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Partners in Sustainable Agriculture
CROPLIFE AFRICA MIDDLE EAST



Editorial

• CropLife Africa Middle East hosts another successful virtual Annual General Meeting and Board Meeting



For the second consecutive year, CropLife Africa Middle East conducted its Annual General Meeting and first Board meeting of the year on 17 May 2021 via teleconferencing. The meeting was opened under the leadership of Jerome Barbaron, President of CL AME.

The DG and Executive team of CL AME guided the agenda, providing an update on the ongoing projects such as the digital stewardship outreach program, the Green Deal Diplomacy impact on AME, the communications strategy and the Agra Project to support the Adoption of East African Community Pesticides Harmonised Guidelines. The active participation by Board members provided an excellent opportunity to have worthwhile exchanges on the ongoing activities.

Following the Board meeting, the AGM dealt with the statutory requirements in approving the Annual Report and the Accounts for 2020, noted the Audit Report and gave formal discharge of the directors and executives for the year 2020.

The AGM then elected the following individuals as Members of the Board:

- Tarek El Azab as the representative of CropLife Egypt.
- Benson Innocent Niankoury as the new representative of CropLife Côte d'Ivoire.

The President took the opportunity to thank Guy Liabra for his excellent leadership and engagement with the industry in Cote d'Ivoire and as a Board member of CL AME.

The meeting concluded with the President thanking each member for their commitment to the industry and CL AME for the successful and professional preparation and execution of the ongoing strategic projects and with that officially closed the meeting.

Dr Samira AMELLAL
Director CL AME



Stewardship

• CropLife Nigeria SSP Training, Adamawa State Nigeria

CropLife Nigeria trained 65 farmers as Spray Service Providers in Adamawa State in April 2021, in partnership with GIZ and the American University of Nigeria (AUN). The project is aimed at “Building Resilience through Sustainable Agriculture (BRSA)”.

The SSP Project took place in Mubi South Local Government of Adamawa State, which is in the Northern part of Nigeria. The farmers selected were from four communities. Among the beneficiaries were farmers of the AUN under the BRSA Project.

During the training they were trained on the Responsible Use and handling of pesticides and certified as SSPs. They are now able to hire out their spraying services to farmers within the AUN cluster and to other farmers within their communities. This will reduce the risks associated with the poor handling of pesticides as well as improve crop yields and the protection of the environment. The training took place from 19 - 30 April 2021 and was coordinated by Muhsin Gambo a CropLife Nigeria field officer.

This undertaking is part of the commitment and stewardship activities towards the responsible use and handling of pesticides practiced by CropLife Nigeria.



The CLN trainer (R) presenting the PPE kit and knapsack sprayer to a successful participant



Group photo of successful participants (SSPs) having just received their PPE kits

Scouting, triple rinsing and the disposal of empty plastic containers were shown to be topics of most interest from the training evaluation. The management of empty pesticide containers will help reduce contamination as well as prevent the reuse for carrying food and water. Although scouting and calibration were identified as challenges earlier by the trainees, this was addressed over the training period resulting in the SSPs seeing the importance of both these practices.

A pre-test conducted prior to the training to determine the level of experience and expertise showed that the average score was 3% while the post-test average score was 70% and 75% for practical application. This evaluation was undertaken following the last day of the training. The result of the post-test showed a high level of comprehension and understanding by the participants.

The successful candidates were given sets of PPE, a knapsack sprayer, ID Cards and Ledgers as an empowerment kit to start a business from the SSP training and the need to keep records of their spraying activities.

Adigun Banielabajide, CropLife Nigeria



Regulatory

• Virtual Training in ESA Region on Basics in Pesticides Registration and Risk Assessment

CLAME organised two training sessions, one for Kenya on April 13 and 14th, 2021 and a regional one on April 26 – 28, bringing together regulatory officials from the 6 East African Community Partner states

A total 80 participants drawn from Regulatory Agencies, Trial institutions, Independent experts, representatives of farmer groups and industry participated in the first training in Kenya while over 55 participated in the regional training involving officials from country regulatory agencies.

