



Africa and Asia's Food Security 'Tipping Point' & the Hope for Collaborative Solutions this World Food Day

In a year when the World Food Program has been rightfully recognized in receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, the state of global food security is in the spotlight this World Food Day more than ever. For Africa and Asia in particular, the critical needs and challenges driving this renewed awareness are sadly only growing.

As if 2020 hadn't delivered enough heartbreak and grief, a barrel-full more made its way to Africa and Asia in July – and marked a troubling 'tipping point' for the two continents' collective efforts to deliver a safe, affordable and nutritious supply of food to those who need it most.

This particular unwelcomed arrival came in the form of new data detailing each region's food supply resiliency (or lack thereof) and toll taken on the populations of both. While the two continents regularly rank "1" and "2" globally in all the wrong categories on this front, the recently released United Nations (UN) annual *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World* only reaffirmed that positioning.

According to the report, the largest number of undernourished people (381 million) reside in Asia. However, Africa is actually growing in this category at the fastest rate and currently ranked second with 250 million.

The impact of COVID-19 has only exacerbated the larger landscape and challenges for the two. The UN estimates that an unimaginable three billion people cannot afford a healthy diet – and in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, this holds true for more than half of the population.

Tragically, the youth of the two regions are suffering in particular. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) recently noted that an additional 6.7 million children under the age of five could suffer from wasting (a form of malnutrition) resulting from socio-economic fallout attributable to the pandemic. Among these young children, 80% would be from sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Beyond the 'red flag' metrics, it's also been a tough year on the ground for the men and women who grow the nutritious food on which both continents' populations depend. Africa and Asia's smallholder farmers have had to contend with unprecedented swarms of locusts that have laid waste to tens of thousands of hectares of crops and vegetation. East Africa has felt the brunt of this, while growers in India and Pakistan continue to do their best to cope as well.



The locust swarms are only the latest invasive pests that farmers in Africa and Asia have faced in the field. The Fall Armyworm has had and continues to have a devastating effect on crop production in both parts of the world since first entering Africa in 2016 and then Asia two years later. According to 2018 estimates, Africa is losing over 17 million tons of corn annually due to this particular invasive pest. Meanwhile, over US\$880 million in annual losses are being realized by Southeast Asia farmers and through related corn import costs alone.

Adding insult to injury, impact from climate change, including an increased prevalence of droughts and floods in both regions, is wreaking havoc with farmers' ability to grow food – and in turn, their livelihood. As challenging as these weather events are, there's strong evidence they're only going to worsen. A McKinsey report released just last month noted that Asia is particularly vulnerable and suggested the region could experience labour shortages resulting in mind-boggling economic losses of up to US\$4.7 trillion annually.

Posing further threats to Africa and Asia food production are ongoing trade-restrictive developments taking place beyond the borders and control of both regions entirely.

Particularly worrisome is a movement within the European Parliament promoting the idea that no other country's farmers should use pesticides that are restricted or banned in the European Union – and using this idea to object to trade-facilitating Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) set by the UN's World Health Organization / Food and Agriculture Organization (WHO/FAO) Codex Alimentarius for pesticides not available in Europe. This would effectively close off the European market to millions of farmers in Africa and Asia, threaten their livelihood, and make an already challenging task for these growers driving food security in the two continents that much tougher.

By objecting to these international standards, it threatens to take effective and regulated pesticides out of the hands of African and Asian farmers. Pesticides, along with quality seeds and fertilizers, are critically important agricultural inputs which these growers depend on to grow a variety of crops. In addition to driving trade, the crops grown in the two regions help provide the critical supply of affordable, nutritious food that is already in great peril. According to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), smallholder farmers produce up to 80% of the food consumed in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.

The reality is that pesticides and plant biotechnology have a role to play in enabling and empowering farmers in Africa, Asia and around the world to grow more food and realize better lives. Biotech crops are developed with improved traits such as increased yield, improved resistance to pests, and enhanced nutrition, among others. Meanwhile, pesticides are helping farmers produce more food on less land. Without pesticides, an estimated 40% of global rice and corn harvests could be lost every year while losses for fruits and vegetables could be as high as 50-90%.

