

# Minutes of MLN Community of Practice First Virtual Meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2016



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## Agenda

1. Recap on MLN CoP meeting held on 29/02/2016
2. Update on MLN Project Activities by CIMMYT
3. Country briefs on MLN activities
4. Feedback on Country Gap Analysis for training needs (surveys, MLN diagnostics, SOPs for MLN free seed production etc.)

## Introduction

During the first CoP meeting held in ICRAF, Nairobi on 29<sup>th</sup> Feb 2016, it was agreed that virtual meetings for the MLN CoP will be held on a quarterly basis. The aim of the meetings was to review MLN activities in the endemic countries and to share experiences on the various emerging issues on MLN mitigation initiatives in member countries and participating institutions. It is on this basis that a virtual meeting was organized via telephone for the members on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2016 at 2.00 – 3.30pm EAT. It is however worth noting that the meeting was not well attended due to lack of connectivity and poor telephone connection to the CoP members. Some members were initially connected but later dropped off along the way without being reconnected by the operator. The South African based Chorus call managed to connect only 12 out of the 21 members who had submitted their phone numbers.

### **Min 1/05/16 Welcome Remarks**

Mr. Simon Kibet, The General Manager in charge of Quality Assurance in KEPHIS representing the MD KEPHIS formally invited the connected participants to the meeting. He reminded members that the meetings are vital to keep the CoP fire burning as per the CoP terms of reference. He, however, could not chair the meeting due to poor telephone network and hence Dr. Stephen Mugo, CIMMYT chaired the meeting.

### **Min 2/05/16 Recap on MLN CoP meeting held on 29/02/2016**

The remarks on the previous meeting were given by Dr. Stephen Mugo who emphasized the key issues that were deliberated in the 1<sup>st</sup> face to face CoP meeting. He quickly summarized the issues that were raised as per the situation analysis of the country's activities related to MLN. He also reminded members on the agreed virtual and face to face meeting schedules and the current chair and co-chair.

### **Min 3/05/16 Update on MLN Project Activities by CIMMYT**

The update on the activities was well presented by the CIMMYT Global maize program (GMP) Director, Dr. Prasanna who is also the USAID MLN Project leader. He gave an overview of the project objectives and zeroed down to the current activities. He briefed the participants on the

ongoing MLN surveillance for the three non – endemic countries in southern Africa. This is informed due to the close proximity of these countries to MLN endemic countries and to the versatile maize seed industry in those countries. It is worth noting that some of the seed companies from these countries produce seed in East African countries and later ship them to other countries hence the risk of spreading the disease.

Signing of Sub Grant Agreements (SGAs) is complete for African Agricultural Technology Transfer Foundation (AATF) and Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) who are main collaborators on quality control for MLN free seed production. AATF will undertake the development of a checklist and SOPs for management of MLN and production of clean seed; implement checklist to obtain baseline average scores. AGGRA on the other hand will identify and create database of public and private sector maize breeders, seed companies and growers in endemic countries. AGRA will also hold in-country (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ethiopia) consultative meetings with breeders, seed companies and extension agents to plan implementation and get stakeholder buy-in. AGRA will also monitor and provide technical support to seed companies on practical use of the checklist and SOPs developed. CIMMYT has initiated the development of a dedicated web portal for MLN. Preliminary structure design is ongoing. Already the wire frame has been populated and various experts are working on it.

The CoP communication platform has been established and the sign up from members is quite encouraging. We will officially launch the communication once the signing in by members is complete. Brenda, the CIMMYT communications officer informed the members that the platform chosen was Google groups where the members can exchange information through emails etc. She asked members who have not accepted the invite from the administrator to do so. The platform will be launched once we have over three quarters of the members signed up. So far 14 of the 30 invited members have signed up.

#### **Min 4/05/16 Country / Institutional briefs on MLN activities – New initiatives, activities in the country/institutions and identified gaps as the situation analysis**

Dr. Sikinyi, the advisor to the Ministry of Agriculture in Rwanda (Rwanda Agricultural Board) explained that he has not been in touch with the MLN task group in the country for some time. He, however, noted that main surveillance work is over and most activities are towards sensitization of the farming communities about the disease and the available mitigation measures.

Mr. Mesfin Melaku, a senior agronomist from Ethiopia also briefed the meeting on the activities. He said that phytosanitary measures are still in place for the seed brought in to the country. He mentioned that there is need for well planned surveillance activities for the country to determine the correct situation of the disease in the country.

Mr. Simon Kibet briefed the meeting about the MLN activities in Kenya. He pointed out that KEPHIS organized a field day in Bomet County on the mitigation for the disease. The guest of honor was Mr Richard Lesiyampe, The Principal Secretary, State department of Agriculture from the Ministry of Agriculture. Crop rotation to facilitate a closed season for maize was emphasized and it is working well for the farmers who have implemented it. He also informed members that all the seed lots for the season had been tested in the Plant Quarantine labs in Muguga and a small percentage had been found testing positive for MCMV.

Mr. Chacha of Meru Agrovet, Arusha Tanzania also indicated that he has not been in touch with the MoA officials on the way forward on MLN activities in Tanzania. None of the MoA and NPPO members from Tanzania joined the call hence little update.

The Project Manager, Mr. Francis Mwatuni urged the representative country members to forward the MLN mitigation gap analysis reports. This will facilitate formulating appropriate interventions of which tailored trainings on specific issues will be part.

There were no updates from Uganda as none of the CoP members from Uganda joined the call. It was resolved that every member sends a brief report on activities carried out since Feb 2016, any new initiatives taken as well as any activities taken towards filling the gaps identified in the situation analysis report by end of this month( May 2016).

Min 5/05/16

It was unanimously agreed that the experiences of this meeting be analyzed to recommend the mode of communication for future MLN CoP meetings as well as the date for the next meeting by the Chair of the CoP in consultation with project Management team.

#### **Min 6/05/16 Closing remarks**

Dr. Prasanna thanked the members who were able to join the meeting and expressed his sincere gratitude to them for making the first virtual meeting materialize. He however expressed his concerns on the poor quality of the Corrus call and asked the operators to improve in their service provision.

Mr.Kibet gave closing remarks by too thanking the members who were able to hook up to the call in spite of connectivity problems. He encouraged them to complete the signing to the communication platform for this will keep the members alive on all MLN issues in the region. He also asked the members who were not able to give their updates in the meeting to have brief reports sent to the Project Manager for compilation.

Dr. Stephen Mugo likewise thanked the members once more for taking their time to participate in the first virtual MLN CoP meeting and hoped for a better attendance in the subsequent virtual meeting. The meeting came to an end at 3.30 pm EAT.