



MARCH 2009

# ABS NEWSLETTER

## 8th ABS Planning Meeting

The 8th ABS planning meeting was held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso on the 22nd - 28th of February 2009. It was hosted by INERA Environment and Agriculture Research Institute one of the four institutes of the National Center for Scientific and Technological Research in Burkina Faso.

The objective of the meeting was to review the progress made in the last three and a half years so as to decide if the project is on course and also identify if there were any gaps in the product development roadmap specifically in the three countries with the aim of constructing a more realistic and robust master plan.

The meeting was opened by Dr. Gnissa Konate the director of INERA with some welcoming remarks and the opening speech was given by the Guest of Honour, Professor Basile Guissou, Director general of (CNRST).

Prof. Guissou said that the ABS project was of critical importance to Burkina Faso given that sorghum was a staple food crop and malnutrition is a major problem facing the country.

Other highlights of the meeting included:

### The ABS Project Roadmap

Phase one of the ABS project ends in 2010 June and the proposal for phase two must be completed by January 2010;

The main factors to be considered for phase two will be (a) Stability of varieties (b) Geographies (c) Hybrid vs Open pollinated;

A new management tier Country Teams was proposed to supplement Management & Coordination by Africa Harvest and the Functional Groups;

The proposed Country Teams will (a) Synergize/Integrate all teams and stakeholders in a country, (b) Coordinate the development of the ABS product, and (c) Provide leadership in the deployment of the product;

The Functional Groups will continue to offer professional assistance, identify gaps and remove or deal with emerging challenges.

### Technology Highlights

The technology expects to have events ready by 2011; in view of this, the Breeders Group must be ready to receive these events while the Public Acceptance and Communication (PAC) Group must identify and develop strategies to deal with related issues; The Puerto Rico "full-product" plant performed very well in the two plantings in Puerto Rico and Iowa. All

plants looked promising and seed were being bulked in preparation for Africa trials.

### Nutrition Highlight

The nutrition team was asked to find out the deregulation requirements for nutrition ie was centralized data enough or did each country require its own data. Also it was to find out if human feeding would be allowed before deregulation.

The team was also asked to consider the outcome of the ABS nutrition during the processing as the sorghum will be processed as any other cereal. They were asked to that ensure that Vitamin A is stable during storage and also preparation.

It was also noted that nutrition statistical data for the ABS product was necessary for product acceptance in Burkina.

### Vitamin A Highlights

CSIR confirmed that it had generated ABS sorghum with elevated Vitamin A levels but the levels attained were less than those of ABS target. The team will now be working towards increasing Vitamin A levels; The PAC team presented various possible names for the final product. A committee was to be formed to decide on a name of the Vitamin A sorghum product as well as the "full-product" will all minerals, micronutrients and vitamins.

### Breeding Highlight

ICRISAT was assigned to provide mentorship for the breeding team while Pioneer would provide backstopping;

The breeding team decided not to use any tannin African varieties. They also requested to have some kind of mentorship from experts during the course of the project.

### Regulatory Highlights

The regulatory team was advised to be prepared for eventualities by doing mock trials so that once the ABS product gets into the various countries everything will be in place. It was also suggested that the mock trials be part of the roadmap; Internal regulation for ABS was assigned to Danforth and Africa Harvest.

### PAC Highlights

Uniformity of messaging on issues of especially gene flow among consortium members was assigned to PAC. They were also allotted the responsibility of developing talking points and training various team leaders.



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1. (L-R) Mohamed Honvy from ARC Egypt, Prof Babatunde Obilana a sorghum expert from Nigeria. 2. (L-R) Zuo Zhao a senior scientist at Pioneer, Richard Boadi, Legal council and Clement Kamau, a KARI breeder. 3. ABS delegates at the 8th ABS planning meeting held in Burkina Faso



4. Prof Basile Guisou director general of CNRST who was the Guest of Honour at the ABS meeting, Gnissa Konate director of INERA and Dr Florence Wambugu the CEO of Africa Harvest. 5. (Foreground background) Andre Oelofse and Prof John Taylor from University of Pretoria, Namera Shargie and Charlotte Mienie from ARC South Africa. 6. (Foreground- background) Dr Hamidou Traore (wheat scientist) and Clarrise Barro (breeder) from INERA at the INERA lab facilities during the ABS



7. Dr Jeremy Ouedraogo from INERA. 8. A visit by ABS delegates to a sorghum biscuits factory in Burkina Faso. 9. The attending ABS delegates on the 8th planning meeting in Ouagadougou Burkina Faso held on the 22nd - 28th of February 2009.