

APBAConf2025 AGRA Side Event

Theme: Winning the Race against Food Insecurity, Malnutrition, and Climate Change

Date: October 7, 2025 | **Venue:** Elephant Hills Resort, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

Title: Fast tracking the release and commercialization of climate smart and nutrient dense crop varieties in Africa

Food security across the African continent is increasingly hampered by climate change resulting in reduced, and in some cases, total loss of crop yields, along with the emergence of insect pests and diseases that are difficult to control. Droughts, floods, cyclones and other climate shocks are now becoming more frequent, often affecting whole regions. For instance, terminal drought stress affected the Southern African Region during the 2023/2024 growing season causing the affected countries to import food stuffs. . The impact of drought stress is compounded by the increased prevalence of malnutrition due to lower cost of living resulting in rural folks being unable to purchase nutritious food products that they cannot produce. These challenges can be addressed by fast-tracking the release and commercialization of climate smart and nutrient dense staple crop varieties. The Centre of Excellence for Seed Systems in Africa (CESSA) at AGRAs aims to increase the adoption of climate smart and nutrient dense crops in focus countries. In the last 2 years AGRA has availed more than 30 catalytic grants to NARS across 16 countries to support the release and commercialization of market-demanded, climate smart and/or nutrient dense crop varieties. The catalytic grants for variety release also included funding for early generation seed production, awareness and demand creation to speed up the process of variety adoption by value chain actors including seed companies and smallholder farmers. CESSA is collaborating with One CG partners on this work.

AGRA plans a side event at the 4th Africa Plant Breeders Association (APBA) conference in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe to share the work that has been initiated on these catalytic grants supporting variety release and to build the capacity of the plant breeders from NARS on various aspects including modern plant breeding technologies, commercialization of varieties and raising farmer awareness.

The objectives of the side event are therefore to:

- Share best practices and learn from the NARS implementing catalytic grants for fast tracking variety release and commercialization
- To address challenges in variety release, commercialization, awareness and demand creation Build capacity of plant breeders from various NARS by OneCG Centre scientist, Seed companies and National Regulatory Authorities
- To foster collaboration among key actors involved in variety release, awareness and demand creation and variety commercialization.



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The proposed topics to be covered in a 4 hr side event include

- a. Sharing progress from catalytic grants supporting the release and commercialization of climate smart and nutrient dense crop varieties
- b. Plant Breeding for tomorrow
- c. Excellence in Breeding
- d. Managing small breeding programs for impact
- e. Seed Company choices of varieties to commercialize
- f. Creating Farmer Awareness and Demand for climate smart and nutrient dense crop varieties
- g. National Regulatory Authority on requirements for commercialization and quality control

Outcomes

- Strengthened breeders and regulators capacity through the exposure to best practices in modern breeding and variety selection.
- Enhanced understanding of best commercialization pathways and models.
- Enhanced collaboration between NARS, OneCG centers, seed companies, and regulatory bodies to streamline the variety release and commercialization process.
- Seed companies' exposure and uptake of recently released elite varieties for multiplication and commercialization.
- Improved variety commercialization pathways/ models informed by farmers' feedback on key factors that trigger variety adoption.
- Enhanced partnerships and linkages among One CGIAR centers, NARS and seed companies
- Lessons learnt from the successful grantees/partners that can be emulated by others

Target Audience include:

- Seed companies
- Government representatives including policy makers
- Farmer organizations
- Development partners
- NARS breeders
- Seed Regulatory Agencies
- One CG
- National Regulatory Agencies

