

March
2021

Partners in Sustainable Agriculture
CROPLIFE AFRICA MIDDLE EAST



Editorial



● Dears Readers,

This year, the theme of International Women's Day was declared as 'Women in Leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world'. It struck me immediately there could scarcely be a more compelling case for needing women in leadership to secure 'an equal future' than in African agriculture and plant science. Great strides have been made by women in pursuing careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) more than ever before but still a lot needs to be done to get more women in STEM and more specifically in plant science.

For our continent and region, we have been told, has the potential to produce enough food to satisfy much of the world, and yet still can barely feed itself as its population and food imports mount. Yet, one of the core reasons for our agricultural underperformance is the way in which our production is hindered by gender issues, which include the scarcity of women in leadership.

According to the World Bank, women make up 60 to 80 per cent of the agricultural work force, but it is men who make the key farm management decisions. Add to that, our women farmers have fewer tools and more limited access to capital, and it is easy to see that our attitudes to gender have stranded much of our agricultural industry.

Yet, the gender imbalance that characterizes our scientific leadership is not confined to Africa and the Middle East. According to the science journal, *The Lancet*, women account for 53 per cent of the world's bachelor's and masters' degree graduates, but only 28 per cent of researchers in all fields. Moreover, only 30 per cent of women in higher education move into STEM-related fields.

These overall proportions are actually similar for Sub-Saharan Africa but vary radically between African nations. For instance, the percentage of women researchers in South Africa, and Egypt tops 40 per cent, but in Nigeria is just 23 per cent, and in Ethiopia, just 13.3 per cent.

Moreover, the problem gets more severe in more senior roles. For example, while 22 per cent of Cameroonian researchers are women, only 7 per cent of the country's academic professors are female.

Yet opportunities abound for women in agricultural science leadership, as CropLife Africa Middle East and its members have shown through the strength of the women ... in their own team and management. CropLife International notes that achieving equal representation in the plant science industry is an ongoing priority, and this is also a main focus within the AME region.

Editorial

The reality is that our continent is grappling with rising challenges in securing agricultural output and yields. Among many other impacts, climate change is increasing the salinity around our coasts, which is damaging output, and driving pest levels upwards, causing one of our worst ever locust invasions, as well as spiraling Fall Armyworm, Tuta absoluta, Rust and many other afflictions. All the evidence shows that women are amongst the hardest hit as these problems strike.

Thus, for women set on careers that help achieve food security in Africa, plant science and plant science leadership beckons, for the good of all of us, and as the biggest possible contributor to women's wellbeing and equality. Women should explore various programs supported by the members companies of CropLife Network that have emerged to encourage and support women entering the plant science and agriculture sectors.

Thank you for your cooperation

Please Follow us:

Website: www.croplifeafrica.org

Twitter: @CropLifeAME

LINKEDIN: CropLife Africa Middle East

Dr. Samira Amellal



Stewardship

● Solar Panels and Building Blocks:

The Success of SSPs in the Vegetable Sector in Ghana

Kwame Offei (31) sits happily on a concrete block. Around him are many more such blocks on the ground. "I am building a house", he says proudly, "I have already molded 1,000 blocks and by the end the year, I should have enough to start building." Kwame is a Spray Service Provider (SSP) and lives in Gonse in the Greater Accra region. He is one of the 268 SSPs who were trained by CropLife Ghana in 2019, supported by the SNV/Horti-Fresh project. Together, the SSPs serviced more than 9,000 farmers over a 2-year period.

Kwame is doing well since he was selected by his community to be trained to become an SSP. In 2019, he applied pesticides for 10 farmers, thereby earning an amount of 280 Ghana Cedis (GHS), in addition to his farming income. Amidst the COVID-pandemic, he managed to service another 25 farmers, which put an extra 1,460 GHS in his pocket. He says: "Currently I live in a mud house of a friend. With my earnings as a farmer, I could just get by. When I graduated as an SSP, I never thought I would be able to build a house from my earnings - now look at me!"



