

Australia-Africa Plant Biosecurity Partnership



MEDIA RELEASE

Building a stronger African food security and trade network

28 February 2017 - 35 African biosecurity champions from ten Central and East African countries will meet from 27 February to 3 March in Lusaka, Zambia for the fourth Africa Plant Biosecurity Network workshop.

The network meetings are a key component of the Australia-Africa Plant Biosecurity Partnership (AAPBP) and will again bring together African biosecurity professional Fellows and industry members from Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe with Australian biosecurity colleagues to share information, provide ongoing mentoring, and boost training and outreach. The aim is to improve national and regional quarantine and plant protection capacity, thereby lifting crop yields, enabling safe regional trade, expanding international market access opportunities and securing greater food security for the region.

[Mable Mudenda](#), a Senior Agricultural Research Officer with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock in Zambia, believes forming networks across Africa has been highly valuable. "The Australia-Africa Plant Biosecurity Partnership program has been extremely useful for us in Africa. Now we know each other better it's easy to contact each other to get updates on pest situations. As Senior Fellows we have an important role to play in making sure knowledge is put into practice."

The network workshop will focus on several areas that are key to improving biosecurity in Africa; surveillance, seed-borne diseases and emergency response. As well as hearing from experts, Fellows will work to design surveillance systems, improving skills to manage seed-borne disease threats and responding to new pest incursions, both at national and regional levels. Fall army worm is currently of major concern in the region and discussions in the emergency response sessions will focus on preparing a regional response to this pest.

Seed-borne diseases, especially maize lethal necrosis disease, are a significant threat to both food security and safe trade in Africa. Dr Andrew Geering from the Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation (QAAFI) will take delegates through this topic.

Well planned and effective emergency responses are vital for managing threats to food security. The current outbreak of fall armyworm across southern Africa is a good example, where fast action can minimise crop damage. Workshop attendees will be able to learn from senior Australian experts with experience in emergency plant pest responses.

The African members of the network include 15 Senior Biosecurity Fellows who have undertaken plant protection training in Australia and Africa, and are passing on their skills and knowledge to 30 Associate Fellow colleagues. At the workshop each Senior Fellow will give updates on their country-specific action plans, developed during their time in Australia, covering subjects such as fruit fly, diagnostics, biosecurity planning and quarantine.

[Ephrance Tumuboine](#), Assistant Commissioner from the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Uganda, said "The Fellowship has been a fantastic experience. I am confident I can make a real difference to agricultural trade in and from my country, as well as helping our farmers directly."

The future of the network in 2017 and beyond will also be discussed with Fellows, officials from the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) trade group and Australian government partners, with the goal of establishing a sustainable network that can quickly respond to emergency incursions such as the fall armyworm, currently spreading rapidly across Africa.

The Australia-Africa Plant Biosecurity Partnership is led by Australia's Plant Biosecurity CRC and funded by ACIAR and CABI. The program is being delivered by a consortium of the Plant Biosecurity CRC, ACIAR, CABI and the Crawford Fund.

More information is available at www.pbccrc.com.au/research/east-africa/news

Watch [the AAPBP video](#) and follow the Network on Twitter: [#AAPBP](#)

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