CropLife Africa Middle East Holds Annual Conference in Beirut

The annual conference of the North Africa & Middle East Hub convened on 25 and 26 Oct, 2011 at the Hotel Bristol in Beirut, Lebanon.

Held under the patronage of HE, Dr. Hussein Hage Alhassan, Minister of Agriculture of Lebanon, the conference was organized in cooperation with the Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development and co-organised by the Ministry of Agriculture in Lebanon.

Over 100 participants attended the conference representing various disciplines of the agricultural sector in the Arab countries. In addition to the industry workshop attended by delegates from the national crop protection associations, the conference also encompassed the annual workshop for the country registrars of pesticides in the context of harmonizing regulations and laws governing the management of crop protection products in the region of North Africa Middle East.

The conference concluded a number of recommendations aimed at strengthening the ongoing regional regulatory harmonization on pesticide management in relation to registration, importation and handling of agricultural chemicals.

Projects on the responsible use of pesticides and integrated pest management were approved for implementation at national and regional levels, in line with the elements of Stewardship Vision 2020 developed by CropLife International.

The conference also deliberated and resolved measures to alleviate counterfeiting and illegal trade in pesticides, with due consideration of the enforcement of the elements of intellectual property rights.

Director General of CropLife Africa Middle East, Dr. Rudolf Guyer and Vice President, Mr. Michel Chartouni, confirmed the organisation’s long-term commitment to support regional projects aimed at strengthening regulatory harmonization and stewardship activities in cooperation with public and private sector stakeholders in the region.
CropLife Africa Middle East Holds Annual Conference in Beirut

Regional Coordinator, Ali Mohd Ali leading conference deliberations

Philippe Cattan delivering feedback from the Regulatory Workshop

Combined Sessions

Representing the Plant Science Industry
CropLife International Launches the Declaration for Farmer Choice

Declaration for Farmer Choice calls for new action on empowering farmers to feed seven billion today and nine billion by 2050.

On 31 October 2011 – the United Nations estimated that by the end of the day, the world’s population will have quietly shot past seven billion. In the past decade the world has grown by nearly a billion people, and since 1940 the population has more than tripled. To meet the challenge of feeding this exponentially growing world, the plant science industry has created innovative technologies that provide farmers with the means to boost yields, increase farm income and protect natural resources. However for these tools to meet the challenge of feeding the next billion people, nations must ensure farmers have access to these sustainable, science-based technologies while investing in the next generation of innovation. To support this effort, CropLife International is launching the Declaration for Farmer Choice, a new framework built on five principles that can empower farmers with the knowledge and freedom to determine what they need in order to grow crops successfully and sustainably.

“Today, our world stands at a crossroads; we have surpassed seven billion inhabitants and will surpass eight billion in the next 15 years. To feed these individuals we must empower farmers to improve their land and livelihoods by providing access to new agricultural technologies,” explained Howard Minigh, President and CEO of CropLife International. “As the international community prepares for the June 2012 RIO+20 Earth Summit, the Declaration for Farmer Choice will provide a basis for discussion on how to foster sustainable farming practices while improving farmer’s lives, especially in the developing world.”

Through its five principles, the Declaration for Farmer Choice creates a foundation to determine how to achieve green agriculture while improving yields and increasing farm incomes.

The Declaration for Farmer Choice calls for:

• sustainable, productive and environmentally-responsible technologies
• enhanced access to agricultural technologies
• science-based regulatory schemes
• increased agriculture investment
• improved agricultural knowledge

“Under the Declaration for Farmer Choice, farmers are recognized as the best and most knowledgeable stewards of their unique plot of land, and green agriculture is comprised of a mosaic of sustainable agricultural solutions and practices that farmers can choose from,” said Minigh. “We urge individuals and organizations to sign on to the Declaration and support these basic principles.”