Responding to Kenya's need for capacity building in risk assessment for both industry and regulatory staff and the requirement for a product reevaluation process scheduled by the Pest Control Products Board (PCBP) the training was scheduled to address the following topics in risk assessment:

- Toxicological parameters and studies; covering the whole tox package (with emphasis on certain studies) and include the determination of reference doses (ADI, AOEL or equivalent, ARfD)
- Non-dietary exposure and Dietary exposure assessments covering qualitative and quantitative aspects Existing models with examples; Risk assessment and refinement options
- Environmental scenarios and assessments (as per Kenya's protection priority - Pollinators & aquatic organisms)
- Risk mitigation and communication

The regional basic training in pesticides registration was aimed at capturing the foundational aspects in the dossier evaluation process starting from an understanding of the law provisions, receiving of the application dossier all the way post registration processes. This was aimed at bringing all the participating officials from the 6 Partner States to a fair understanding focusing on the following topics:

- Pesticide Regulations: General objectives and overview of EAC Pesticide Guidelines
- Responsibilities of Regulatory Authorities in Pesticides Registration
- Interactive session on dossier submission, data requirements for conventional pesticide applications – Checklist approach
- International and regional sources of pesticide registration information
- Protection of Confidential Business Information
- Exercise: Dossier Receipt & Completeness check.
- Data on physical and chemical properties of a pesticide product
- Registration of biopesticides and biocontrol agents in the EAC (EAC guidelines)
- Bio-efficacy requirements, key considerations and issues
- Basic principles in the evaluation of potential human health risks
- Basic principles in the evaluation of potential environmental fate effects
- Basic principles in the evaluation of potential ecotoxicity (biota) effects
- Review of a proposed label – Labeling requirements
- Pesticide regulatory decision – risk management

Capacity building in dossier review process for the regulatory experts is been identified as one of the pillars to support fast tracking of implementation of the 6 EAC pesticides harmonised guidelines under the AGRA- EAC project. In addition under ongoing the pesticide management framework effort by CropLife Kenya, CropLife Africa Middle East (CLAME) and CropLife International through the focus is on equipping technical and regulatory staff with relevant practical skills on risk assessment.



Regulatory

Both training sessions were facilitated by international and regional experts including Dr. Thomas Muller, Toxicologist from Auxilife and Dr. Wolfgang Maasfeld, Member of the 'Exposure Group' of CropLife International, Luis Suguiyama, Former EPA Regulator (Facilitated through USDA-FAS), Barasa Wanyonyi (Pest Control Products Board, PCPB), Ramadhan Kilewa; Tanzania Plant Health and Pesticides Authority (TPHPA)

Stella Simiyu and Evelyn Lusenaka

• E-submission Experiences Africa- Turning Challenges into Opportunities

In the wake of the COVID – 19 crisis, in 2020 countries in AME region begun to implement components of e-submission to facilitate continuity in dossier evaluation and eventual registration of crop protection products

These and other measures as deemed necessary by countries have continued into 2021 in order to ensure that countries have access to needed crop protection solutions. The e-services range from picking out and building into the existing digital tools, various phases of product registration depending on the existing information technology capacities.

This presents an opportunity for all stakeholders to participate in creation of digital tools that enable registration authorities to continue providing essential services while adhering to laid down Ministry of Health COVID- 19 prevention procedures. Such online services may include applications for new registrations, renewals, label submissions, extensions and minor changes among others. The move to digitalizing regulatory services need also to take into consideration the possibilities of assisting countries combine in their systems the FAO pesticide registration tool kit (<http://www.fao.org/pesticide-registrationtoolkit/tool>) as well as training modules for Confidential Business Information.

Experiences in AME

Since 2020, there have been various efforts by countries in our region to implement aspects of e-submission, several achieving positive results and a number on the right path which, will need time to get there.

In our engagements with countries on this topic, as a way of supporting the efforts in overcoming challenges, through webinars held in 2020 and March 2021 respectively, regulatory experts from other jurisdictions have share experiences from long histories of digitalising application processes for pesticides including US-EPA and Canada.

This process is not without challenges including inadequacies in information technology infrastructure capacity, culture change and incorporation of other services often surrounding dossier registration, including pre-consultations and payments.

CropLife AME is looking to continue supporting efforts towards implementation of e-submission by engaging with authorities on resolving the challenges by sharing best practices from other countries and regions.

Stella Simiyu



Regulatory

- **CropLife Europe recently launched Free software suite to facilitate electronic submissions of dossiers.**

In order to boost electronic submissions by companies in several countries, CropLife Europe developed specific software usable by applicants and authorities. [The suite](#) includes different tools supporting the common electronic submission standards (OECD format GHSTS and the Industry developed standard CADDY).

The latest piece developed and launched in 2020 is an [e-submission builder](#): an easy-to-use and free software to manage and build your dossiers. It allows:

- The management of different versions of documents and dossiers
- The submission of a single dossier to multiple authorities with different requirements
- Transparency throughout dossier life cycle in the absence of more sophisticated technical solutions
- Simplifies work sharing, increases efficiency and improves communication.

The easy building of dossiers is supported by Tables of Contents (ToCs) based on local regulatory requirements. These Tables of Contents can be amended or new ones created to consider new national situations. Supporting material is available on the dedicated [webpage](#), including a [video demo](#).