SSP Kwame Offei among blocks that will be used to build his house

● Solar pumping machine



SSP Forster Gawa proudly showing his solar pump

Kwame is not the only SSP who did well and is using his earnings to improve his situation. Forster Gawa (43) lives in Agorve in the Volta region. With earnings of up to 4,600 GHS, he gained himself a nice extra income that is much higher than he ever expected. When the money started coming in, gradually at first, he decided to spend this effectively. He explains: "As with most vegetable farmers in the area, I have an irrigation system on my farm.

However, electricity to run the pump is expensive and is not always available because of power cuts. My only income always came from farming and it was hard to save money for any type of investment. Now I am able to earn an additional income as an SSP and decided to invest the earnings into a solar pumping machine. The money I now save on electricity, I will use to expand my farm and irrigation system."



Stewardship

● Two extra baskets



SSP Aaron Gadagbui (43) decided to offer other services in addition to his application services. The Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) is promoting the use of scales among tomato farmers to ensure that they are getting paid for the actual weight delivered. Aaron, who mainly provides services for female farmers, noticed that most of them find the weighing process too cumbersome. Aaron collected scales from the MOFA offices and helped several female farmers with the process. He explains why the weighing of produce is important: "Most farmers sell their tomatoes per crate or basket.

There is a common agreement on the kilograms of tomatoes each crate or basket should contain. However, because no one weighs the crates or baskets, they very often contain more kilograms and farmers lose out on additional income."



SSP Aaron Gadagbui is weighing one of the extra baskets

His theory is proven when he helps one of the female farmers who is a regular customer of his application services. She harvested 10 crates from her farm. However, after Aaron carefully weighed all crates, it turned out that most crates carried extra kilograms. The extra tomatoes filled two baskets that were sold in addition to the 10 crates. Aaron: "Farmers pay for my application services but when I help them with weighing their produce, they will earn back what they have paid me. For me it's a good way to promote my application services."

● Awards

The activities of the SSPs have not gone unnoticed. SSP Wonder Gamali (39) proudly shows his medal. Last year, he attended the training on Integrated Pesticide Management (IPM) organized by CropLife Ghana. After he started assisting farmers in applying IPM principles, he entered an environmental activity competition. To his surprise, he won. This is how he tells it: "I am a teacher and have always farmed to earn some extra income. With my application activities I earned an additional 6,700 GHS. But this award is equally important to me. It shows that I am doing something good that is appreciated by my community."

The success of the SSP project is not only a credit to CropLife and SNV; several extension agents from MOFA have assisted CropLife in every step of its implementation. The ultimate recognition for their work was given at "Farmers' Day 2020" when Extension Officer Emmanuel Amegbe who works in the KojɔAshong area, received the award for being the Best Regional Extension Agent. The effective management of pests and disease in his area by SSPs and the proper application records kept, contributed to his winning of the award.

Even though the project came to an end in January 2021, it is not the end of SSP services offered. During a monitoring visit in which 223 SSPs were interviewed just before the closure of the project, all SSPs indicated without any doubt, to continue selling their services in 2021. It is once again proven that the SSP concept is not only a successful concept but also a sustainable one.

Manon Dohmen



Emmanuel Amegbe: Best Regional Extension Agent of 2020



SSP Wonder Gamali with his well-deserved medals

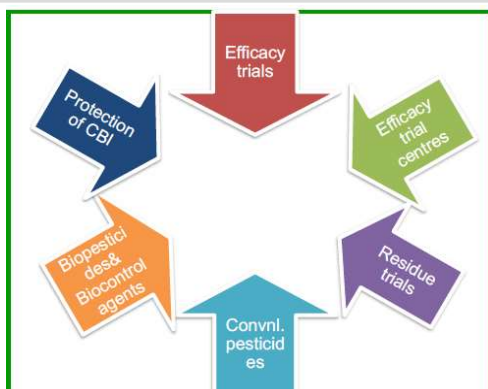
Regulatory

● CropLife Africa Middle East is leading the AGRA project to support Adoption of East African Community Pesticides Harmonised Guidelines

CropLife Africa Middle East is leading the AGRA project to support efforts of the East African Community (EAC) Secretariat in the domestication and implementation of EAC harmonized guidelines. The overall goal of the project is to facilitate increased farmer access to effective conventional pesticides and bio pesticides in EAC Partner States through fast tracking the domestication and implementation of the harmonized pesticide registration system.

