Partners in Sustainable Agriculture
CROPLIFE AFRICA MIDDLE EAST
Editorial

• Only Innovation Can Help Africa Align its Food, Climate and Environment Needs

For too long, Africa’s farmers have been pitted against its environmentalists. The common narrative seems to suggest that trade-offs are inevitable between feeding the continent’s growing population and protecting its land, water and biodiversity while taking climate action.

But it need not always be a zero-sum game like this. Breakthrough innovations are redefining how these two sectors can work together, and researchers from both the private and public sectors have embraced this challenge by developing new products and practices that can address both needs jointly.

Crop breeding programmes, for instance, are not only focused on boosting yields, but also on helping farmers put measures in place to improve soil health and capture carbon in the soil.

Soils are amongst the biggest potential carbon sinks, and the practice also helps reduce erosion, retain moisture, and diversify soils’ microorganisms.

New crop varieties are also being designed to use less water and to be more tolerant of droughts, heatwaves, and salinity from ocean flooding. Yet others are being bred to be resistant to common diseases, such as bananas resistant to “fusarium wilt” that is sweeping across countries like Uganda where bananas and plantains are staples in the diet.

Similarly, a range of different crop protection products, both biological and chemical, are helping farmers not only protect their harvests but also to preserve forests and other natural habitats. This is because up to 40 per cent of the world’s crops are lost to insects, diseases, and weeds, and farmers tend to clear more land for cultivation if yields on existing land are insufficient.

These practices are also helping African farmers anticipate new and more frequent pest outbreaks due to climate change. A recent case in point was an outbreak of the Tuta absoluta moth in tomatoes in 2014, which led to a decline in tomato production and increased tomato prices across the region. Many of the lessons learnt from that experience were then replicated when the Fall Army Worm began decimating the region’s major grain and vegetable crops including maize, rice, sorghum one year later. It was used again during a major locust invasion the year after, when the outbreak threatened the food security and livelihoods of the over 300 million people living there.

Using these crop protection products as minimally as possible reduces the risk of impact to biodiversity and native species while disposing of their containers properly afterwards avoids the risk of polluting waterways.

At the same time, advances in digital agriculture are allowing farmers to anticipate risks from weather earlier and more effectively and also to track what is happening on their farms in real-time and adjust their methods and their inputs accordingly.

These innovations cannot come quickly enough for African farmers, who are facing extreme pressures at a scale unmatched by most other regions. Much of the continent faces the highest risk of exposure to climate change, despite contributing only around three per cent of total historic greenhouse gas emissions globally.
Editorial

At the same time, the average African farm performs at only around 40 per cent of its potential, and the continent contains more than 50 per cent of the world’s food insecure population and is the world’s fastest growing continent.

Ensuring farmers have access to the innovations they need is not simply a matter of ensuring they exist. Farmers may sometimes need incentives and training to adopt these practices. They also need a supporting environment outside the farm itself, including viable infrastructure, harmonised risk-based standards, and fair-trading markets and protocols. For example, transport costs in Africa today are on average 63 per cent higher than in developed countries.

The continent’s current agricultural subsidy programmes could be redirected to support more of these innovations that deliver a “double win” for both food and the environment. Even more, once these gains started materializing, the $35 billion currently spent on food imports could instead be used to further fuel the economic growth of Africa’s rural areas.

As the global community comes together for the United Nations Food Systems Summit, Africa can proudly take its place at the global table with a broad set of concrete solutions to offer. Agricultural innovations across the continent are showing that Africa’s farmers are a solution not only to hunger but to the environment upon which our agriculture depends.

Samira Amellal,
DG and CEO, CropLife Africa Middle East
Stewardship

• **CropLife Egypt participates in Tomato Value Chain project**

CropLife Egypt was invited to participate in the workshop conducted by the “Inclusive & Sustainable Development of the Tomato Value Chain” project in Egypt (TVC) under the name of “Stakeholders’ Consultation Workshop Functionality and Governance of the Tomato Learning and Service Centre (TLSC)”

The event took place on 30 September at the Steinberger Tahrir meeting hall and was attended by around 200 representatives of various stakeholders.