While these plant science technologies are crucially important, they're only part of the shared solution needed. In the midst of these challenging times and indeed a food security 'tipping point' for Africa and Asia, it's important to remember: only a collaborative effort among stakeholders across the food value chain will turn the tide in addressing hunger, malnutrition, undernutrition, wasting and a host of other unacceptable outcomes that are plaguing the populations of the two continents.

In that spirit, an encouraging step forward was realized earlier this month when the leads for the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and CropLife International, the global voice for the crop protection and plant biotechnology industry, jointly signed a Letter of Intent to explore new partnerships.

This will allow the two to consider how best to work together in promoting rural development and transforming agri-food systems – and at a time when we desperately need more collaboration among the private, public and civil society sectors, this sends a strong signal that it's completely possible.

For Africa and Asia, this World Food Day presents an opportunity for groups up and down the food value chains of the two continents to recommit to engaging in impactful partnerships that help strengthen food supply resiliency and working together with regional governments to provide sustainable and shared solutions. The stakes are simply too high to not act now.

The food security 'tipping point' for the two continents is at hand. While 2020 will be remembered for a slew of reasons we'd like to forget, let's work to ensure it's also the year food and agriculture stakeholders in Africa and Asia came together like never before in a collaborative spirit for a common cause.



Dr. Samira Amellal
Director General / CEO
CropLife Africa Middle East

Dr. Siang Hee Tan
Executive Director
CropLife Asia

Stewardship

CropLife Zambia Kicks off the Digitalisation Project

Normally when the planting season is approaching, farmers are flooded with training sessions in all kinds of farming topics and CropLife Zambia features quite prominently with its *Responsible Use of Pesticides* messages. This year however, the story is different as no face to face meetings have been possible because of COVID-19 but there's always a way around any problem and CropLife Zambia found an answer.

In order to ensure that farmers do not lose out on the important information covering the Responsible Use of Pesticides, CropLife Zambia in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture initiated a digitalization program aimed at informing the farmers on the Responsible Use of Pesticides using a SMS messaging system. The messages are a summarized training curriculum which covers topics from use of certified and treated seed, scouting, weeding, selecting the correct pesticide, buying from reputable agro-dealers, safe transportation and storage, safe application and disposal of empty containers.

The program is targeted to reach one hundred thousand farmers (100,000) with 24 SMS messages per farmer between September and December 2020. By the end of the project, 2.4 million messages would have been sent. CropLife Zambia partnered with the Zambian Government, Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), to leverage from their farmers' database countrywide which is managed by Smart Zambia. The Smart Zambia platform manages a database on behalf of the MOA covering four (4) million farmers located across the 10 provinces of Zambia.

The project was initiated with a planned 24 'responsible use' related messages which have been translated into the three (3) main local languages; Bemba, Tonga and Nyanja and sent to three (3) target provinces Central, Southern, Eastern Provinces respectively.

The project is managed by a project coordinator who has been engaged to monitor the distribution of messages and also to receive feedback from the farmers.

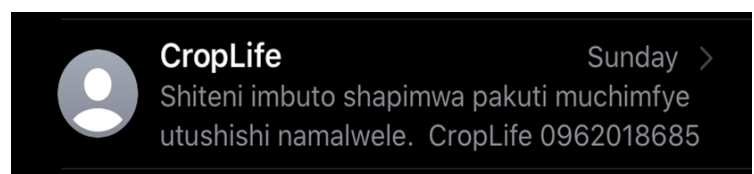
The first message was sent in the 3 local languages on Tuesday 20 October 2020 to ninety-four thousand (94,000) farmers. The message has a sender identity (ID) as

'CropLife' and the sign off is also 'CropLife'. However, the sign off also serves as a return mobile number specially registered for this purpose and to engage in a 2-way exchange with farmers.

The recipients started responding to the messages from 21 October 2020 and by 28 October CropLife Zambia had received over 960 responses in the form of calls and SMS messages.



Mark Chingumbe, Project Coordinator, responding to farmers calls



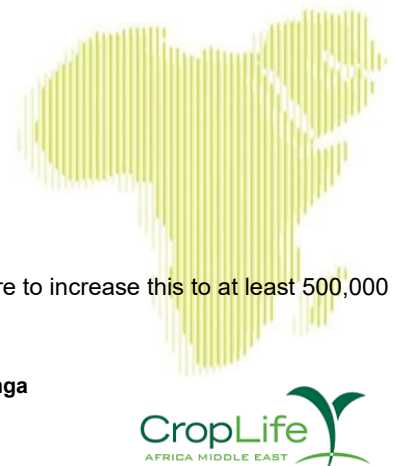
A translated message as it appears on the farmer's phone.