The six months project ending in July 2021 is aimed at providing support alongside other partners in the following focus areas, including:

- Assessment of the needs and tracking progress of respective EAC Partner States in implementation of the pesticide harmonized guidelines
- Building capacity of the Technical Working Group, regulatory agencies and organizations of the six EAC Partner States to efficiently and effectively engage members in developing, reviewing and expediting pesticide registrations that provide reprieve for emerging pests and diseases such as FAW and locusts
- Facilitating private sector buy-in to the newly introduced EAC harmonized pesticide registration process.



The implementation of the six harmonized guidelines was set to be completed by May 2020 as per the directives of the 11th Sectoral Council on Agriculture and Food Security (SCAFs) and the Council of Ministers 38th Extra Ordinary Council of Ministers meetings held in June 2018 and January 2019 respectively but COVID - 19 related challenges have delayed the process.



● The harmonized guidelines for:

- Evaluating and reporting the efficacy of pest control products.
- For data requirements on the registration of conventional chemical pesticides.
- For conducting supervised pesticide residue field trials,
- For Designating Efficacy Trial Centers.
- For registration of Biopesticides and Bio Control Agents, and
- For Protection of Confidential Business Information.

Implementing this work will involve working closely with the EAC secretariat, EAC Partners States, USAID, USDA, the private sector and other stakeholders amongst others.

Stella Simiyu

Regulatory

● CropLife Africa Middle East under the Leadership of the Regional Committee held a Regional Regulatory Webinar with Francophone Countries

On 17th March CropLife Africa Middle East held a webinar on Pesticide Regulatory Frameworks in Africa under COVID-19 Times: Overcoming new challenges. The Webinar brought together regulators, industry, grower groups and other agencies from French speaking countries, including Morocco, Cote d' Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Tunisia, and Algeria,

The Webinar was organised around 3 panels. The first one on Transforming regulatory processes for pest control products through digitalization: the second on MRLs and the third on Navigating increased sensitivity towards pesticides in the region.

In this excerpt we provide highlights of the second panel on MRLs, local produce and external market access: Challenges and opportunities – panelists drawn from growers, regulatory bodies and industry share

Panelists representing growers, exporters and regulators guided by the chairs shared their challenges in this area, their envisioned role in communicating to the public about MRLs matters and food safety, supporting farmers and national economies and risk assessment.

The growers and exporters on their part shared how they deal with discrepancies by adapting their GAPs (Good Agricultural Practice) according to the expected export destinations for their products.

They recommended the need for regulators to fast track the registration process for the Biologicals and chemical solutions with good residues profiles. They also recommended the need to foster establishment of national MRLs, to encourage safe food production in locally consumed products.



Panelists on the MRLs Session

The regulators stressed their role on MRLs communication putting the food and feed safety as a high priority within their commitments, and their role on food control, monitoring and analysis of residues. They also highlighted the of lack of resources to handle risk assessment. On challenges in establishment of MRLs on minor crops the work being undertaken in several African countries was highlighted.

In Conclusion, the authorities, associations of producers and Minor Use Foundation, recognize their role in supporting farmers and national economies to remain competitive whilst managing the emerging MRL issues, by working together to overcome myriad challenges around MRLs such as:

- Missing and Misaligned MRLs
- Disparate application of Codex MRLs
- Change of policies on MRLs

Soufiane Mezzane – Member Regional Regulatory Committee

Association management

● ASPLANTE (CropLife) Lebanon holds AGM.

The Association of Importers and Distributors of Supplies for Agricultural Production in Lebanon (ASPLANTE) was established in Lebanon, in 1965, with its headquarters in Beirut - Hazmieh.

The General Assembly of ASPLANTE held its Annual General Meeting on 24 March 2021 at the association's offices in Hazmieh and elected its administrative council for the years 2021-2023. Michel Akl was re-elected as president of the association.



Mr Michel Akl
President of ASPLANTE

Mr Michel Akl

● CropLife Zimbabwe holds AGM.

The AGM took place virtually on Thursday 18 March at which Tawanda Mangisi (Syngenta) was elected as Chair and Mazvita Shumba (Bayer) as Vice-Chair. Key decisions taken at the meeting included to push ahead with the container management pilot project and to address the counterfeit issue which is becoming very problematic.

