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AFRICAN UNION SIGNS MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) WITH TASAI AND BIOVISION AFRICA TRUST TO STRENGTHEN COLLABORATION IN AGRICULTURE



The African Union, through the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (DARBE), signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with The Africa Seed Access Index (TASAI) and Biovision Africa Trust (BvAT) that agreed to strengthen collaboration and build cooperation on “Advancing the Seed Sector in Africa” and Ecological Organic Agriculture (EOA) in Africa, respectively. The signing ceremony took place at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa on Wednesday, 20th July 2022. The MoU was signed by H.E Amb. Josefa Sacko, Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (ARBE) of behalf of the African Union; Dr. Michael Waithaka, Chief Editor for the Africa Seen Access Index (TASAI); and Dr. David Amudavi, Executive Director of Biovision Africa Trust.

The MoUs are a formal mechanism of fostering strategic partnerships and alliances with stakeholders as well as a gesture of commitment to mutual accountability to shared goals and interests towards the realization of aspirations of AU Agenda 2063 on inclusive growth and sustainable development. Hence, the MOUs are a recognition of the catalytic, complementary, and empowering role the two institutions will continue to play with the African Union in the implementation of 2014 Malabo Declaration through the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) framework for action on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods and other related programmes.

In her remarks during the signing ceremony, H.E Amb. Josefa Sacko, Commissioner for ARBE welcomed the two partners to the Headquarters of the African Union in Addis Ababa, and paid tribute to their contribution towards enhancing agricultural diversity and transformation. She

retaliated the statement made by H.E. President Macky Sall, AU Chairperson, during the 2022 Mid-Year Coordination Meeting held in Lusaka, Zambia underscoring access to quality input and services including seeds. *“The affordability and access to high quality seed is key to improving agricultural productivity, thus we need to improve the quality of debate and actions aimed at improving seed systems on the continent”* she noted.

Furthermore, the Commissioner applauded Biovision Africa Trust for supporting the implementation of Ecological Organic Agriculture (EOA) initiative, which she said has a special niche in the production of healthy foods for the people and for protecting the environment. She further called for more advocacy on the promotion of bio-fertilizers and bio-pesticides that should result to industrial-scale production to enable the shift away from conventional fertilizers and pesticides.

Dr. Michael Waithaka the representative of TASAI, expressed appreciation to the African Union for entrusting TASAI to collaborate on areas of assessing the performance of seed sectors in African countries, through the biennial review process where TASAI is working with Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and other partners to develop seed scoring process and eventually a seed index. Further, TASAI appreciates the support to policy processes aimed at improving seed systems across Africa and to develop a Joint Action Plan (JAP) for the operationalization of the MOU.

Dr. David Amudavi, representing Biovision Africa Trust, expressed his gratitude and commitment that BvAT shall implement its functions in the MoU that include hosting of the EOA Initiative Continental Secretariat and ensuring its effective and efficient functioning. BvAT has been endorsed by the AU’s Special Technical Committee (STC) on ARDWE to strengthen existing cooperation and collaboration of the parties in the implementation of the decision on Ecological Organic Agriculture in Africa and to spearhead awareness of the EOA initiative in Africa.

Mr. Alex Mutungi, the EOA Initiative Continental Secretariat Coordinator gave a briefing on a pilot study on EOA indicators in the five political regions of Africa for possible inclusion in the CAADP Biennial Review (BR) reporting framework. He further noted that a Farmer Managed Seed Systems (FMSS) cluster had been established within the AU led African Seed and Biotechnology Partnership Platform (ASBPP) to champion farmer seeds.

While concluding the ceremony, H.E Amb. Josefa Sacko, retaliated the commitment of DARBE to work closely with TASAI INC and Biovision Africa Trust to ensure resilience in Africa’s agriculture sector to respond adequately to various shocks on African Food Systems. *“We need to align our work to the African Common Position that was presented at the UN Food System Summit in 2021 and to the existing African Union Agriculture transformation frameworks such as the CAADP, for us to be able to achieve agriculture transformation and growth for shared prosperity and improved livelihoods for our people”*, she stated.

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