



CSTA Researchers East Committee
Thursday January 22, 2009
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon
Kent Room, Four Points Sheraton
London, Ontario

Document #4

Chair: Ellen Sparry
Secretary: John Van Herk
Board Liaison: Alejandro Hernandez

Board Liaison Report

This brief report on activities determined to be of interest to the members of CSTA's Researchers East Committee, is structured to fit with the Strategic Goals developed by the CSTA Board of Directors as part of its strategic planning process in 2008.

1. **FOSTER INNOVATION** – *work to find solutions to allow the funding, introduction and trade of innovations.*

Leaning More About Our Industry

- **Seed sector contribution to the Canadian economy** – this survey based study was conducted over the spring and summer, to collect data for the 2007 year. Surveys were conducted in four segments of the seed industry: Research and Plant Breeding; Seed Production; Seed Processing and Production Support; and Seed Marketing and Distribution. The study found that the Seed sector in Canada contributes \$3.95 billion to the Canadian economy and employs over 14,000 Canadians. Plant Breeding and Research contributes over \$361 million and employs over 3,000. More information on the study results can be found on the CSTA website http://www.cdnseed.org/news_meetings/news.asp
- **Benchmarking the Canadian seed sector** – a survey was conducted in the late winter and early spring, of members of the International Seed Federation to determine Canada's place in the world with respect to the use of certified seed. This work found that Canada is not a world leader, and in fact ranks in the bottom three in terms of the use of certified seed for cereals and peas. The study also found that where the use of certified seed is high, it is always the result of some form of intervention, either by governments through regulatory requirements or incentives; or by markets through contracts or Intellectual Property protection.
- **Seed Sales Surveys** – in 2008, CSTA conducted its annual confidential surveys of certified soybean and canola seed sales. The results of the canola survey were reported in confidence to survey participants. Unfortunately, the participation was not high enough to compile results for soybean sales. Also this year, CSTA conducted a new survey of sales of certified cereal and flax sales in Western Canada. The aggregate results were reported in confidence to the survey participants. CSTA is also in the process of conducting a new survey of certified wheat seed sales in Ontario. Aggregate results are expected to be reported to participants in early February. CSTA also helped to design and support a national survey of forage seed sales that is being conducted by Statistics Canada.

Supporting an Environment for Innovation

- **Grow Canada[®] Coalition** – CSTA is a founding member of the Grow Canada[®] value chain coalition that promotes innovation and strives to position agriculture as a solution provider for health and wellness; fuel and energy; as well as food production. CSTA participated in a Grow Canada[®] Parliamentary reception in December, and spoke about the goals of the coalition, and CSTA's contribution study.
- **Supporting Plant Breeding** – CSTA is formally supporting an application to the National Science Education and Research Council (NSERC) for funding to establish a Plant Breeding Centre. The proposal was made by a collaborating group at the Universities of Guelph and Saskatchewan and including some CSTA member representatives. As part of its support, CSTA is prepared to serve on the Steering and Program Committees; provide summer employment for students in the program; and provide experts as speakers to the program.
- **Kernel Visual Distinguishability** – CSTA was part of a successful lobby to remove KVD as a requirement for the registration of western wheat varieties. A spin-off from the regulatory change was a proposal to allow the import of seed of unregistered varieties of wheat to the Canadian Wheat Board area for seeding by the importer. CFIA will be consulting on this proposal over the winter. CSTA has made it clear that this is a much bigger issue, as import of seed of unregistered varieties for seeding by the importer is currently allowed for all other crop kinds in all other regions of Canada. We have made the case that this is a competitive issue for CSTA's members, to staff in the Minister's office, to the CFIA and to the national seed consultation.
- **Federal Election Package** – CSTA developed a package of fact sheets and letter templates for its members to use in pre-election communications with candidates in the federal election. The focus was on seed driven innovation and the need for governments to contribute to a regulatory environment that fosters innovation and investment. A letter was also sent to each party leader.