The guest of honour at the meeting was Deputy Minister VP Haritotose, Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Resettlement who gave a speech on behalf of the Minister, Hon. Dr AJ Masuka.

Extracts from the speech include: "His Excellency the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe in the Agricultural Recovery Plan, clearly spelt out the need to increase agricultural production and productivity in order to drive economic growth and recovery. This can only be achieved through the constant availability of sustainable Agro-remedies for use in treating the crops, soil and livestock.

This spells out the importance of CropLife and its members. The availability of chemicals in the country on time is a critical component for the growth of Agriculture and the two fundamental pillars among many that drive these are: availability of finance and improved pre-inspection protocols.

My Ministry is committed to ensuring a favourable environment through discussions with line Ministries like the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce so that CropLife and its members can enjoy significant progress with respect to sourcing of foreign currency and the now infamous Bureau Veritas process. The Global trend in chemical use is towards sustainability. There is therefore a need for concerted efforts between my Ministry and the Agro-Chemical Industry to ensure that farmers use Agro remedies in a sustainable manner. This means that government and industry must join hands in awareness programs that include but are not limited to:

- Safe and Responsible use of chemicals
- Empty Container management
- Obsolete stock management
- And
- Banned / Illegal / Counterfeit products

—Government is committed to reducing porosity at the country's borders and calls on CropLife to actively reign in errant parties and to also try and encompass in the association more players so that monitoring of players is easier and they increase accountability from each player.

As I welcome you all to this 2021 AGM, I would also want to congratulate the incoming Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and the new executive committee. I say to you my door is open and I look forward to a stronger and more intimate working relationship with your association."



Tawanda Mangisi

Association management

● CropLife South Africa Hosts Another Successful Virtual Annual General Meeting

For the second consecutive year, CropLife South Africa conducted its Annual General Meeting seamlessly on 16 March 2021 via teleconference. The meeting was opened by CropLife SA CEO, Rod Bell, after which Quintin Cross, CropLife SA President, gave a summary of the challenges and progress made throughout the year based on the four strategic pillars defined by ExCo, namely stewardship, regulatory, marketing and communication and education, training and skills development. He concluded by appealing to the members to be involved with the Association and its projects, to participate in the forums and working groups, to engage with the Executive and to constructively criticise as ultimately, CropLife SA is there to represent them.

Rod Bell continued with the agenda, providing an overview of the Association's performance and future planned initiatives, such as extended producer responsibility scheme and the establishment of a BBBEE guideline for member companies. In addition, he announced that prior voting indicated a preference to keep the current Executive Council and leadership the same as the previous year, due to the postponement of the 2019 AGM, resulting in a shorter than usual term.

- Quintin Cross (President) - AECI Plant Health
- Kobus Meintjes (Vice president) - Corteva
- Antonie Delpont - Syngenta
- Chris Thompson - Laeveld Agrochem
- David Wood - Farmers Agri-Care
- Gerrit Badenhorst - Rolfes Agri
- Henk van der Westhuizen - Philagro
- Jan Botha - Arysta LifeScience
- Kobus Steenekamp - Bayer Crop Science
- Marius Boshoff - Villa Crop Protection
- Niel Kruger - InteliGro
- Paul Roux - Avima
- Rod Bell - CropLife South Africa

The meeting concluded by Rod Bell thanking each member for their commitment to the industry and the Association as well as the Executive Council for volunteering their time for a second term. Quintin Cross officially closed the meeting as President of CropLife South Africa.

