

Minutes of MLN Community of Practice Second Virtual Meeting held on 5th Aug 2016



Participants List

No.	Name	Institution	Phone no.	Email address
Members present				
1	Evans Sikinyi	Advisor , RAB, Rwanda	+254 704878945	sikinyi_evans@yahoo.co.uk
2	Simon Kibet	KEPHIS, Kenya	+254721177854	skibet@kephis.org
3	Mesfin Melaku	Senior Agronomist	+251-911238754	mesafent02@gmail.com
4	Watanga Chacha	Meru Agro Vet, Tanzania	+25575468864	meruagro@yahoo.com
5	Samuel Ochore	AGRA	+254735319036	SOkita@agra.org
6	Stephen Mugo	CIMMYT	+254207224610	s.mugo@cgiar.org
7	L.M. Suresh	CIMMYT	+254207224610	l.m.suresh@cgiar.org
8	Francis Mwatuni	CIMMYT	+254207224610	f.mwatuni@cgiar.org
9	Brenda Wawa	CIMMYT	+254207224610	B.Wawa@cgiar.org
10	David Wafula	East African Community	+254720733923	dwafula@eachq.org
11	Dominik Klauser	Syngenta Foundation	++41797226890	dominik.klauser@syngenta.com
12	Kasaija Banage	Seedco Rwanda	+250 733 22557	kasaija.banage@gmail.com
13	Gospel Omanyara	AATF	+254735992204	g.omyara@aatf-africa.org
14	George Ngundo	KEPHIS, Kenya	+254721499881	gngundo@kephis.org
15	Katemani S. Mdili	PHS. MoA - Tanzania	+255756637966	catemanmdily@yahoo.com
16	Melaku Admasu	Ethiopian Seed Growers and Processors Association		melaku.admassu@pioneer.com
17	Nelson Masereka	USTA Uganda Seed Traders Ass.	+256782423767	nelsonmasereka@gmail.com
18	Bob Shuma	Tanzania Seed Traders Ass.		tasta02@gmail.com
19	Tafesse Gebru	MD-Ethiopian Seed Enterprise	+251911511553	tafesseg004@yahoo.com
20	Kennedy Onchuru	USAID	+254728607097	konchuru@usaid.gov
21	Jovia Kamatenesi	Laboratory Technician - RAB	+250788616827	joviakk@gmail.com
22	Fidele Nizeyimana	Researcher, Maize prog. RAB	+250788616827	f.nizeyimana5@gmail.com
23	Daniel Bomet Kwemoi	Maize Breeder NACRI - Namulonge	+256782711892 +256704798961.	kwemoi2000@yahoo.co.uk
Absent with Apologies				
	Ben Orebaugh	Research Manager, Uganda		borebaugh77@gmail.com
	B.M. Prasanna	CIMMYT	+91954 0293287	b.m.prasanna@cgiar.org
	WeldehawariatAss efa	DG, Animal and Plant Health		hapru.assefa2@gmail.com
	Stephen Byantwale	Commissioner – Crop Protection		byantwale@gmail.com
	TeresiaKaranja	MoA, Kenya	+254722267909	trzkaranja@gmail.com
	David Kutunga	Senior Agric Inspector, Crop protection Dpt. MAAIF	+256782160521	rudakut@gmail.com

The Agenda for the meeting

Activity	Facilitator	Est. Duration (mins)
Welcome remarks by the	Chair – MD Kephis (Mr. Kibet)	3 mins
Recap on MLN CoP virtual meeting held on 03/05/2016	Dr. Mugo, CIMMYT	3 mins
Update on USAID-MLN Project activities by CIMMYT	Project manager - Francis Mwatuni	5 mins
Country / Institutional /Collaborators(Partners) briefs on MLN activities	1. Kenya – George Ngundo 2. Uganda – Daniel Kwemoi 3. Rwanda – Fidel Nizeyimana 4. Tanzania – KatemaniMdili 5. Ethiopia – WeldehawariatAssefa 6. EAC -David Wafula 7. AGRA – Samuel Okita 9. AATF – Gospel Omanyanya	5 mins 5 mins 5 mins 5 mins 5 mins 5 mins 5 mins 5 mins
Appropriate MLN viruses diagnostics for surveillance and seed certification- Experiences and challenges	Dr. Monica Mezzalama – CIMMYT- Mexico	10 mins
Closing remarks, Chair. Next meeting face to face in October	Chair	5 mins

Introduction

Virtual meetings for the MLN CoP are held on a quarterly basis. The meetings are aimed at updating members on the various emerging issues on MLN mitigation initiatives in member countries and participating institutions. The first virtual CoP meeting was held on 3rd May 2016 at 2.00 – 3.30pm EAT. This second meeting was held on 5th of August 2016 with an improved attendance of 23 participants compared to the 12 in the previous meeting. The connectivity was also improved where many members remained connected to the call for the entire session. A few members including the CIMMYT team in Nairobi were temporarily disconnected but were reconnected promptly.