At launch, several organizations have already joined CropLife International in supporting the Declaration for Farmer Choice. The International Seed Federation, Truth about Trade and Technology, Pan African Agribusiness & Agro industry Consortium, and the International Fertilizer Industry Association have pledged their support and will join CropLife in demonstrating to the public and private sector the importance of allowing farmers the freedom to choose the tools that are best for their land and livelihoods.

To learn more about the Declaration for Farmer Choice and to find out how to sign on, visit www.ActionforAg.org/get-involved
Three training initiatives took place in the region; on October 6 & 7 in Accra, Ghana, on October 14 in Aboisso, and October 28 in Abengourou, Côte d’Ivoire.

The training in Accra targeted customs, police, judiciary officers, industry participants and the supply chain (retailers, farmers). The two separate sessions in Côte d’Ivoire targeted only customs agents at the borders and officers of the two cities above.

The purpose of these initiatives was to provide capacity and knowhow to the participants to enable them deal with counterfeit and illegal pesticides and sensitize them on the risks associated with such malpractices on man, the environment and the country’s economy.

These successful undertakings provided a platform for:

- Dialogue to be considered in a joint collaborative effort to fight against the trade in counterfeit and illegal pesticides;
- Intensifying the capacity building program and embark on more frequent meetings to exchange information on the issue;
- Establishing Anti-Counterfeiting Committees to coordinate the activities and steer the adaptation of the regulations;
- Embark on an intensive communication campaign on the issue and the associated risks attached to this.
East & Southern Africa

CropLife Malawi – Special General Meeting

Following the Annual General Meeting in March, the CleanFarms Assessment in April and the Association Management Training in July, a Special General Meeting was arranged to seek clarity from the members as to whether or not to continue as an association. This took place at the Limbe Country Club on 5 October.

The agenda covered the following:

- Purpose of the meeting
- The CleanFarms Project
- The Assessment Report supported by the Minutes of the March AGM together with the outcome of the Association Training
- The options on the way forward
- AOB and closing remarks

An Executive Council meeting will take place during the first two weeks of November to consider the options developed starting with the re-writing of the Constitution.

Container Management – South Africa

On 28 October, under the auspices of “Plastics South Africa” a group of interested stakeholders met to look at the recycling of plastics in the packaging industry and the possible synergisms that the partners could bring to the table.

Participants included:

- Plastics SA
- AVCASA / CropLife South Africa
- The plastics recycling industry
- The plastics manufacturing sector
- The “oil container recycling industry

A list of action points were developed with a follow-up meeting planned for end November.
Planned visit of Prof. Klaus Ammann

The “Biotech Working Group” in South Africa have had discussions with various stakeholders, and a suggestion has been proposed that for next year the eminent scientist, Prof Klaus Ammann, Emeritus, University of Bern, Switzerland, one of the top authorities and highly respected in the field of biotechnology, be invited to visit the country.

A further suggestion is to capitalize on this visit and that en route to South Africa he stops over in Kenya where a one-day seminar/workshop takes place. This will allow Prof. Ammann to address the future prospects of GM crops and what this could mean to Africa, with higher yields, food security brought about through the GMO technology, including drought resistant crops.

The idea is to bring together in Nairobi influential representatives from, Kenya, Uganda, Malawi and Tanzania i.e. scientific communities, agronomists, agriculturalists, research institutions, politicians (ministries of agriculture, science and technology, trade and environmental affairs), farming associations, regulators, biotechnology institutions, WEMA, etc.

The organisers feel that there is a real need to bring a top independent biotech heavy weight like Ammann to Africa to counter the anti GMO lobby in the country.

CropLife is regarded as a key stakeholder in this development and during October attended four meetings with the organisers.
Gauteng Premier, Nomvula Mokonyane opened the 9th Agricultural biotechnology international conference (ABIC 2011) at the Sandton Convention Center in Johannesburg. The Conference was held at the convention center from the 6th to the 9th of September 2011. In her opening remarks she said biotechnology was a transformative technology entrenched in sustainable development to create better living conditions, while contributing to environment conservation.

