Dear Readers,

The challenges of the last year have been unprecedented for everyone. For CropLife Africa Middle East Members, charged with furthering the deployment of plant science to raise agricultural output, the levels of attrition to food production have made this mission ever more vital.

Indeed, as the World Food Programme warned of ‘biblical famine’, the rage of the COVID-19 pandemic, has seen people from all walks of life remaining at home and supply chains disrupted, with the region’s largest locust invasion in living memory, brought about a new urgency to service the crop protection industry.

The COVID-19 pandemic put CropLife Africa Middle East and its national associations at the forefront in finding regulatory solutions where normal mechanisms had broken down. We applaud the efforts of many countries for considering agriculture as an essential service during the COVID-19 pandemic and worked with authorities led by Egypt, towards the e-submission of registration applications.

We continued with our commitment in promoting sustainability and stewardship across the region.

The past year also brought about a dramatic transformation to our stewardship programmes by accelerating our use of digital outreach communications. Led by CropLife Zambia, Malawi, Ghana, Morocco and Egypt we partnered with the respective Ministries of Agriculture and other service providers to develop and access databases to deliver SMS outreach messaging to more than half a million farmers.

As we move to scale up our digital stewardship programmes to reach a million smallholder farmers by the end of 2021, the platforms that were created introduced a two-way communication exchange that saw tens of thousands of smallholder farmers contact the respective CropLife national associations with texts and calls.

With the training of more than 16,000 community-level Spray Service Providers, we also continued to work at providing additional agricultural extension and ensuring responsible use.

Moreover, the Africa Stockpiles Programme concluded with CropLife Africa Middle East having engaged to collect and destroy more than 800 tons of obsolete stocks. These materials were rendered redundant through expiry, banned, or through poor storage.

We continued to drive new collection initiatives, such as the partnership in Cote d’Ivoire with the World Bank to collect and destroy 329 tons. Meanwhile, CropLife Kenya developed a guideline for retesting and relabelling stocks still within specification, providing a more efficient way forward for millions of tons of crop protection products.
New Year message from the Director General: continued

We also launched a regional social media platform from September reaching over 300,000 users and interacted with over 30,000 users across Africa. At the same time, we led the way in raising food security issues within the region’s media for World Food Day, with an opinion article authored in partnership with CropLife Asia.

The year brought about a step-change in communications covering the counterfeiting of pesticides, with a programme delivered on local radio stations in vernacular languages across the continent, and the sharing of educational materials and posters. For where a single use of a counterfeit product can lead to a complete crop loss, we see the pressing need to increase the general knowledge and increased regulation covering counterfeits. Assisting in the challenge of counterfeit and illegal products, we worked diligently to nurture coalitions and stakeholder alliances. These included the likes of USDA-USAID-Michigan State University initiative in West Africa, USPTO-Office of Policy and Int. Affairs

The challenges raised by climate change - of extreme weather conditions, rising temperatures, drought, and more pest plagues, accelerated other initiatives, with Kenya and Nigeria among those now developing frameworks distinguishing the regulatory handling of gene editing and opening the way to an array of pest-resistant and drought tolerant new crops.

Overall, the pandemic of 2020 changed the way we worked, but rather than delivering a suboptimal result, the change itself delivered increased engagement and an entirely new platform to continue our work with farmers, governments and partners to ensure sustainable agriculture across the Africa Middle East region.

Dr Samira Amellal
Director General
CropLife Africa Middle East
Stewardship

Strengthening Cooperation in capacity building of IPM-RU in Côte d’Ivoire

On January 11 – 15, CropLife Côte d’Ivoire (CI) and Le Bureau Norme Audit (BNA) organized the first session of the IPM/RU training workshop under a joint capacity building initiative aimed at professionalizing and improving the pesticide supply services to the farming communities. The 75 participants comprised of 20, 15 and 40, dealers, applicators and counselors’ sections, respectively. Many of the participants were seeking certification from the Pesticide Committee while others were seeking the renewal of certification.