Min 1/08/16 Welcome Remarks

Dr. Mugo, CIMMYT-Africa Regional Representative (CRR) welcomed the members who had been connected and quickly did a roll call to ascertain members connected for the call. He gave apologies for Dr. Prasanna, the Director, Global Maize program and the Project Leader for this project. He further reminded members that as CoP members, we have a common problem, Maize Lethal Necrosis Disease hence the reason for these periodic (quarterly virtual meetings). The members were appraised on the objectives of the CIMMYT USAID MLN Diagnostics and

Management project. He also outlined the meeting's agenda and welcomed the Chair, Mr. Simon Kibet, General Manager in charge of Quality Assurance (KEPHIS) representing the Managing Director KEPHIS to give welcoming remarks. Mr. Kibet formally invited the connected participants to the meeting and reiterated the importance of this quarterly virtual engagement by the members. The meetings provide an avenue for members to be appraised on the strides made in the last three months in fighting MLN in the region. He appreciated the encouraging efforts by CIMMYT, NARS and other stakeholders towards breeding for MLN resistance. He informed members that many stakeholders in the maize industry in the region are eager for release of varieties that have shown MLN tolerance/resistance on the market in the shortest time possible. He handed over to Dr. Stephen Mugo, CIMMYT to steer the meeting.

Min 2/08/16 Recap on MLN CoP meeting held on 29/02/2016

The recap for the previous meeting was given by Dr. Stephen Mugo who emphasized the key issues deliberated in the 1st virtual MLN CoP meeting on 3rd May 2016. He ably gave a summary of the issues that were discussed in the last meeting with emphasis on the continuity on the MLN surveillance in the Southern African countries and the development of SOPs for MLN free seed production. He also psyched members for the upcoming face to face annual general meeting and the CoP meeting in October where the dates will be communicated to the members in good time.

Min 3/08/16 Update on MLN Project Activities by CIMMYT

The Project Manager gave an update of the project activities for the last three months since the last CoP meeting. Below are the activities:

1. MLN surveillance in the three target countries in southern Africa i.e. Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi started in mid-April and is complete for farmers' fields and seed fields in Zambia and Zimbabwe. MLN Surveillance maps for Zambia and Zimbabwe are available. Surveillance to start in Malawi in late August.
2. AATF and AGRA have so far held two consultative meetings, one each in Kenya and Tanzania, which brought together breeders, researchers, seed companies and extension agents to harmonize the MLN-free seed production checklist and SOPs.
3. The NPPOs in the MLN-endemic countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda) have been trained on MLN surveillance using modern tools (including MLN diagnostics and modern surveillance tools) in the workshop organized in Nairobi on June 29th-30th, 2016. In the workshop, use of the Open Data Kit (ODK) App in a smart phone or a tablet was also demonstrated. Participants also did practical work on symptom identification, sampling, testing using immunostrips and surveillance data collection in ODK.

4. A communication platform has been developed and launched. An invitation mail done and quite a number of members have responded. Members have been asked to provide relevant MLN topics for discussion by members on the platform.
5. Facilitated Seed companies on acquisition of Agristrips at a CIMMYT negotiated price. Kenya seed co. has already acquired the strips and is using them in their surveillance programs.
6. Planning for coordinated MLN surveillance in Ethiopia in collaboration with EAIR, Crop Protection Dpt. MoA and KOPIA Ethiopia.
7. Population of information for the MLN web portal expected soon for a trial run. Members will be informed.

Min 4/08/16 Country / Institutional briefs on MLN activities – New initiatives, activities in the country/institutions

Rwanda

Fidele Nizeyimana, a maize researcher with RAB gave a brief for Rwanda. He mentioned the four major activities which included training of farmers and community leaders on MLN which included symptoms identification and the available remedial actions against the disease. It is expected that these trained personnel will train others. Regular surveillance activities are ongoing with samples exhibiting MLN like symptoms ferried to the labs for testing MLN viruses. The other activity being planned is for the MLN awareness campaigns for control and management of the disease to farmers and the stakeholders. The last ongoing activity is the screening of their lines for MLN tolerance/resistance. Work still going on and some lines are promising.

Uganda

The NARS, Ministry of Agriculture and the private sector held meetings where MLN management manuals were developed. They have first targeted the seed companies to adopt these manuals to limit the spread of the disease through seed. Farmers will then be sensitized on the developed manual too. He mentioned about the two varieties released in Uganda that had shown tolerance to MLN. Continuous sensitization on MLN is going on.

Tanzania

Mr. Katemani Mdili gave a brief for Tanzania. Sensitization about the disease is ongoing with many extension materials on the disease distributed to the farmers. Also video documentaries on the disease are being distributed. Farmers' sensitization meetings on the disease have been

stepped up in Southern part of the country where the disease has not yet been reported. MLN mitigation measures have now been officially ratified and published in the government gazette and can be used by any interested parties. Quarantine inspectors will be using these regulations and rules as well. The rules also compel the farmers to promptly report any strange symptoms in their maize fields. This will then facilitate rapid response to mitigate on the disease. A seed certification protocol for MLN free seed production is being developed with the target of limiting the disease in the northern endemic areas. The last official surveillance was done in May this year by the Ministry confirming the disease still only in the Northern districts of Kilimanjaro, Arusha and Manyara. Bob Shuma, the Tanzanian seed traders association CEO reported on the stakeholder's workshop that was held in Arusha from 1st – 3rd June 2016. Dr. Prasanna, the Director, Global Maize Program (GMP) in CIMMYT was invited and he gave a presentation on CIMMYT's activities towards the mitigation on the effects of MLN in the region.