Some of the information requested covered the following:

- Who is CropLife and what do they do?
- Where can we buy treated seed from?
- How do we treat our own seed and what chemicals should we use?
- Can you send us more information about seed and other pests?
- When can you visit us to show us how to treat seed?
- Can we call you concerning any challenges in the field?
- Where can we find CropLife?

The large number of farmers reached with each message is a great success and plans are to increase this to at least 500,000 in Phase (II).

Perry Ngoma and Emmanuel Simwinga



Stewardship

Cooperation Agreement signed between CropLife Egypt and Feed the Future

On October 7, CropLife Egypt (CLE) signed a cooperation agreement with Feed the Future covering Egypt Rural Agribusiness Strengthening Project ("the Project") at the Project's headquarters in Dokki, Giza.

The ceremony was attended by the CLE Chairman, Dr. Sherif Ayoub, the Project's Chief of Party, Dr. Walid Sallam, and a number of CLE member companies and senior project staff.

The agreement aims to enable smallholder farmers in the better use of pesticides and the implementation of integrated pest management (IPM) practices. CropLife Egypt will provide capacity building programs including a training-of-trainers on plant protection products for spray service providers which complies with GLOBALG.A.P. requirements, the management of empty pesticide containers, and the responsible use of pesticides. Additional workshops and awareness sessions will aim at combating counterfeit and the illegal trade of pesticides, promote the use of genuine products, specialized training on transportation and storage of pesticides, and awareness programs for rural women regarding responsible use of pesticides.

The Project will facilitate linkages between its partner producer organizations to reach targeted smallholder farmers and will encourage Project participants to attend CropLife Egypt's training courses and technical support visits.

Mahmoud Said



(L/R) Dr. Walid Sallam and Dr. Sherif Ayoub exchanging documents after signature



(L/R) Mahmoud Said, Hani Adel, Osama Zaki, Said Abdella, Dr. Walid Sallam, Dr. Sherif Ayoub, and Amr Mousa

Stewardship

FDFP Funding CropLife Cote d'Ivoire for Training Professionals on IPM/RU

“The Fund for the Development for Professional Training” (Fonds pour le Développement de la Formation Professionnelle, FDFP) has agreed to allocate funds amounting to US\$ 110,000 (one hundred ten thousand) to support CropLife Cote d'Ivoire (CI) for capacity enhancement for professionals on IPM-RU.

FDFP is a parastatal institution set up to collect funds such as taxes from the private sector and from donor organizations to support capacity enhancement for private sector companies and organizations. The agreement was announced on October 13, 2020 following the submission and presentation by CropLife Cote d'Ivoire and Bureau Norm & Audit (BNA) requesting support. BNA as a certification body has been supervising the training activities of CropLife CI for more than 2 years, so were in a favourable position to provide support to CropLife CI for the preparation of the submission. BNA will continue to supervise this training program.

The program will consist of two sessions, one in 2020 and a second, in early 2021 targeting in total 180 participants comprising mainly of pesticide retailers and applicators, and to a lesser extent counsellors.

The “applicators group” will comprise of at least 50 active SSPs in the cocoa sector. These SSPs will constitute the first set to go through a refresher course in order to renew their badges in line with the recommendations of the WCF-CropLife Africa Middle East project.

Bama Yao



From Left to Right: Daniel Koffi Deputy Manager of BNA, Roger Yeboue Executive Director CropLife CI, Mrs. Olga Kouassi, Managing Director BNA, and Benson Niankoury, Vice President CropLife CI, during the finalization meeting of the project.

Photo Courtesy CropLife CI



Stewardship

Startup of the Stewardship Digitalization Project in Malawi

The digitalization project was designed to reach out to farmers with short, but concise stewardship messages, for a period of six months between October 2020 and March 2021. The project used the existing database of Spray Service Providers (SSP) and linked this to the farmers' database that the Government of Malawi through the Department of Agriculture Extension Services (DAES) and ESOKO are using. The platform has a total of 60,000 farmers, and with the CropLife Malawi database, a further 700 contacts were added.

