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Final Press Release

Second World Seed Conference, Rome September 8-10 2009

World food security: urgent measures on seed needed

September 10 2009, Rome – Urgent government measures and increased public and private investment in the seed sector are required for the long term if agriculture is to meet the challenge of food security in the context of population growth and climate change. This was the declaration of the Second World Seed Conference held at the FAO Headquarters in Rome, September 8-10, 2009.

Governments are strongly encouraged to implement a predictable, reliable, user friendly and affordable regulatory environment to ensure that farmers have access to high quality seed at a fair price.

In particular, FAO member countries are urged to participate in the internationally harmonized systems of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), the International Treaty on Plant and Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) and the International Seed Testing Association (ISTA).

Participation in those systems will facilitate the availability of germplasm, new plant varieties and high quality seed for the benefit of their farmers, without which their ability to respond to the challenges ahead will be substantially impaired.

The conference emphasized the important role of both the public and the private sectors to meet the challenges ahead and the benefits when the two work together.

The Second World Seed Conference emphasized that agriculture needs to provide sustainable food security and economic development in the context of current and future global challenges.

The Conference highlighted the critical role of new plant varieties and high quality seed in providing a dynamic and sustainable agriculture that can meet those challenges. It concluded that governments need to develop and maintain an enabling environment to encourage plant breeding and the production and distribution of high quality seed.

The global seed market has grown rapidly in recent years and is currently worth around US\$37 billion. Cross border seed trade was estimated to be worth around US\$6.4 billion in 2007.

The Second World Seed Conference was held at FAO headquarters from September 8-10 and organized in collaboration with the OECD, UPOV, ITPGRFA, ISTA, ISF.

Conference conclusions:

- Plant breeding has significantly contributed and will continue to be a major contributor to increased food security whilst reducing input costs, greenhouse gas emissions and deforestation. With that, plant breeding significantly mitigates the effects of population growth, climate change and other social and physical challenges.
- ITPGRFA is an innovative instrument that aims at providing food security through conservation, as well as facilitated access to genetic resources under its multilateral system of access and benefit-sharing. The multilateral system represents a reservoir of genetic traits, and therefore constitutes a central element for the achievement of global food security.
- Intellectual property protection is crucial for a sustainable contribution of plant breeding and seed supply. An effective system of plant variety protection is a key enabler for investment in breeding and the development of new varieties of plants. A country's membership of UPOV is an important global signal for breeders to have the confidence to introduce their new varieties in that country.
- Seed quality determination, as established by ISTA, on seed to be supplied to farmers is an important measure for achieving successful agricultural production. The establishment or maintenance of an appropriate infrastructure on the scientific as well as technical level in developed and developing countries is highly recommended.
- The development of reliable and internationally acceptable certificates, through close collaboration between all stakeholders along the supply chain for varietal certification, phyto-sanitary measures and laboratory testing, contributes substantially to the strong growth in international trade and development of seed markets to the benefit of farmers.

ISTA www.seedtest.org

ISF www.worldseed.org

OECD www.oecd.org/tad/seed

UPOV www.upov.int