The 10 modules were facilitated by trainers from CropLife CI, the Plant Protection Directorate (DPVCQ) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Following the theoretical and the practical sessions, participants undertook the evaluation tests. The 70 participants who passed the test comprised of 19, 13 and 36, dealers, applicators and counsellors, respectively.

During the closing ceremony chaired by Mrs. Angele Yao Epouse Bédi, Director of the DPVCQ, CropLife Cote d’Ivoire and the BNA, represented by the Manager Mrs. Olga Kouassi, congratulated the participants for their diligent participation in the various exercises during the training, and for the expected professionalism during their future work to service the farming communities. They also seized the opportunity to once again thank the Funds for the Development of Training (Fonds pour le Développement de la Formation Professionnelle, FDFP) for funding the CropLife CI-BNA initiative which is expected to conduct the second session in March.

FDFP is a parastatal agency in charge of funding training activities for private sector companies as they are liable to a special training tax.

G. Yoboue & R. Yeboe
Stewardship

Strengthening Cooperation with the Plant Protection Directorate, Côte d’Ivoire

A delegation from the Plant Protection Directorate (DPVCQ), the pesticide regulatory authority of Côte d’Ivoire, comprising of four officers and headed by the Director, Mrs. Angèle Yao Epse Bédi met with CropLife Côte d’Ivoire (CI) on January 19 to exchange views on the cooperation framework for 2021. The delegation from CropLife Cote d’Ivoire was headed by the President of the Consultative Council comprising of, among others, the Vice-President, the Executive Director, the Chairs of the Training activities and of Communication.

The issues covered during the meeting relate to the joint activities needed to cover the certification of SSPs by the DPVCQ as requested by CropLife Cote d’Ivoire. Added to this was the support from the DPVCQ towards the foreseen levy system on pesticide importation, the pilot project on container management in the cocoa and cotton sectors, joint sensitization efforts on child labor and the issue of anticounterfeiting activities. The two delegations agreed to organize further meetings delving into deeper discussions, especially on the needed arrangements for the certification of SSPs as well as the levy initiative in which all pesticide importers must be involved.

G. Yoboue & R. Yeboue
Online E-submission Portal, Official Launch

The official launch of the E-submission portal took place on 28 December 2020 at the Pyramisa Hotel – Cairo and was attended by the Agricultural Pesticide Committee (APC), CropLife Egypt members and other stakeholders from the Central Agricultural Pesticide Laboratory (CAPL) and Plant Protection Research Institute (PPRI) in addition to the local press.

The APC Chairman opened the ceremony and stated that this new online submission system is a huge leap towards digital transition for all Egyptian authorities and it’s the first of a kind in the region. This will help in reducing the paper load, will add to centralized data, reduce the need of frequent visits to the APC offices and enhance the APC members’ abilities to track documents and data.

CropLife Egypt gave a speech and thanked the APC for embracing the new digital transition which will facilitate the work of the needed regulatory requirements for all pesticide companies engaged in product registration especially under the circumstances of COVID-19. The ERC lead took the opportunity to thank the APC and ERC members for their incredible support through the development of the system.

The E-submission portal is designed as a friendly interface which will facilitate the services developed by the APC (back-end), and it can easily be handled by the registering companies (front-end) in addition to many features to help the tracking of applications and the usual back-and-forth online communication between both sides.

The system is published online and in the 1st phase, registered companies will be able to collect their account credentials via the APC, after validation and be able to start submitting applications online using services offered by APC.

Mahmoud Said delivered a presentation explaining the features of the system and confirmed that the E-submission portal had been tested for penetration by Redforce, a specialized company and all possible vulnerabilities were tested to ensure the security of users and data.

