

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**GLOBAL SEED INDUSTRY LEADERS GATHER IN NAIROBI, HIGHLIGHT COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR AFRICAN AGRICULTURE**

Nairobi, Kenya – The International Seed Federation (ISF) has convened its Board Meetings in Nairobi, bringing together national, regional and global seed industry leaders to reinforce their commitment to Africa’s agricultural development, especially in the face of climate change and a rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape.

“Africa is on the verge of unlocking the transformative power of quality seeds,” said Arthur Santosh Attavar, President of ISF. “The private seed sector, represented by ISF, stands ready to support governments, civil society actors, and farmers in the continent in achieving food security, resilience, and economic growth by ensuring that farmers have access to high-quality, climate-resilient seeds.”

“This meeting highlighted ISF’s dedication to strengthening partnerships with African stakeholders, led by the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) and the Seed Trade Association of Kenya (STAK), to support innovation in plant breeding, harmonize regulatory frameworks, and create an enabling business environment,” added Attavar.

BRIDGING INNOVATION AND ACCESS

Plant breeding innovation is a cornerstone of agricultural progress, especially in Africa, where 2021 estimates show that up to 65% of productive land is degraded and invasive species cost the agricultural sector an estimated \$65 billion annually.¹

Recent advances in plant breeding innovations on the continent have already demonstrated significant benefits:

- Bt cowpea in Nigeria, approved in 2019, has reduced the need for insecticides by providing resistance to the Maruca pod borer pest. [Source: [IITA](#)]
- Bt cotton in Kenya, commercialized in 2020, offers protection against the African bollworm, a major threat to cotton yields. [Source: [ISAAA](#)]
- Teff breeding in Ethiopia is developing new lodging-resistant varieties, potentially reducing yield losses by up to 25%. [Source: [MDPI](#)]

“As a sector that invests, on average, 25% of annual turnover in research and development, developing crop varieties that offer higher yields, pest and disease resistance, and greater climate adaptability for farmers is part of the day-to-day business of seed companies in Africa and worldwide,” said Michael Keller, ISF Secretary General.

¹ Sources: FAO, 2021; CABI, 2021

BUILDING RESILIENT SEED SYSTEMS IN AFRICA

Despite these advancements, access to quality seeds remains a challenge due to inconsistent policies and the prevalence of counterfeit and uncertified seeds. ISF and its partners are working to close this gap through capacity-building initiatives like the [Seed Resilience Project](#) in Rwanda, and increasing access to quality seeds through seed certification programs.

ISF is also a strategic partner to increase Africa's participation in the OECD seed certification schemes through the [OECD-G7 Joint Initiative](#), which aims to enhance the availability of certified, high-quality seeds in 14 African countries over the next five years.

Additionally, ISF applauded the efforts by the African Union Commission (AUC) and the AUDA-NEPAD to streamline biotechnology regulations and promote the adoption of new breeding technologies, including genome editing, that can enhance food production and support food security.

“Without strong regulatory frameworks that give Africa's farmers access to quality seeds, they will remain at a disadvantage,” added Keller. “We need policies that enable, rather than hinder, seed choice for all farmers, including smallholder farmers, helping them build more resilient food systems.”

After the Board meetings, ISF will join the [AFSTA 2025 Congress](#) in Kigali, Rwanda on 3-5 March 2025. A field visit to the trial plots of the Seed Resilience Project will be organized in coordination with project partner Fair Planet and the Rwandan Agricultural Board (RAB). The visit will showcase how the project is trialing the latest varieties of vegetables and potatoes to identify varieties best suited for Rwanda's agroecological conditions, helping farmers increase food production and boosting incomes in the long-term.

In Ethiopia, the approach implemented by Fair Planet has already helped 75,000 smallholder farmers triple their vegetable production.

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About ISF

ISF is the voice of the global seed industry. It has represented the interests of its members since 1924, and represents 96% of the international seed trade today. With a global reach extending to members around the world and official observer status in intergovernmental and international organizations, ISF is uniquely positioned to assist in the development of government policy and business strategy.

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