



**Dr. Denis Kyetere, Executive Director  
Africa Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF)**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

- Thank you all for joining us.
- May I take this opportunity to introduce the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) and the Water Efficient Maize for Africa (WEMA) Project.
- The AATF facilitates public-private partnerships for access and delivery of agricultural technologies for use by smallholder farmers across Sub-Saharan Africa to improve food security and livelihoods. We are currently in 13 countries in Africa working on various technologies with different partners.
- The WEMA project is one of eleven projects that AATF currently participates in. It is a PPP project that brings together seven partners including national agricultural research systems of Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda; the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), an internationally funded, non-profit, scientific research, training, and development organization; and Monsanto, a private agricultural company. All the WEMA partners each contribute their technology, time, and expertise to the project.
- The project aims to develop and avail to farmers drought tolerant and insect-pest protected maize varieties using a range of approaches including conventional plant breeding and genetic modification. These varieties will improve yields under moderate drought and protect maize from insect-pest damage.
- The first conventional drought tolerant maize under the name *DroughtTEGO* or simply *TEGO* is already in use by farmers in Kenya and Uganda.
- In Kenya, AATF has partnered with KALRO and other organizations in testing and disseminating of various agricultural technologies. These technologies include the WEMA *Bt* maize which has been proven to effectively control stem borer insect-pests, increase yield and improve maize grain quality due to reduced insect-pests damage. Trials conducted by KALRO show 3.7 tonnes per hectare above the commercial hybrids. We are therefore jointly seeking approval from the Kenya government for commercial release of the *Bt* maize through the National Biosafety Authority (NBA).
- We thank the NBA for moving fast and opening up our application to public review and participation as required by the law. We are confident that the application will be approved.
- Approval for release will ensure farmers enjoy the benefits of higher maize yields and better quality grain due to controlled pest infestation. It will also mean that Kenya will become the second country in Africa, after South Africa, to release *Bt* maize variety for use by local farmers and join the ranks of Brazil, Argentina,

Canada, Spain, Portugal, and others where farmers are tremendously benefiting from the adoption of *Bt* maize variety.

- If I can give an example of South Africa, successful adoption of the *Bt* maize by farmers saw the country realize a net increase in national maize yield of 9.5%, equivalent to USD 213 million in 2012 after
- With this application, KALRO is set to lead the country into the league of over 25 countries that are benefiting from *Bt* technology world-wide.
- Of importance to note is that the WEMA *Bt* maize will be availed royalty-free to farmers – meaning it will be sold at the prevailing market price of maize seed without additional royalty payments for the insect-pest protection.

### **Concluding Remarks**

- In conclusion, I would like to say that GM crops have been safely used in our global food system for nearly 20 years and have a history of safe cultivation and consumption.
- Approval for commercial release will pave way for variety release and registration through the National Performance Trials (NPTs) and eventual delivery to farmers through local seed companies in the same manner as any other crop varieties.
- Thank you for your attention. We now can take your questions.