

MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

Australia-Africa Plant Biosecurity Partnership Prioritisation Workshop

27 to 28 October 2014



Agriculture employs over 60 per cent of the labour force and accounts for 30 per cent of gross domestic product in many African countries. Agricultural performance is therefore key to growth and poverty reduction in Africa through impacts on employment, health, nutrition and livelihoods (especially for women and youth).

Great strides are being made by many African countries to enhance farm productivity through research, infrastructure projects and importantly, more effective operation of agricultural markets and trade.

SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What is the partnership?

The initiative was established in response to requests from African stakeholders of the Australian International Food Security Research Centre (AIFSRC) – within the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR). The AU\$1 million Australia-Africa Plant Biosecurity Partnership (AAPBP) is a capacity development program aiming to enhance plant biosecurity skills and planning in Africa by linking African professionals with their counterparts in Australia. The first activity of the partnership is this prioritisation workshop in Nairobi, 27-28 October 2014. More information is available on the project pages of [ACIAR](#) and [PBCRC](#) websites

Why is plant biosecurity important?

Plant biosecurity is the management of risks to the economy, environment and community from plant pests and diseases entering, emerging, establishing or spreading. Improved plant biosecurity can reduce the risks from new plant pests and weeds, increase crop production and enable African farmers to secure and maintain market access for their produce, contributing to improved food and income security.

What countries are being targeted?

The AAPBP covers 10 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa: Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

What is the aim of this partnership?

The Australia-Africa Plant Biosecurity Partnership is aiming to enhance plant biosecurity skills and planning in Africa by linking African professionals with their counterparts in Australia.

Who are members of the partnership?

The two-year one million dollar project is led by Australia's Plant Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre (PBCRC). The Australian International Food Security Research Centre (AIFSRC) within ACIAR (the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research) is providing AU\$800,000 and CAB International \$200,000. The program will be delivered by a consortium of PBCRC, ACIAR, CSIRO, the Crawford Fund and CAB International. It also aims to leverage support from other international agencies and to complement other work underway on plant biosecurity issues in Africa.

Who will be targeted for capacity development?

The partnership capacity development activities will be aimed at biosecurity specialists in national plant protection agencies and from the private sector in Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

What activities are planned?

The partnership will include:

- Short-term placements in relevant Australian biosecurity agencies and related organisations
- Workshops in Africa on priority plant biosecurity issues
- A mentoring system for African participants to support long-term learning and application of knowledge
- Follow-up funding to assist participants develop plant biosecurity action plans at national and regional level

Under the current available funding for the project, approximately 10 individuals from the 10 countries will be initially trained through placements in Australia and other activities. They will also be tasked to manage training and outreach in their own country. There may be further placements depending on additional support from the private sector and governments.

What issues will the Australia-Africa Plant Biosecurity Partnership address?

The capacity building will focus on topics including pest risk analysis, pest prioritisation, biosecurity planning, surveillance systems, diagnostics and identification, pest early warning systems, pest reporting systems, emergency response mechanisms, management of infestations in stored products, biological control programs, export certification systems, technical market access, integrated pest management for pest/weed/disease, and regulation systems.

PROJECT PARTNERS' QUOTES

“Poor capacity to control the movement of significant plant pests and diseases in eastern Africa limits farmer incomes and food security, and is an obstacle to regional trade of agricultural products,” said Dr Nick Austin, CEO of ACIAR.

“Biosecurity is a global challenge – all nations benefit from a stronger global biosecurity system,” said Dr Michael Robinson, CEO of Australia’s Plant Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre (PBCRC). “Australia can use its world-class strength, experience and comparative advantage in biosecurity to leverage African knowledge and private sector involvement.”

“Agricultural trade is a powerful engine for economic growth, poverty alleviation and food security, but harnessing it can be difficult,” says Julie Flood, Senior Global Director for Trade and Commodities at CABI. “By joining this initiative, CABI is helping to build plant biosecurity capacity within Africa, helping Africa’s ability to trade more effectively in the future.”

“The impact that improved biosecurity can have beyond productivity increases – to the operation of agricultural markets and trade – make the aims of this project of particular interest,” said Dr Denis Blight, Chief Executive of the Crawford Fund.