The support of the common OECD and Industry standards is also ensured via additional software, like a [validator](#) (technical check of dossier content) and a [viewer](#) allowing especially authorities to display, search and easily navigate a dossier using these formats.

All these user-friendly software products can be downloaded for free and the source code can also be provided upon request, allowing the development of locally adapted versions.

Laurent Oger, CropLife Europe



Association Management

“Happy Retirement, Dr Mguni” from CropLife Zimbabwe

Dr Cames Mguni, Director of the Research Services Division in Zimbabwe’s Ministry of Agriculture, retired this year after more than 35 years’ service with the ministry.

A pathologist by profession, Dr Mguni started working at the ministry as a research officer and rose through the ranks to be head of the Plant Protection Research Institute and finally Director of the Research Services Division.

To mark Dr Mguni’s retirement, representatives from CropLife Zimbabwe’s Executive Committee took him to lunch at a Harare restaurant. The outgoing chairperson, Caroline Charumbira, presented him with a retirement gift of an engraved wall clock in the shape of Zimbabwe, in appreciation of his many years of service to the industry.

Mr Kwadzanai Mushore, the Registrar of Pesticides and another key person from CropLife Zimbabwe, also came to the lunch while the association was represented by four members of ExCom; as well as Caroline Charumbira. These were the incoming chairperson and vice chairperson, Tawanda Mangisi and Mazvita Shumba, plus Talk Chinoda who has been in charge of CropLife Zimbabwe’s finances for the last two years.

“During his time as Director of the Research Services Division”, said Mazvita Shumba, “Dr Mguni always had his door open for us to meet and discuss regulatory matters and issues that affect us due to policy in the country.



(L – R) Kwadzanai Mushore, Caroline Charumbira, Cames Mguni, Mazvita Shumba, Tawanda Mangisi, Talk Chinoda

This has been, and will continue to be, helpful in how we operate as businesses.” She went on, “Dr Mguni encouraged us to take CropLife Zimbabwe to greater heights by interacting more as companies and standing up for the needs and interests of the organisation. He also gave us insights on how certain government programmes are implemented and how we could play a role. We hope to continue consulting him in future as he knows the best strategies to work and collaborate with our government.”

As outgoing chairperson of CropLife Zimbabwe, Caroline Charumbira added: “For the industry, he was an advocate of softer requirements for label extensions and mutual acceptance of data from other countries in Africa where a product is registered. He pushed for the industry to bring in chemicals for FAW control by granting temporary registrations so that companies could bring in relevant products to control the pest while doing trials.

“He was also an advocate for the safe and responsible use of chemicals by running advertisements on radio and TV.”

We wish Dr Mguni a long, happy and fulfilling retirement.

Carol Smith – CropLife Zimbabwe



Plant Biotechnology

• Genome Editing in Agriculture - International Perspectives and Lessons for Regional Alignment

The world of plant biotechnology is rapidly evolving, and these new innovations and technologies are becoming key in assisting farmers to meet the global food demand of a growing population. One of these promising technologies is genome editing, which in some instances differs from genetic modification in that only a small, controlled change is made to the organism's existing DNA similar to changes that are introduced through conventional plant breeding... The challenge, however, arises in how these new technologies should be regulated and more importantly, working towards global regulatory harmonisation to ensure that these innovations are not stifled and that policies disproportionate to safety concerns, are not implemented.

For this reason, CropLife South Africa hosted a webinar on 25 May 2021, to provide a platform where stakeholders in South Africa and the region could gain a better understanding of genome editing technology, get insight into best practices.

regarding policy in various regions, as well to encourage alignment in policy approaches.

The event was moderated by Ben Durham, the chief director of bio-innovation at the Department of Science and Innovation, and subsequently opened by the US Department of Agriculture's Chargé d'Affaires, Todd Haskell, who set the stage by describing the long-standing relationship between the US and South Africa. He indicated that in 2020 alone, over \$8 Million was achieved in bilateral agricultural trade between the two countries. He continued by describing how South Africa's adoption of proven scientific approaches in biotechnology has paved the way for its farmers to increase maize production exponentially over the past 20 years, resulting in South Africa being the continent's leader in plant biotechnology and a reliable supplier of maize across the region, and in the world.

Dr. Julian Jaftha, the chief director of plant production and health at the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, explained the considerations of regulating genome editing in South Africa in terms of the GMO Act of 1997. He acknowledged that developing this framework was still a work in progress and that one of the main questions that needed to be answered was whether or not genetically edited products or techniques should be regulated under the same Act, and if so, what kind of risk assessment route needed to be followed. At present, he said, a two-tiered approach is being considered, where the first tier would encompass the core information required to perform a basic risk assessment and the second would, if needed, include supplementary information based the characteristics or unintended use of the genetically modified organism. To date however, no formal application for registration under the GMO Act, 1997 for a genetically edited product has been received in South Africa.