The project kicked-off on 24 October with two messages focusing on nursery management and the promotion of certified seed and planting materials. Both messages were translated from English into the two major local languages of Chichewa and Tumbuka, as will be the case for the remainder of the program. Chichewa covers the larger area of both the Southern and Central Regions with Tumbuka covering the Northern region. The profiling of the messages was undertaken based on the areas as well as the major crops produced. It was on the advice of the Ministry of Agriculture to only use Chichewa and Tumbuka when transmitting the messages to the farmers.

The first messages sent on Saturday 24th October went to all 60,700 farmers that are on the database. The messages had a signoff, "for more information contact CropLife 0999923531 (a dedicated line)". This dedicated line is used for a 2-way exchange with farmers. So far, a total of 36 responses were received, these included:

- How can they access these certified seeds in their respective areas
- Some recipients identified themselves as SSPs and were enquiring on some SSP related issue
- What are the specific pesticides for some specific problems such as bacteria wilt and *Tuta absoluta*
- What is CropLife and where can they find more information
- Some farmers commented and indicated that they will save the contact for future enquiries.

Following the release of these first messages, there was an influx of phone calls requesting additional information. The level of enthusiasm could be seen in that working times were completely disregarded with calls starting as early as 4am and ending as late as 11pm. A number of farmers were interested in specific products for their field challenges, these enquiries were passed onto member companies.

We are absolutely delighted at the way this project has started.

Christopher Beya – CropLife Malawi



Photo: Courtesy ESOKO



Stewardship

CropLife Morocco launches a Digital Communication Campaign

CropLife Morocco, (CLM) with the support of CropLife AME has undertaken to launch a digital communications campaign with the following objectives:

- To enhance the reputation of CLM
- To inform the agricultural sector and public on CLM's stewardship activities
- To raise the awareness of good agricultural practices within the agricultural sector.

The program will run from 15 November 2020 to 15 February 2021 and will focus on the following messages:

- Sanitary measures to protect against COVID-19
- The importance of triple rinsing empty containers
- The scourge of counterfeit products
- The Responsible Use of pesticides

Owing to the popularity and frequency of use in Morocco, the two social networks identified for the campaign are Facebook and YouTube. Unfortunately, the Moroccan social networks do not have the option to select the population grouping with their job function, such as farmers. It is for this reason that CLM targeted the main agricultural regions with the following criteria:

- Key agricultural regions
- Males aged between 25 and 65 years
- Agriculture as the area of interest



Graphic by Researchleap



Stewardship

Thanks to the "Advanced Targeting" feature (see the capture below) available on Facebook, this App allows CLM to target people who have declared, directly or indirectly, agriculture as a centre of interest. A focus could be the group type in which a person is in, the pages they follow, the posts they share, etc.

It was agreed that a frequency of (4) publications per month would be followed, i.e. (1) publication per week, knowing that there are 2 principles of media buying on Facebook:

- Reach: the reach is the number of people who can be reached by the post in each targeted region
- Impressions: when an advertisement or any other form of digital media renders on a user's screen. Impressions are not action-based and are merely defined by a user potentially seeing the advertisement, making CPM campaigns ideal for businesses intent. i.e. the number of appearances of the same publication on the target's screen

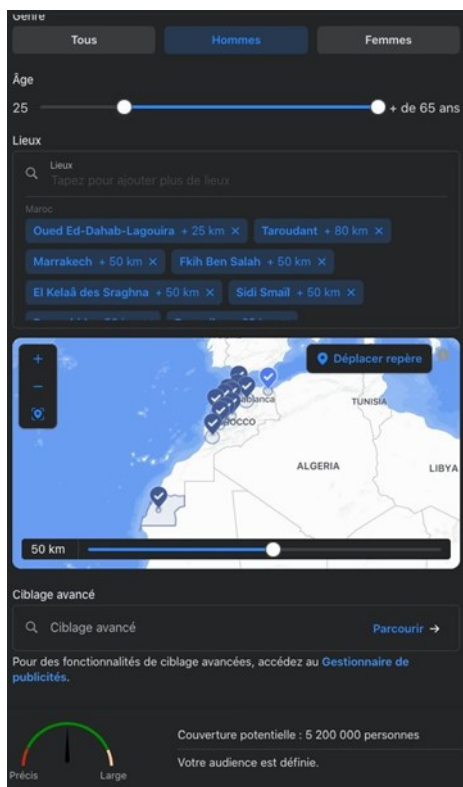
As an example: If one is part of the targeted group, and has viewed the publication 4 times. The number of reaches here = 1 (1 person reached), but the number of impressions = 4 (number of appearances of the publication is 4 times).

