



THE AFRICAN SEED TRADE ASSOCIATION

SEED MOVEMENT UNDER THE PANDEMIC (COVID19)

The health crisis caused by the “*coronavirus disease 2019*” (COVID-19) has slowed down nearly every facet of life and the seed system is not an exception. The African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) joins the global and regional communities in supporting measures to prevent further spread of the virus while bearing in mind that seed should reach farmers in a timely manner.

With a view to controlling the spread of the disease, a number of important seed industry events and meetings have been cancelled or postponed such as the ISF Congress 2020 that was to be held in South Africa in June 2020 as well as many other international seed meetings. This was also witnessed at the just concluded AFSTA Congress 2020 that was held in Livingstone, Zambia in March 2020 that also experienced a decline in the number of delegates.

However, the movement of seed within the country and across borders should not be affected considering that coronaviruses have poor survivability on surfaces, and it is highly improbable that coronaviruses can survive international transport, especially true for shipments of seed handled by professional seed companies that already respect strict sanitary, phytosanitary and hygienic handling protocol in accordance with National and international standards.

Closing borders or even slowing down the cross-border seed movement creates a significant problem in the seed supply chain domestically, regionally and globally. In a number of regions, it is now the planting season and timely delivery of seed and other agricultural inputs is crucial to ensure farmers plant on time in order to ensure food security especially after the health crisis.

AFSTA is willing to join hands with all concerned government authorities and agencies in Africa and appeals to their support to ensure that seed movement is facilitated in order to reach its destination without delay. Particularly, AFSTA urges National Seed Trade Associations to collaborate with relevant authorities at national level so that seed movement is not hindered within the country and across the borders.

We wish all AFSTA members and seed stakeholders well at this trying moment and please rest assured we are in it together.

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