The project is implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation, and funded by the Italian government represented by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS).

The project intends to improve the processed tomato value chain focusing on skills development from the field to factory by the establishment of a specialized Pilot Training & Service Centre under the name of the Tomato Learning and Service Centre (TLSC) dedicated to the agro-food sector.

It should be noted that Egypt ranks fifth among the list of countries producing fresh tomatoes in the world with about 8 million tonnes.

**Mahmoud Said**

• **Capacity Enhancement for coffee and vegetable producers in Cameroon**

The capacity building workshops for pesticide handling and uses in the vegetable and coffee sectors reached four more communities during the period of August 24 to September 08. The workshops were organized under the cooperation program between the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER) and CropLife Cameroon. The 184 participants were mainly producers (139), and to a lesser extend dealers, trainers, and extension agents.
**Stewardship**

The topics presented during sessions relate to IPM/RU-SU and GAPs, the importance of PPEs, container management and the calibration and maintenance of spraying equipment. A special focus was on the illegal trade of pesticides and the associated risks on the health of the farming communities and on the sustainability of the whole agricultural sector.

The training workshops were organized under the cooperation framework between the MINADER and CropLife Cameroon.

The participants were thus called for vigilance and cooperation to fight counterfeit and other illegal pesticides. They were provided with the lists of registered pesticides for the specific crops and tips to identify illegal pesticides focusing on the “3 Basic Questions” when purchasing pesticides.

**C. Sonna, Executive Secretary CropLife Cameroon**

An exercise conducted by the participants on how to read a pesticide label.
• **Building Capacity on IPM/RU-SU for dealerships in Côte d’Ivoire**

CropLife Côte d’Ivoire and the Directorate of Plant Protection (DPVCQ) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER) organized the third joint training workshop on October 11-15 in Yamoussoukro for capacity building on IPM/RU-SU. The 71 participants were mostly individuals seeking certification or renewal of certification as pesticide retailers (18), applicators (15) or counsellors (38). Many participants in the counsellor group were agents from various companies or organizations where they directly handle pesticides.

Topics covered relate to basics on pesticides (definition, families, formulation...), pesticide regulations in Côte d’Ivoire, transport and storage of pesticides, IPM/RU, public hygiene, First Aid, application equipment and technics, protection of stored products. A special attention was brought to Anticounterfeit and other illegal pesticides and the associated risks on health and the environment and impacts on the economies.

All the participants passed the evaluation test thus were awarded a certification of participation during the closing ceremony chaired by the Director of Plant Protection, Control and Quality Directorate of the MINADER.

J. Yoboué

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• **Building Capacity on IPM/RU-SU for dealership in Nigeria**

The joint nationwide training program for the certification of pesticide dealers by CropLife Nigeria-NAFDAC was officially launched on September 08 in Osun State, Nigeria. The program is aimed at training 6,000 dealers throughout the federation. So far, 950 dealers have been trained as the COVID-19 restrictive measures have greatly delayed the process.
The ceremony was chaired by Dr. Mudashiru Idayat, Director of the Veterinary Medicine and Allied Products (VMAP), in the presence of Dr. Jimoh Abubakar representing the Director General of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC). CropLife Nigeria was represented by a delegation headed by its President, Mahmood Tauhid.

Training sessions will be organized in Lagos, Ogun, and Niger State during the coming months before the start of the certification process by NAFDAC.

**Oluwasiji Ofoesuwa, Executive Secretary CropLife Nigeria**
Stewardship

- **Strengthening Capacity for Container Management Program in Ghana**

CropLife Ghana trained and sensitized over six hundred (600) fruits and vegetable farmers in the Central Region of Ghana as part of its activities in the implementation of the pilot Empty Pesticides Container Management Program with funding support from CropLife Africa Middle East. During the program, two hundred fruit and vegetable farmers were sensitized on the program in each of the community in Bawjiase, Bonsiaku, and Olotom on 27th, 28th and 29th of September 2021 respectively.