2. SUPPORT A SCIENCE BASED REGULATORY SYSTEM – *CSTA actively supports the current science based regulatory system and advocates for reform that will promote innovation and allow regulators to focus on health and safety*

- **Variety Registration** – CSTA continues to actively support changes to the variety registration system to allow for flexibility and more timely registration of varieties to meet the needs of producers and end users. When proposed amendments to create a three-part registration system, CSTA presented a detailed submission which included the placement within the three-part system of the crop species, kinds and types currently in Schedule III. The submission can be found on CSTA's website <http://www.cdnseed.org/pdfs/Presentations%202008/VarietyRegistrationGazettePart1.pdf> Final regulations have not yet been posted. However CSTA has been told that its efforts to gain value chain support and propose rationale for the movement of forages out of Part I (requiring merit testing), were not sufficient to warrant movement in this trench of regulatory reforms. CSTA will continue to work with the Canadian Forum on Forages and Rangelands and others in the forage value chain to advocate early movement. CSTA continues to advocate for the continued exemption from registration for corn, food grade soybeans and turf species. A resolution accepted by the Board of Directors at the semi-annual meeting also instructs CSTA to explore the possibility of moving all eastern cereals into the third part (listing) of the new variety registration system.

- **Corn Hybrid List** – to support the continued exemption of corn from variety registration, CSTA maintains an up-to-date listing of corn hybrids commercially available in Canada. The list includes information on heat units, traits, and the date of commercialization. The list is updated twice annually, and was just completed at the end of November. It can be found at <http://www.cdnseed.org/pdfs/CornHybridListNovember2008.pdf>
 - **Novelty** – On its own and as part of the National Forum on Seed, CSTA has been working with CFIA to clarify and finalize a directive that identifies triggers for plants with novel traits. CFIA has established a small working group to further refine the draft directive before public consultations. CSTA members are represented on the working group. Once the working group has completed its work, the directive will be widely circulated for an email consultation.
 - **Use of Variety Names and Variety Deregistration** – CSTA staff and some member representatives participated in technical working sessions hosted by the National Forum on Seed on the use of variety names and on the process for de-registering varieties. In both cases it was agreed that the CFIA processes need to be more transparent and better communicated along the value chain, but no regulatory changes are required. The reports will be available on the National Forum on Seed website.
 - **Seed Certification Review** - building on the Strategic Review Initiative of the federal government, the CFIA has launched a comprehensive review of Canada's system of seed certification. At this point a steering committee has been established to guide the review. CSTA is represented on the steering committee.
 - **Weed Seeds Order and Grade Tables** – CSTA is an active participant in CFIA consultations around changes to the weed seeds orders. As a first step, it is proposed that Giant Foxtail be reclassified out of the prohibited noxious category. Work continues on the classification of weeds. Additionally work is being initiated to review the grade tables. This work is still in the very early “scoping” stages.
3. **INCREASE THE USE OF PEDIGREED SEED** – *CSTA continues to promote pedigreed seed and its role in establishing seed quality, traceability and quality control, and in facilitating investment in innovation.*
- **Tax Incentive** – CSTA continues to advocate the implementation of a tax incentive for producers who purchase certified seed. A new one-page fact sheet “An Economic Stimulus for Agriculture” has been developed for use with policy and decision makers, and with the public. It can be found on the CSTA website at <http://www.cdnseed.org/pdfs/Fact%20Sheets/EconomicStimulus.pdf>
 - **Sharing the Message** – CSTA is a member of the Sharing the Message coalition, which uses public relations, advertising, logos etc. to promote the benefits of certified seed to farmers.
 - **KVD** – At the request of the House Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, CSTA prepared a paper that promotes certified seed and the tax incentive as important components of a plan to replace Kernel Visual Distinguishability.
4. **DELIVER WHAT THE END USER WANTS** – *CSTA continues to strive for a policy and regulatory environment that will enhance the ability to deliver what the end user wants and to capture opportunities for all links in the value chain.*
- **Seed Tags** – CSTA leads the work to modernize and upgrade the use of the blue certified seed tag. Following a small technical working group organized by the National Forum on Seed, CSTA has been working with the CFIA to facilitate the authorization of establishments to print the blue tag themselves, on bags, or on the company tag along with other required information. The tag may also be printed on a “sticky” label so that it can be affixed to bulk seed sales invoices. CFIA hopes to run a pilot this winter.

