



PRESS RELEASE: NIGERIA COMMERCIALISES GM MAIZE



For immediate Release

Nigeria commercializes GM maize varieties.

(Nigeria, Ibadan: January 12, 2024) The Federal government of Nigeria has approved the commercial release of transgenic insect resistant and drought tolerant maize varieties, known as TELA maize.

The approval was granted by the National Committee on Naming, Registration and Release of Crop Varieties, Livestock breeds/Fisheries (NCNRRCVLF) headed by Prof Olusoji Olufajo at its 33rd meeting at the National Centre for Genetic Resources and Biotechnology (NACGRAB), Ibadan on January 11, 2024.

The four varieties approved by the NVRC are, SAMMAZ 72T, SAMMAZ 73T, SAMMAZ 74T, and SAMMAZ 75T.

The new maize varieties are drought tolerant and are resistant to stem-borer and fall armyworm resulting in yield advantage of up to 10 tonnes per hectare under good agronomic practices. The national average for similar hybrids is 6 tonnes per hectare. The varieties are suitable for Rain Forest, Guinea, and Sudan Savannas.

Stem-borer reduces maize production in several countries in Africa, while fall armyworm can destroy up to 20 million metric tons of maize in Africa each year, enough to feed 100 million people.

The release and registration of the four varieties followed environmental release approval in October 2021 granted by the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA).

Development of the improved varieties was led by the Institute for Agricultural Research (IAR) Samaru, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria through the TELA Maize Public-Private Partnership coordinated by AATF. The TELA Maize Project is currently being implemented in 5 countries – Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, and South Africa.

Prof Ado Yusuf, Executive Director, IAR expressed satisfaction with the release of the new four maize varieties saying, "IAR is very proud of our scientists who are addressing the maize productivity challenges in the country and beyond. These varieties have undergone thorough research and have been developed



PRESS RELEASE: NIGERIA COMMERCIALISES GM MAIZE

using the tools of biotechnology over several years of continuous testing and revalidation.”

Dr Canisius Kanangire, AATF's Executive Director, said, “the release of TELA Maize in Nigeria will contribute to food and nutrition security in line with the Federal Government’s Agricultural Transformation agenda. AATF reaffirms unwavering commitment to addressing challenges faced by farmers across the continent.”

Professor Garba Sharubutu, the Executive Secretary, Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN) said the approval of the TELA Maize variety in Nigeria is a critical milestone that confirms the potential of biotechnology in ensuring food and nutrition security, and improved livelihood of farming households in Africa.

Prof. Mustapha Abdullahi, Director-General, National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA) celebrated the release saying that, with the advent of TELA Maize, farmers will reduce the use of pesticides on maize to the bare minimum which is beneficial to humans, livestock, and environment.

Dr Sylvester Oikeh, the TELA Maize Project Manager celebrated the decision by Nigeria by calling on other countries in Africa to act for farmers. ‘I am encouraged by this decision by the Federal Government of Nigeria that reflects their commitment to the needs of farmers. I congratulate the scientists for their hard work and dedication that has seen the product getting closer to farmers and look forward to other countries making similar decisions for the good of the farmer, he said.

The other partners in the TELA Maize project include National Agricultural Research Institutes in Kenya, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and South Africa, International Maize, and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), Bayer, with funding from Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and USAID.

About AATF:

AATF is an international not-for-profit organization that is empowering smallholder farmers across Sub-Saharan Africa with a wide choice of agricultural innovations that contribute to food and nutrition security to generate health and wealth for their families and communities. Established in 2003 as an African-led entity, AATF works with public and private partners across the full food value chain to access, develop, deliver and commercialize innovative technologies that bring meaningful change to Africa’s agriculture. AATF is driven by a vision of a prosperous and food secure Africa, one where millions of smallholder farmers can transform African agriculture with the same innovations that are transforming food



PRESS RELEASE: NIGERIA COMMERCIALISES GM MAIZE

production around the world. AATF believes the farmers in Africa will become globally competitive through use of the best technology, optimal agricultural practices, strategic product value addition and boosted access to efficient markets within and outside Africa.

About IAR:

The Institute for Agricultural Research (IAR), Samaru, a nationally recognized Agricultural Research Institute, holds the responsibility for the genetic improvement of maize, cowpea, groundnut, cotton, castor, sunflower, artemisia and sorghum. IAR was established in 1922 as the Research Division of the Department of Agriculture for the now-defunct Northern region of Nigeria. The Institute was formally transferred by law to the later established Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) on October 14, 1962.

For further information and Pictures contact:

Prof. Rabi Adamu

Principal Investigator,

TELA Maize Project, IAR, ABU Zaria, Nigeria.

Email: rsadamu@gmail.com Phone: +2348028373464

Alex Abutu

AATF Communications Officer

+2348068701960

Email: a.abutu@aat-africa.org

Yakubu Dodo,

OTF Lead,

TELA Maize Project, IAR, ABU Zaria, Nigeria

Email: dodo.bulus@gmail.com +234 802 373 9174