Shedding some light on the responsibilities for the regulatory framework in Nigeria, was Dr. Rufus Ebegba, the chief executive officer at the National Biosafety Management Agency. He illustrated the process map used in Nigeria that assists in deciding whether a product is considered genetically modified or not. Some of the considerations include whether there is a transgene or foreign DNA present, if the product uses the transgene temporarily and if the final product is free of the transgene. Alejandro Hernandez, the regional director of biotechnology for CropLife Latin America, followed with an informative presentation about the regulation approaches in Central and South America. He highlighted that some legislation discriminates between genome edited and genetically modified products by analysing whether the final product can result from conventional breeding, mutations or natural intervention. He emphasised the importance of definitions and specific wording contained in the regulations and provided examples from countries such as Honduras, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Argentina, who follow the same consultation approach regarding whether the final product is considered a GMO or not.



Plant Biotechnology

Dr. Donald Mackenzie, the executive director at the Institute for International Crop Improvement concluded the day by suggesting that conversations around genome editing and plant breeding innovations should be rooted within the historical context of plant breeding and crop improvement. He further explained that the vast majority of market-oriented plant breeding innovations are mutations that are indistinguishable from the kinds of mutations produced using classical mutation

breeding. He concluded by suggesting that the science should be followed and the learnings of more than three decades of regulating GMOs, should be captured.

The next webinar in this series will be hosted on 22 June 2021 and will focus on how genome editing in agriculture can enable opportunities for agricultural innovation in South Africa.

Elriza Theron
CropLife South Africa

• A new chance for genetically engineered crops



The European Union is reviewing its rules on genetically modified organisms (GMOs), with an eye to loosening restrictions on genetically engineered (GE) crops. It is a welcome move, and African countries should consider emulating it. There are fewer controversial topics in global agriculture. Many worry that GE crops have adverse environmental and health effects, and that they risk undermining food sovereignty, as the handful of corporations making the seeds can gain undue power over global agricultural output – and the farmers who produce it. It is because of these fears that the EU and most African countries currently restrict the cultivation of GE crops.

This said, German Agriculture Minister Julia Kloeckner has welcomed the possibility of looser restrictions on genetically engineered crops as an "overdue modernization" of EU policy. She is right – and it is not only Europe that needs to rethink its approach.



Plant Biotechnology

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And yet, many countries – including Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, the United States, Uruguay, Paraguay, and South Africa – have embraced GE crops. These countries generally subscribe to the view that gene editing in crops is safe, because it mostly just accelerates natural processes.

Moreover, advocates argue, gene editing may be the key to developing more resilient, sustainable crops. These claims are backed by significant evidence: countries that have embraced GE crops report lower insecticide use, more environmentally friendly tillage practices, and improved crop yields.

South Africa is a case in point. Planting of GE maize seeds commenced in the 2001-02 season. Prior to that, average maize yields were around 2.4 tons per hectare; last season, that figure was 5.9 tons per hectare. As a result, South Africa managed to produce nearly 20% of Sub-Saharan Africa's maize on only about 2.5 million hectares of land.

By contrast, Nigeria typically plants about 6.5 million hectares of maize, but accounts for only 15% of Sub-Saharan Africa's output, according to data from the International Grains Council. Across the region, maize yields average less than two tons per hectare. And irrigation does not explain the discrepancy: only 10% of South Africa's maize is irrigated; the rest of the crop is rainfed, like in the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa.

For the EU, the benefits of GE crops are becoming impossible to ignore. As a recently published study by the European Commission puts it, “New Genomic Techniques products have the potential to contribute to sustainable agri-food systems in line with the objectives of the European Green Deal and Farm to Fork Strategy.”

The Commission hopes that it can take advantage of GE crops' potential to “contribute to sustainability,” while “addressing concerns” by, for example, preventing gene editing in agriculture from “undermining other aspects of sustainable food production,” such as organic agriculture. That will be a difficult path to walk. As the study shows, there is still significant resistance to GE crops among member states, and many are calling for a more intensive risk assessment.

Yet there is also significant support for change. German Agriculture Minister Julia Kloeckner welcomed the possibility of an “overdue modernization” of the EU's approach to GE crops, which are currently subject to the same rules as GMOs. France has previously expressed support for creating separate rules for GE crops.

If the EU does loosen its restrictions on GE crops, the effects will extend far beyond its borders. For one thing, larger European crop yields would put downward pressure on world grain prices by creating additional competition for major grain exporters, such as the US, Ukraine, Argentina, Russia, Brazil, Canada, and South Africa. – (extract from Agbiz News)





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