Official Launch link on YouTube
https://youtu.be/w-bz2kiEVtk

Mahmoud Said
Impact of Insecticide Applications on Cocoa Pollinators

Cocoa represents a strategic crop in West Africa, especially for Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana, the two main producing countries which supply 60% of the world’s cocoa needs. Cocoa production is largely dependent on pest control and the use of neonicotinoid-based insecticides to control mirids dominates the cocoa pesticide portfolio.

The recent growing activism in Europe is pushing for the banning of neonicotinoids arguing that they are responsible for bee mortality and more importantly, hive collapse.

Though it is well documented that bees are not cocoa pollinators, CropLife International and CropLife Africa Middle East funded a study to assess the impact of neonicotinoid insecticide on cocoa pollinators in Côte d’Ivoire. The two-year study was carried out by the National Agricultural Research Service (CNRA) in Divo, Côte d’Ivoire, covering the 2018 and 2019 crop year.

The report confirmed the cocoa pollinator population as indicated in previous studies, that the Ceratopogonidae, Cecidomyiidae, Drosophilidae, Formicidae and Psyllidae are involved in the pollination of cocoa. However, micro-dipterans of the genus Forcipomyia of the Ceratopogonidae family have been described as the most important insects involved in cocoa pollination. The report indicated that insecticide sprays caused mortality of the cocoa pollinators to some extent. However, treated cocoa plots had better yields due to the fact that the insecticide application regimes do not coincide with the main flowering and pollination periods. A rapid recolonization of the sprayed field by the pollinators could also be possible.

The present calendar-based insecticide application regime has little impact on cocoa pollinators. The ongoing cocoa pest control program based on IPM/RU practices is with little doubt leading to a greater protection of the beneficial insect population for sound cocoa production.

CropLife International, CropLife AME and their member companies will continue to collaborate with CNRA, and other stakeholders involved in pest management and cocoa production program to provide farmers with appropriate tools to protect pollinators during crop husbandry.

Bama Yao and Stella Wafukho
CropLife Egypt elects a new Board

On 30 December 2020 the General Assembly of CropLife Egypt held a meeting at the association’s offices to elect a new Board.

The meeting was coordinated by the oldest serving General Assembly member, Dr. M. Hamaky and the association’s lawyer. The outcome of the election produced a new Board as follows:

- Tark El-Azab (Corteva) - Chairman
- Abdelmoneim Bakr (Syngenta) - Vice Chairman
- Ahamed El-Samra (Sumitomo) - Treasury
- Abdallah Agoor (FMC) - Secretary
- Essam El-Dabe (KZ) – Board Member
- Amr Mousa (BASF) – Board Member
- Waleed Abdelaziz (Bayer) – Board Member

The new Board thanked the former Chairman, Dr. Sherif Ayoub and the previous Board members for their worthy efforts and pledged to guide and serve the pesticide industry in Egypt.

Said Abdella
European Commission Authorizes Eight GM Crops for Food and Feed

The European Commission has authorized five genetically modified (GM) crops (3 maize, 2 soybeans) and renewed the authorization for three maize crops used for food and feed. The announcement was made on the European Union's Daily News which was published on January 22, 2021.

All of the eight GM crops have gone through a comprehensive and stringent authorization procedure, including a favourable scientific assessment conducted by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). The authorization decisions do not cover cultivation. Member States did not reach a qualified majority either in favour or against at the Standing Committee and at the subsequent Appeal Committee, therefore the European Commission has the legal duty to proceed with the authorizations which are valid for 10 years, and any product produced from these GMOs will be subject to the EU's strict labelling and traceability rules.

ISAAA

European Commission Authorizes Eight GM Crops for Food and Feed

China's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs has approved two genetically modified (GM) corn varieties from Bayer AG and Syngenta AG for importation.

The two varieties, herbicide tolerant and insect resistant MON87411 and MZIR098 are approved for imports for five years starting December 2020, according to a list published on the Ministry website.

The approvals are said to come at a time when there is a surge in demand for animal feed. China's corn imports have reached a record as the domestic hog population is rebounding fast from African swine fever.

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