The objectives of the program include promoting a better and wider public understanding and appreciation on the need for the safe handling and recycling of empty pesticides containers among the fruits and vegetable farmers in the Central Region of Ghana. Secondly, to help reduce the rate of counterfeiting of crop protection products and to promote public-private partnerships for safe and responsible use of pesticides and environmental sustainability.
CropLife Ghana is collaborating with the Awutu Senya District Department of Food and Agriculture under the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) and GLOBALG.A.P. Farm Assurers for the successful implementation of the pilot program with strong support from the CropLife Ghana member companies.

Pivotal to the success of the pilot container management program is the motivation for the farmers to bring back their empty pesticide containers to the designated collection cages hence the active involvement of CLG member companies in the program. The member companies will offer T-shirts, key holders, and other paraphernalia to farmers who are able to bring back their containers.

R. Kadiri, Program Manager CropLife Ghana
Regulatory

• **Strides in Domestication and Implementation of EAC Harmonized Pesticide Guidelines in Kenya**

On 7 October 2021 the Agrochemicals Association of Kenya (AAK) together with the Pest Control Products Board, CropLife Africa Middle East (CLAME), Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), East African Community Secretariat, U.S Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, University of Missouri, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, KARLO, regulatory authorities; PCPB and KEPHIS took part in the sensitization and validation workshop in Nairobi.

The objectives of the workshop were to further induct stakeholders on the EAC harmonized pesticides guidelines, receive feedback on and validate the country assessment report on domestication and implementation of the EAC guidelines. It was the last of 5 specific interactions held under the project in 5 Partner States since June 2021.

The project aims at ensuring farmers access quality pest control products to control FAW through fast tracking the domestication and implementation of EAC harmonised pesticides guidelines in the 6 Partner States.

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<th>AGRA and the EAC Secretariat project towards domestication of a set of 6 EAC Harmonised pesticides guidelines</th>
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<td>1) Efficacy trials</td>
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<td>2) Designation of efficacy trial centres,</td>
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<td>3) Residue trials,</td>
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<td>4) Registration requirements for chemical pesticides,</td>
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<td>5) Data requirements for registration for Biopesticides and Biocontrol agents for Plant Protection and</td>
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<td>6) Protection of CBI</td>
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Project places emphasis on:
- Building capacity on registration procedures including dossier evaluation and risk assessment.
- Establishment of a secure online system for dossiers submission.
- Piloting and testing of the system for efficiency using existing Fall Armyworm (FAW) pest control options.

Participants recommended that the ongoing law review process be fast tracked to ensure domestication of the EAC pesticides harmonised guidelines. Others highlighted the need to enhance capacity in infrastructure, human resource, governance to support pesticide registration and post registration surveillance.

**Stella Simiyu Wafukho**
ANTI-COUNTERFEITING

CropLife Côte d’Ivoire enhances awareness raising through rural radios

The first phase of the 2021 anticounterfeiting media campaign launched last August ended in early October. The campaign involved 21 rural radio stations in the areas of high use of pesticides and/or high potential of illegal trade of pesticides. The campaign consisted of broadcasting radio messages for awareness raising focusing on the “3 Basic Questions” with reference to legitimate products (intact packages and labels), registration number and contact details of the distributor, contact details of the extension agents or the cooperative agent, purchasing from only legitimate dealers and using the services of SSP where available. The contact details of the Executive Secretary of CropLife Côte d’Ivoire were also provided.

The message was broadcast in 10 local languages besides French, at least three days per week twice per day during the two-month period.

The next phase of outreach messaging is scheduled for the period of the cocoa insecticide spray round in December-January.

G. Yoboué, CropLife Côte d’Ivoire
ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT

• **CropLife Côte d'Ivoire appoints a new Executive Director**

Justin Yoboué has been recruited as the new Executive Director of CropLife Côte d’Ivoire following the resignation of Roger Yeboué after more than 10 years in that position.

J. Yoboué joins CropLife Côte d’Ivoire (CI) with a solid background and knowledge of the industry.

Known as an active field officer within member companies of CropLife CI where he served, he joined the Board of UNIPHYTO, the former association, as Vice-President in 2003, then become President from 2004 to 2008. He served the association with dedication leading the discussions for adoption and move to become CropLife CI.

