Maize for Africa Technician Training Workshop conducted at Regional Rice Research and Training Centre.



A total of 31 technicians, drawn from five Institutes (NaCRRI, AbiZARDI, BuZARDI, BugiZARDI, and NaSARRI) and eight seed companies attended a training course for maize technicians between July 31st -4 August at Regional Rice Research and Training Centre, Namulonge. The training focused on upgrading technicians' skill and knowledge of field trial management, variety testing, registration, and release. Topics covered included breeding for abiotic and biotic stress, management of trials and nurseries, hybrid development, on-farm variety testing, seed production, variety descriptors, variety release and registration, and use of the CIMMYT Fieldbook software for pedigree and data management. Course presentations were in the form of lectures, demonstrations, and practical sessions.

The workshop was officially opened and closed by Godfrey Asea, Institute Director who emphasized the importance of the course for improved testing network and trial management. In his remarks, he thanked the management of CIMMYT and STMA for the training opportunity and the

lives by improving the yield of stressed tolerant maize varieties and highlighted some of the tools to help build capacity to improve genetic gains.

Course participants displayed great enthusiasm and willingness to learn new tools. Paul Kyogondeze a Technician at NASECO Seed Company noted that was impressed with the training. "I have gained a lot of knowledge for example on using field books. I am actually planning to apply this approach in the planting season 2017B," he said before adding that "I was also captivated with the new skills in phenotyping and gender mainstreaming in breeding," he emphasized.

The course was organized under the auspices of Stress Tolerant Maize for Africa Project in collaboration with National Crops Resources Research Institute. It was coordinated by STMA Dominic Karanja and resource persons for the training from CIMMYT included Dan Makumbi, Jumbo MacDonald, Mosisa, Amsal

facilitation.

Dr. Stephen Mugo, CIMMYT Regional Representative for Africa, emphasized the project goal to change farmers'

Tarekegne, Henri Tonnang and Bruce Anani; NaCRRI's Julius Sserumaga, Michael Otim, Charles Kasozi and Daniel Kwemoi also facilitated during the training.

Regulators, communicators look to consolidate biosafety communication efforts at ABBC 2017



The Africa Biosafety Network of Expertise in partnership with Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST), Uganda Biosciences Information Center (UBIC), the International Service for the acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) and the Program for Biosafety Systems (PBS) organized the Agri-Biotechnology and Biosafety Communications (ABBC) 2017 Africa Symposium from July 18-20, 2017.

Over 80 participants including heads of National Biosafety Authorities, government ministers, communicators, policy makers and other stakeholders in the biotech industry congregated to share experiences and lay strategies to advance biosafety communication in Africa. Expert presentations, in-depth discussions and practical working sessions comprised the bulk of the symposium program. Principals and essentials of biosafety communication, communication to build alliances and trust in biosafety management,

experience sharing on biosafety communication, managing the narrative of emerging breeding technologies and multimedia approaches in biosafety communication in Africa were some of the thematic topics discussed during the event.

The symposium offered an opportune platform for sharing and advancing innovative strategies for communicating biosafety concepts, processes and decisions, valorizing exchange of approaches, resources and expertise on biosafety communications and identification of critical follow up actions to align biosafety communications to current and emerging plant breeding technologies. A key immediate outcome of the event was the establishment of the African Biosafety Communicators Network to further engagements beyond the symposium.