- **End User Advocacy** – CSTA has identified associations of processors as important contacts in the effort to build understanding of the role that certified seed can play in quality management systems. Two meetings have been held with the Canadian National Millers Association, to discuss the requirements of the industry that can be addressed by plant breeding and research, and the role of certified seed. Future meetings are planned.

5. IMPROVE MARKET ACCESS AND UNDERSTANDING FOR THE TRADE OF SEED – CSTA strives to resolve trade issues that arise for members in many markets and works to promote the benefits of Canadian seed in international markets. CSTA also represents its members at the International Seed Federation.

- **Authorized Exporter Program** – CSTA worked with its members and the CFIA to establish a pilot project which authorized samplers to sample for an ISTA approved lab other than the CFIA lab, and authorized the use of OECD tags. A permanent Authorized Exporter program is being implemented using the pilot as a base. It was formally launched in August, 2008 and is expected to be fully operational by early 2009. The pilot project is still operating until January 31, 2009.
- **Adventitious (Low Level) Presence** – CSTA works through the ISF on an international effort to engage an OECD working group in a project to develop a common risk assessment process for low level presence of biotech traits in seed.
- **Other ISF Activities** – CSTA is represented on the ISF Executive Committee and on a number of committees, sections and working groups, including the breeders committee; the field crops section and the Forage and Turf Section. Work is ongoing on a project to gather information on royalty collection systems around the world. CSTA is also working with ISF to revise and update trading rules. CSTA will host the ISF's World Seed Congress in Calgary in 2010.
- **Convention on Biological Diversity** – CSTA works through the ISF to make input to the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity around access and benefit sharing. CSTA supports efforts to maintain or allow access to plant genetic resources for research purposes and has made that clear to the Government of Canada and internationally.
- **Seed Association of the Americas** – CSTA is an active member of the Seed Association of the Americas. Recently CSTA participated in a workshop hosted by the SAA on phytosanitary issues. The work focused on Pest Risk Analyses and is working on ways to reduce the PRA requirements. Another issue identified was around the re-export of seed from counter season production. Work to create a procedure to facilitate re-export will be undertaken at the next meeting of the SAA.
- **Trade Statistics** – CSTA continues to update import and export codes for the trade of seed. The codes are used by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to generate import and export data for 2007-08. CSTA's website is the only place where these statistics can be found. http://www.cdnseed.org/international_trade/trade_statistics.asp

CSTA EXTERNAL RELATIONS TOOLS AND MEMBER SERVICES

- **Trade Winds Weekly** – 40 issues of the weekly newsletter were produced and distributed in 2008, and one issue has been distributed in 2009. The distribution list has been revised and additions are being made regularly. There are now close to 700 recipients within CSTA's membership.
- **Trade Winds Update** – is a regular, detailed report of CSTA activities, which is distributed to the Trade Winds Weekly list. Three issues were produced in 2008

- **CSTA Member Directory** – a comprehensive listing of CSTA members and contacts, identified by crop kind and interest, is developed and provided in quantity to CSTA members annually.
- **Overview of the Seed Industry in Canada** – a glossy, full colour booklet that profiles the seed sector was updated and marked with the Brand Canada logo. It is available in both official languages from the CSTA office.
- **CSTA Website** – is updated daily and contains all position papers, discussion documents, submissions, releases and presentations. The members only section contains discussion documents, committee minutes and other more confidential information.
- **CSTA Policy Manual and Operational Guidelines** – are updated twice annually and approved by the Board of Directors. They were revised in January, 2008 and are available in the members only section of the website.
- **New Meeting Format** – the new meeting format which includes shorter, consecutive committee meetings has been well received. In an effort to ensure that all participants can be fully prepared for the annual and semi-annual meetings, all agendas and documents are published in advance on the CSTA website.
- **Careers** – the CSTA website includes a “A Career in Seeds” section that describes potential careers in the seed sector, and profiles participants. The careers section also hosts a job posting service for CSTA members, which is getting increasing attention. At any given time there are a number of listings on the site, which are updated regularly.
- **Group Purchases** – CSTA has a special rate at all Fairmont Hotels that is available to all CSTA member companies. CSTA also has been able to extend its Grand & Toy discount to all CSTA members. Check the members only section of the CSTA website for more details.