Elriza Theron



Association management

● CropLife Cameroon holds AGM

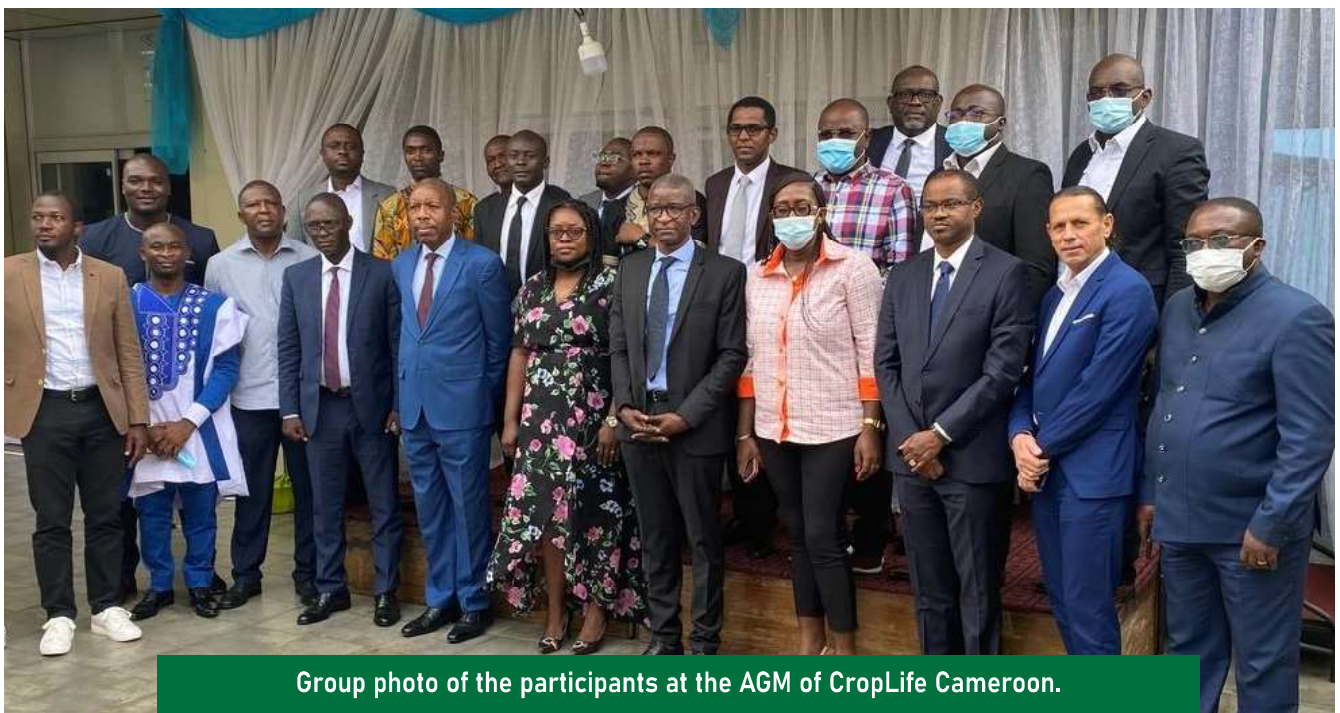
The first annual general assembly meeting (AGM) of CropLife Cameroon under the chairmanship of Jean Biakath was held on March 10, in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

The important mobilization of the members generated a fair exchange on the activities in 2020 and financial report, and on the workplan for 2021 which were presented by the Executive Committee. Specific issues on the agenda were presented by the respective project teams and included the revision of the Cameroon Code of Biosafety, the FAO project on container management, anti-counterfeiting activities and the impact of the new financial laws on the pesticide sector.

The “University of Plant Protection” which was planned to be held by the end of 2020 was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic but hopefully will take place during the second half of 2021. The partnership between CropLife Cameroon and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER) was also covered during the discussions as an example of a successful public-private partnership.



Christian Fosso CropLife Cameroon



Group photo of the participants at the AGM of CropLife Cameroon.

Association management

● CropLife Côte d'Ivoire appoints a new Executive Board

The annual general assembly meeting (AGM) of CropLife Côte d'Ivoire was held on March 26 in Abidjan followed by the election of a new board. Resulting from the resignation of the current President Guy Liabra, the AGM elected M. Benson Innocent Niankoury as the new President and M. Richard Kanga Kouamé as the Vice-President for a two-year term. Other key appointed executives are Franck Tokoré and Reine Tra Lou Dié as the association's financial controllers.

Prior to the election the AGM approved the annual activity and financial reports, as well as the action plan for 2021 which covers increased communication under the COVID-19 pandemic to support the AntiCFT activities, stewardship activities with the container management project, the promotion of PPE, the extension of the SSP program in the cotton sector and the MoA labeling initiative. Other priority issues relate to the pesticide laws submitted to government for discussion and adoption by parliament to provide a legal framework to engage on actions related to pesticide counterfeiting activities, and to funding mechanisms for sustainability.