CLM intends to distribute messages so that they reach the maximum number of people (reach) with a very minimal number of repetitions (impressions) (1.1 to 1.2).

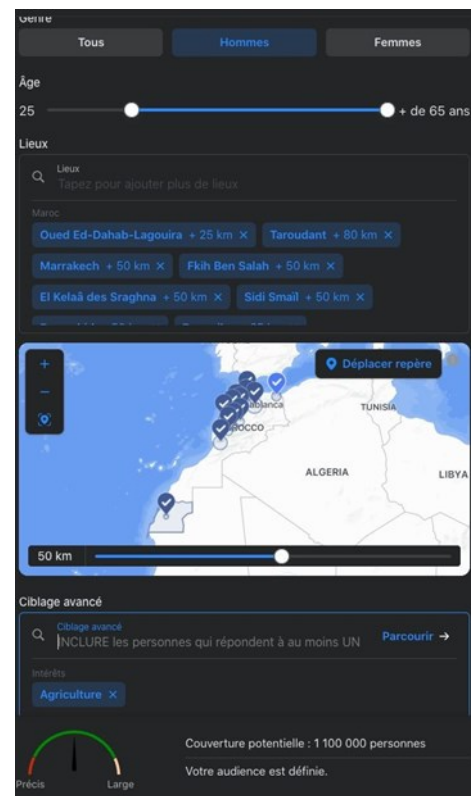
For the broadcast period, CLM is aiming at one spot publication per week, so the duration of this same publication will be spread over the whole week until the next publication, in order to give the Facebook algorithm time to find the most suitable users for our message, as well as to ensure a significant number of people impacted by the publication.

The result would look as follows:

Population reached without any interest centre 5 200 000



Population reached with agriculture as a focus of interest: 1 100 000



Boubker El Ouilani, CropLife Morocco

Association Management

CropLife Malawi holds successful AGM

CropLife Malawi held its 2020 Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 23 October 2020. The AGM was delayed due to COVID-19 guidelines that restricted the movement and gathering of people. This year's AGM was one of the best-attended and actively participated on record. This demonstrated the confidence in the current Executive Committee led by the Chairperson, Thyphord Chirwa. During the period, the team has made enormous strides in improving the visibility of the national association making it one of the active stakeholders in the policy realm of the agricultural industry in Malawi. The increase in membership, establishment of key partnerships, participation in industry policies and improvement of governance structures empowered the Secretariat to work efficiently and in so doing address the bottlenecks that have plagued the national association for some considerable time.

An election took place during the AGM for an Executive Council Member to fill the vacancy created after the Secretary had resigned from both her member company and Executive Council. This development saw the Executive Council Member, Mrs Donna Mkandawire from Rentokil being elected as the Secretary and Hudley Funsani from Afriventures as the Executive Member of the Council.

During the meeting, our key partners, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Pesticides Control Board made presentations covering topical issues. FAO through Precious Chizonda, Coordinator, Project Management Unit of the Pesticide Risk Reduction Project, appraised members on the positive inroads and progress that has been agreed with the Environmental Affairs Department relating to the pilot Empty Container Management scheme, a project component that is being led by CropLife Malawi. Members were also informed on the procurement of a shredder and how this will be used in addressing the empty pesticide container issues in the country.

Furthermore, the Registrar of the Pesticides Control Board, Misheck Soko reminded member companies of their key responsibilities in conducting ethical business practices in the distribution of pesticides in Malawi. He highlighted company responsibility in the management of obsolete pesticides, counterfeit and illegal products and Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs). Member companies were also updated that government will soon finalize the Pesticides Regulation Bill.

Christopher Beya, CropLife Malawi



Group photo of representatives from CLM Member companies



Above: Precious Chizonda, PMU Coordinator, FAO making a presentation on empty container management

Below: Thyphord Chirwa, Chairperson of CropLife Malawi making his presentation



Association Management

CropLife Sudan (SAGA) – New Steering Committee

A new political environment is evolving within Sudan and with this some fundamental changes. One such change is that all previous National Chamber Committees have been dissolved and new ones will be created under certain guidelines. SAGA was asked by the Transitional Steering Committee of the National Chamber of Importers to nominate four candidates to act as a Transitional Committee to run its activities for the next 3-4 months and to arrange for the election of a new Executive Committee.