“There is significant pressure on natural resources to provide energy for other industries, such as the power industry, through renewable energies. Food production has to explore other technological methods to provide sufficient food for the growing population of the province,” said Mokonyane.

The conference was attended by world leading biotechnology experts from across the Globe. This was the first time the conference was held in Africa. The theme for ABIC 2011 was agricultural biotechnology for economic development. This prestigious conference was held in Africa for the first time and is destined to put the continent on the map as far as biotechnology is concerned.

According to experts, agricultural biotechnology is no longer viewed as just part of the agricultural sector. It is now recognized that agricultural biotechnology can play a significant role in economic development at the community, provincial, national and international levels.

At the conference, industry leaders, investors, policy makers, scientists, researchers and other professionals working in the field of agricultural biotechnology interacted with each other to look at the latest advances, barriers to biotechnology and future scenarios.

The conference has tracks in Bio-economy; Genomics for Improved Agriculture; Bio-based Industrial Products; Bio-pharming; and, Environmental and Food Safety Evaluation, the New Frontier.

ABIC 2011 was hosted by AfricaBio with the support from the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.
CropLife Ethiopia

Partnership in Training

In mid-September a training workshop was organized by Chem-Trade International in partnership with CropLife Ethiopia. The training focused on application techniques, calibration and Responsible Use. Participants included 28 agro-dealers.

Capacity Development of Pesticide Management

The workshop took place 18 – 20 October at Debrezeyit, some 50 km from Addis Ababa and covered the progress review from the national consultants on aspects of pesticide management.

The focus of the workshop was to review the information collected on the different aspects of pesticide management and covered the following:

- Registered pesticides in Ethiopia and the implementation of the PSMS system
- Development of a national network for inspection and quality control
- Develop a national network for the management of empty containers
- Practices in pesticide use in Ethiopia
- Pesticide Resistance Reduction Programme
- Also covered was the Rotterdam Convention and data collection.

Stakeholders meeting on Pesticide Risk Reduction Activities

The purpose of the workshop, which took in Addis Ababa on 26 October, was to “review and strengthen working relationships between the stakeholders”, with the objective to introduce a Pesticide Risk Reduction Programme.

Participants included the pesticide importers, research organizations / university community, representatives from the horticultural, cereal, coffee, sugarcane and cotton sectors, government and NGO’s. There were a total of 70 participants.

Left: Getachew Cherinet delivering the Responsible Use Training

Group photo

les@croplifeafrica.org

Representing the Plant Science Industry
CropLife International Stewardship Dialogue

CropLife International held a “Stewardship Dialogue” in Berlin 19 – 20 October. The event, which included both Biotech and Crop Protection Stewardship built on an earlier Crop Protection Dialogue in 2005 and was an opportunity to get critical feedback on the industry’s stewardship programmes. Some 50 external stakeholders from governments, international organizations, food retailers and distributors, universities, NGOs and farmer organizations, plus 30 individuals from CropLife International member companies the associations attended the event.

Presentations and group discussions by stakeholders and industry explained various approaches and needs of stewardship. This was followed by a full day of break-away discussions covering numerous stewardship themes, including: stewardship and the food chain; knowledge transfer and training; sustainable agricultural productivity; and the interaction of stewardship, voluntary standards and regulation.

The event was held under ‘Chatham House Rules’ meaning that individual comments will not be attributed, but an overall summary of outcomes and recommended actions will be publically available in January 2012. The presentations from the first day of the Dialogue are on the CropLife website as is a summary of the ‘Crop Protection Stewardship Vision 2020’.

Delegates at the Stewardship in Dialogue Meeting
Contributors:
Ali Mohamed Ali (North Africa Middle East)  ali@croplifeafrica.org
Bama Octave Yao (West-Central Africa)      bama@croplifeafrica.org
Les Hillowitz (East-Southern Africa)              les@croplifeafrica.org

GROWING FOOD - CREATING RENEWABLES - SUPPLYING SUSTAINABLY  
Representing the Plant Science Industry