

# EXPERIENCES OF AFSTA

BY JUSTIN RAKOTOARISAONA  
SECRETARY GENERAL OF AFSTA  
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## PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION

- A few persons (promoters) met from time to time to discuss further about the creation of a regional seed association;
- Sensitization of the African seed stakeholders on the necessity of setting up a regional Association (especially potential members);
- Looking for donors to fund the preparatory meeting to set up the scene;
- Convening the 3-day preparatory meeting in Lilongwe from 8 to 10 April 1999

## PREPARATORY MEETING LILONGWE

- **Participants:**
  - Strong support from the FIS (currently ISF)
  - National Seed Trade Associations, Research Institutions, NGOs, development partners, international seed organizations; etc.;
  - 74 participants of whom 39 seed companies and seed associations from 16 African countries;
- **Objectives of the preparatory meeting**
  - To know whether or not the African seed industry needs a regional seed association;
  - Definition of the mission of the forthcoming regional association;
  - Geographical coverage;
  - Membership categories;

## PREPARATORY MEETING LILONGWE (cont'd)

- Source of funds for the regional seed association;
- Nomination of Ad hoc committee to continue the work after the Lilongwe meeting;
- Timing for the execution of the tasks after Lilongwe;
- Founding Congress/General Assembly
- **Outcome of the preparatory meeting in Lilongwe**
  - Participants unanimously agreed to set up AFSTA;
  - Mission and objectives of AFSTA well defined;
  - One Association for the continent because the African seed market was too small to be divided into smaller sub-regions;

## PREPARATORY MEETING LILONGWE (cont'd)

- Ordinary members with voting rights (private and public seed companies and NSTAs based in Africa)
- Associate members without voting rights (NGOs, Service providers, NSTAs and seed companies outside Africa)
- Funding: Membership fee primarily, net proceed from annual congress and project funds (the Associations needs external funding for the first two or three years);
- Nomination of Ad hoc committee with 10 members from South Africa, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal and Zimbabwe with clear mandate until the founding meeting;

## PREPARATION FOR THE LAUNCH OF AFSTA

- Meeting of Ad hoc committee in September 1999 in Nairobi;
- Preparation for all the necessary documents for the Association such the AFSTA Constitution and Bylaws, the budget for the first year, registartion of AFSTA in Kenya, etc. ;
- South African Seed Organization (SANSOR) accepted to host the first founding congress in March 2000 in Pretoria;
- Donors helped for the frist AFSTA founding congress 2000;

## AFSTA FOUNDING CONGRESS



- The Constitution and Bylaws with the objectives and mission and the governance structure were adopted;
- 42 AFSTA founding members were elected (9 NSTAs, 25 seed companies and 8 NGOs and service providers) and 34 confirmed their membership after the congress 2000;
- The initial budget of US\$105,000 to run the Secretariat was adopted by the General Assembly;
- Kenya was elected to host the AFSTA Secretariat and the Seed Trade Association of Kenya was the interim Secretariat until 15th September 2000 when the Secretary General reported;
- The President, the Vice President, and the Past President together with the other Board members were elected for two years.

## GOVERNING STRUCTURE



- Annual General Meeting is the supreme body for decision making;
- Secretariat is composed with the Secretary General and the staff he employs;
- The AFSTA Board is composed of 12 members from ordinary members and 2 members representing the associate members;
- The Executive Committee is composed by the President, the Vice President and the Past President;
- The Secretary General is ex-officio members of the Board and the Executive committee but without voting rights;
- The Committees or working groups can be created as deemed necessary.

## AFSTA SECRETARIAT

- **The Secretariat was kept to minimum number of staff and composed only of:**
  - The Secretary General
  - One Administrative Assistant

*(This lasted for about 8 years)*
- **Setting up the office**
  - An office space was identified next to STAK (to support each other)
  - The minimum necessary equipment and office furniture were bought when the Secretary General came on Board;
- **Sources of funds to run the Secretariat:**
  - Membership fees
  - Proceed from the annual congress
  - Some project funds (very few)

## SOME CHALLENGES

- Not all the potential members joined AFSTA in the beginning;
- Late payment of membership fee;
- Late recognition of AFSTA as representative of the African private seed industry;
- Scarcity of the resources to conduct activities for AFSTA members and even to run the Secretariat (cash flow management);
- The AFSTA Board paid for themselves to attend the AFSTA Board meetings;

## CONCLUSION



- Setting up an association needs to have enough members who are motivated and convinced that the association is important;
- The Association requires external financial support at its inception for two or three years;
- The country that hosts the Secretariat needs to give strong support to the regional association until it is up and running;
- The voice of the African private seed industry was better heard through advocacy of AFSTA.