Based on the request of the Transitional Committee of the National Chamber of Importers, the long-serving Chairman of SAGA, Elsir Omer, excluded his name as a nominee for the Steering Committee for this transitional period, and opted for retirement. Elsir worked for the industry for 45 years, 30 years for CIBA-GEIGY/NOVARTIS/SYNGENTA and 15 years as Chairman of SAGA. His role and dedication to the plant-science industry is highly recognized and appreciated.

The 4 names put forward who will run the national association for the transitional period are:

- Mohamed A. Ali as Chairman
- Ayman D Khalil as Secretary General
- Ali M Ali as Treasurer
- Faisal M Ali as Coordinator for CropLife AME relations

We wish the new team every success for their term of office.

Samira Amellal



Elsir Omer (Left) outgoing Chairman of SAGA with Faisal M Ali - Coordinator for CropLife AME relations



Plant Biotechnology

Pinkglow™, Del Monte's Pink Pineapple Now Available

After more than 15 years, Pinkglow™ Pineapple, the pink pineapple from Fresh Del Monte is now commercially available. A product of bioengineering, Pinkglow™ Pineapples contain lycopene, a natural pigment that gives some produce its red colour (e.g. tomatoes, watermelon), which makes this pineapple pink.

Pinkglow™ Pineapples are grown on a select farm in the South-Central region of Costa Rica, which has the ideal soil and climate for growing pineapples. They are grown by planting existing pineapple crowns in the ground. These pineapples are said to have a delicious and unique taste, with notes of candy pineapple aromatics, and are also less sour than a traditional pineapple, juicier and sweeter in taste.

Currently, Fresh Del Monte is the only company that grows this unique pink pineapple variety.



Photo Source: Pinkglow Pineapple

ISAAA

Ghana's Scientists to Seek Commercial Approval for GE Cowpea

Genetically engineered cowpea will be requested for commercial approval in Ghana in November, according to Savannah Agricultural Research Institute (SARI).

SARI is one of the institutes of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research that is tasked to develop enhanced crop varieties to help the farmers in the northern part of the country and beyond.

The Pod-borer resistant cowpea, which exhibits resistance to destructive Maruca pests, is currently undergoing an internal review process. Once this is done, the next step is to submit it to the National Biosafety Authority for environmental release.

The Pod-borer resistant cowpea is expected to decrease spray from 10 times to 2 times only to control other pests that attack cowpea.



ISAAA



CropLife
AFRICA MIDDLE EAST

Tribute to Frederic Brandford Boampong – Project Manager at CropLife Ghana

Those who knew Fred will remember him for the smile on his face and laughter in his eyes. A smile to welcome you, a smile when he talked to you and a smile when you said goodbye. Fred was a happy and good-humoured man. Even when faced with challenges, he kept seeing the positive side of things.

Aside from his positive energy, Fred was extremely dedicated to his work as Program Manager of CropLife Ghana and an excellent communicator. From the time he started working for CropLife Ghana in 2005, he quickly became the focal point of the association and coordinated almost seamlessly with the contacts and between the member companies, Executive Council, staff, government officials, partner organizations, CropLife Africa Middle East and others. If you sent a message to Fred, you were assured of a speedy response.

Over the years, Fred has coordinated countless projects and activities for CropLife Ghana. He was the driving force behind the anti-counterfeiting and container management activities and took the role of national coordinator for the CleanFarms project and all Spray Service Providers (SSP) projects. As the Project Manager, he not only coordinated all activities and managed staff, he also offered solutions for the challenges faced and motivated all involved. Without doubt, CropLife Ghana is one of the most well-organized CropLife associations on the continent and this is mostly due to Fred.

For the CropLife Ghana team, Fred was more than just a colleague; he was a dear friend. We will cherish his memories as a good-natured man with his heart always in the right place. That he was highly valued and appreciated by others far and wide is shown from the many phone calls and messages received at the secretariat of CropLife Ghana.

Fred passed away suddenly on Wednesday 14 October after a short illness. He leaves behind a wife and three children.

Go safely Fred – we will miss you.

The CropLife Ghana Team and all within the CropLife Network





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