Another key event of the AGM was the tribute CropLife Cote d'Ivoire paid to the former presidents of the association. The association was created in 1986 as UNIPHYTO and became CropLife Côte d'Ivoire by embracing the vision of CropLife International and CropLife Africa Middle East. Since the creation of CropLife Côte d'Ivoire, nine presidents have occupied the seat of the presidency, all of whom plus some notable individuals received a trophy and certificate in recognition of their support to CropLife Côte d'Ivoire.

Roger Yeboué CropLife Côte d'Ivoire



The newly elected President Benson I. Niankoury (L) and the outgoing President Guy J. Liabra (R) together with the Financial Controller Reine Tra Lou Dié (M)



The former Presidents together with some key individuals proudly exhibiting their trophies

Plant Biotechnology

● Newly Elected Leaders in Central Uganda Pledge Support for GM Crops



Newly elected leaders from Wakiso district in central Uganda pledged support for genetically modified (GM) crops during a sensitization workshop on on-going biotech research at the National Crops Resources Research Institute (NaCRRI) on March 25, 2021. The 10 leaders including district and division councillors were led by the Woman MP-elect Wakiso District, Hon. Ethel Betty Naluyima.

"We have a cardinal role as leaders to ensure food security in Uganda. I pledge support to engage relevant stakeholders to ensure political embrace of agricultural technologies like virus resistant (GMO) cassava," Hon. Naluyima said during the workshop. The local councillors accompanying her promised to rally support at their respective levels of administration to galvanize grassroots demand for GM crops developed at NaCRRI. NaCRRI remains at the vanguard of crop improvement using biotechnology in Uganda with crops like insect and drought tolerant maize, virus resistant cassava, and nitrogen-use efficient rice very close to commercial release stages.

"You have heard the controversy around genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and more recently (COVID-19) vaccines. This needs to be urgently addressed. The reason NaCRRI develops GMOs is to help farmers. We are not a profit-making entity," Dr. Godfrey Asea, NaCRRI Director, assured the guests at the workshop.

Dr. Asea called upon the local leaders present to work together with NaCRRI scientists to advance food security and make farming profitable for Uganda's farmers. His sentiments were re-echoed by one of the district councillors who noted, "We need to work together to promote agriculture in our district and country. By doing this, we are not helping NaCRRI but our farmers.

" Such pronouncements by political leaders keep hope alive that Ugandan farmers will one day be allowed to choose and grow improved GM crops. The workshop was organized by Science Foundation for Livelihoods and Development (SCIFODE), in collaboration with Uganda Biosciences Information Centre (UBIC).

Plant Biotechnology

● Japan Launches World's First Genome-Edited Tomato

The first direct consumption genome-edited tomato was launched in Japan by Sanatech Seed. The Japanese ministries in-charge have announced their determination that the genome-edited tomato will not be regulated as a genetically modified product.

Sanatech Seed's Sicilian Rouge High GABA tomato was developed using CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing technology. The tomato contains high levels of gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), an amino acid believed to aid relaxation and help lower blood pressure. According to Shimpei Takeshita, President of Sanatech Seed and Chief Innovation Officer of Pioneer EcoScience, the exclusive distributor of the tomato, it contains four to five times more GABA than a regular tomato.

Takeshita said the Sicilian Rouge variety and the GABA trait were chosen for their high level of consumer acceptance. "Sicilian Rouge is a popular tomato, and consumers are already used to buying other products with a high GABA content so we felt it was important to introduce them to the technology in a way that was already familiar to them," he explained.

In a statement on the notification of genome-edited high-GABA tomato in Japan, the International Seed Federation said it welcomes the release and that it is an important step in the implementation of the Japanese policy on genome editing, providing opportunities for the seed sector to continue its efforts on plant breeding innovation to contribute to sustainable food systems.



Photo Source: Sanatech Seed Co.



**CropLife Africa Middle East
International Association AISBL
Rue Théodore de Cuyper 100
B-1200 Brussels**

www.croplifeafrica.org

 CropLife Africa Middle East
 @CropLifeAME