Ethiopia

The disease incidence has increased compared to last year (2015) because of mono-cropping, poor field and seed field management. There have been concerted efforts between the regional government and the central government on awareness creation to the farmers about the disease and the available management practices. The seed production areas have been given more emphasis and lower disease incidences have been reported from these areas. Planning for standardized MLN surveillance is going on between the Ministry, EIAR and other collaborators especially KOPIA on laboratory testing.

East African Community

Mr. David Wafula, the EAC SPS officer gave a brief for the regional body. He reminded members that EAC has an SPS protocol which addresses plant health issues. This has also facilitated development of SPS plant health measures with specific regulations to implement such measures. The EAC under the Agriculture and Rural Development Policy (ARDP) is currently working on the development of a Regional Early warning and rapid Response Plan for MLN to complement the member states initiatives on the same. Regional guidelines on MLN management and seed certification protocols are also currently being developed. He called upon the CoP members to give their technical support to EAC during training and implementation of these protocols, SOPs, guidelines etc. in the region with funding anticipated from USAID.

Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)

Samuel gave a brief of the activities under the Sub grant Agreements between CIMMYT and AGRA. Two consultative meetings have already been done on the harmonization of the protocols for MLN free seed production in the region. The first meeting was in Nairobi which

brought together researchers, breeders, Seed companies, regulators, seed traders associations and other stakeholders in the maize industry. The harmonized checklist for the production of MLN free seed was developed hence an important output for this consultative meeting. The second meeting was held in Arusha, Tanzania on 23rd June 2016 which was also well attended and the harmonized checklist was an output too from the meeting. The last consultative meeting is being organized for Ethiopia in Addis Ababa on 30th Aug 2016.

AGRA and AATF has had a consultative meeting with CIMMYT on the approach to be adopted for training seed producers on the checklist for adoption. One bottleneck already identified is the training of contracted farmers by seed companies who are many. The seed companies have been requested to mobilize them for AGRA to sensitize them on the checklists. As for the large scale producers contracted by seed companies, AGRA will deal with them directly.

AATF

Dr. Gospel Omanyia gave the brief of AATF and stated that most of the activities have been implemented jointly with AGRA hence the details already stated. AATF organized the Tanzanian consultative meeting. AATF will work jointly with AGRA in the trainings for the seed producers on the checklist as earlier mentioned.

Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS)

George Ngundo of KEPHIS Muguga gave a brief on the institutions activities. He informed members of the ongoing seed testing where 3,175 samples have been tested so far. Capacity has been built on MLN testing for the two labs, one in Nakuru and the other at Kephis headquarters in Karen, Nairobi. Each laboratory has been apportioned regions in the country which they will be testing seed. The seed inspectors are currently implementing the revised seed certification protocols for MLN free seed production. The Plant Quarantine Labs in Muguga is currently working on implementing more MLN testing assays that are affordable. We are working Francis Mwatuni, CIMMYT who developed the LAMP MLN Assay while in KEPHIS to operationalize the protocol. The infrastructure for LAMP has already been acquired by KEPHIS and reagents are being awaited.

Min 5/08/16

Dr. Monica Mezzalama, Plant Pathologist and Head of The Seed Health lab in CIMMYT- Mexico gave a brief talk on appropriate MLN viruses' diagnostics for surveillance and seed certification. She informed members that ELISA is still the most preferred method for testing MLN viruses in the lab. ELISA is suitable for both surveillance in fields and for seed testing. Some experiments have been done on soaking seeds and testing the residual water but the virus titre in the water has been very low hence grinding seed still recommended. She mentioned that immunostrips

have been optimized for testing MCMV in leaf tissues for field surveillance. She however did not recommend for use of immunostrips for seed testing.

Mr. Ngundo asked for technical information on testing the seed using ELISA and Monica assured him that she will facilitate once back in office in late August.

Min 5/08/16

Closing remarks

Dr. Mugo who was guiding the meeting quickly summarized the meeting proceedings and thanked members for the turn up. He asked Kennedy of USAID for his comments where he thanked members for their commitment to the implementation of the MLN project in the region and also lauded the members for their high level participation and engagement.

Dr. Mugo finally handed over to the Chair, Mr. Kibet to close the meeting. He also thanked the members for the record turn up for this meeting compared to the last one where we managed to connect only 12 members as compared to this one where 23 members were connected. He noted that the call had some interference in the beginning but later was clear with a good number of members connected. He wished members all the best in their activities. The next meeting will be the face to face meeting in October. The dates will be communicated in time for ample preparation.

The meeting was officially closed at 17:15 Hrs EAT