J. Yoboué joined the GEF-WB obsolete stocks project in Côte d’Ivoire (PROGEP-CI). Five years ago, as the Specialist for Chemicals, he greatly contributed to the preparation of the Draft Bill for the repression of illegal pesticides in the country.

JY was recognized by the various member companies of CropLife Côte d’Ivoire where he served in both product development and sales.

With the new relationships developed during all these years, especially through PROGEP-CI, JY is expecting to boost the image and implication of CropLife CI in the many issues the pesticide industry is facing in the country and the sub-region.

B. Niankoury, President CropLife Côte d’ivoire
Plant Biotechnology

• Nigeria Approves Genetically Modified TELA Maize for Open Cultivation

12 October 2021, Abuja, Nigeria - The Federal Government of Nigeria granted environmental approval for evaluation and open cultivation of TELA Maize, a new maize variety genetically modified to tolerate moderate drought and resist the fall armyworm and stem borer. This development now places Nigeria one step closer to commercializing the biotech maize and becoming the second African country after South Africa to do so.

The approval was contained in a Certificate issued to the country’s Institute for Agricultural Research (IAR) whose researchers developed the variety. It was issued by the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA), the federal government agency mandated to regulate genetically modified products in the country. The Certificate, with permit code no. NBMA/CM/003, allows the commercial release of TELA Maize effective from October 8, 2021 to October 5, 2024.

• Uganda edges toward accepting biotechnology as climate challenges mount

Faced with weather extremes, food insecurity and a fast-growing population, there is growing acceptance in Uganda for adopting innovative biotechnologies to address climate change-related agricultural challenges.

Unlike its neighbour, Kenya, which has warmed up to and benefitted from biotechnology, Uganda has faced long odds, primarily due to the lack of a supportive biosafety law and low awareness about the benefits of biotechnology. President Yoweri Museveni has failed to sign the genetic engineering regulatory bill twice passed by the legislature.

But forces beyond politics, such as the increasingly adverse impacts of climate change on the country’s agricultural sector, have been at play, inevitably changing the narrative.

“Political involvement in regulation has been a limiting factor in easing the regulatory barriers to the development and deployment of biotechnology, but as the climate warms and as the country’s population continues to surge, the country’s decision-makers will have to reduce their objections to biotechnology,” Jonan Twinamatsiko, a researcher and science policy expert, said.

Yona Musinguzi, a member of parliament’s science, technology and innovation committee, said Uganda will have to follow the lead of other nations in Africa that have successfully adopted biotechnology and are currently transforming their small-holder farming sectors into commercialized and market-oriented businesses.
Plant Biotechnology

• Rwanda moves closer to adopting Plant Biotechnology

Rwanda signalled its growing receptivity toward agricultural biotechnology this week as it joined seven other African countries — Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda and Tanzania — in forming a country chapter of the Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology (OFAB).

"By embracing technological upgrading and building capacity for our farmers and rural value chain actors, I believe they will make informed decisions to be at par with the rest of African countries who are already benefiting from agricultural biotechnology, such as South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, among others," said Dr. Geraldine Mukeshimana, Rwanda’s Minister for Agriculture and Animal Resources.

Africa has yet to adopt agricultural biotechnology in an optimal way as one of the solutions to food production challenges, Mukeshimana said.

"As a continent, we are still hesitating due to the bad press GM (genetically modified) products have received for the past decades," she said. "It is worth noting that the food import bill for Africa rose to US$49 billion in 2019 from US$35 billion in 2015. We need to use homegrown scientists’ innovations to help reduce the food import bill and to repurpose these savings to other socio-economic programmes."

The Rwanda OFAB chapter launch comes at a time when Africa’s agriculture-dependent economy is facing myriad production challenges, including climate change, new pests and diseases and finite farm land. These challenges require special attention to enable optimal production yields that are also friendly to the environment.

The agricultural sector constitutes 32 percent of the continent’s Gross Domestic Product, according to Dr. Emmanuel Okogbenin, director of Program Development and Commercialization at AATF, in a recent article published in the journal Afrika Focus. The ongoing agricultural transformation agenda in Africa hinges on a system change from subsistence farming to an agribusiness approach that explores high productivity to strengthen the African economy.