
Statement of the American Seed Trade Association
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The **American Seed Trade Association (ASTA)** is one of the oldest trade organizations in the United States. Founded in 1883, its membership consist of about 850 companies involved in seed production and distribution, plant breeding, and related industries in North America. As an authority on plant germplasm, ASTA advocates science and policy issues of industry-wide importance. The strategic plans of both the ASTA & USDA-CSREES have many common actionable components. I have listed a few of ASTA's top strategic policy issues within their comparable goal components found in the USDA-CSREES Strategic Plan for 2004-2009 (http://www.csrees.usda.gov/about/offices/pdfs/strat_plan_04_09.pdf). ASTA has policies that span all of CSREES Strategic Goals (1-5); I have listed a few below. I have chosen to emphasize one key area, those components found in Strategic Goal # 3.

Strategic Goal 1: Enhance Economic Opportunities for Agricultural Producers:

- Intellectual property to ensure that the flow of improved germplasm, biotechnology traits and breeding methods continue to be made available and contribute to the productivity and competitiveness of US agriculture; Research funding in both the public and private sectors; Prevention of a patchwork of state and local initiatives dealing with biotechnology, farm saved seed (intellectual property) and labeling that would impede the movement of seed, other inputs and agricultural output among states.

Strategic Goal 2: Support Increased Economic Opportunities and Improved Quality of Life in Rural America

- Trade in agricultural products that are not impeded by trade distorting domestic subsidies, export subsidies, tariffs, non-tariff barriers or any other means; Domestic agricultural policy that, while providing a safety net for farmers, is not trade or market distorting; Improving market access for American agricultural products in markets outside the U.S.; Improved rural infrastructure including - transportation, education and medical

Strategic Goal 3: Enhance Protection and Safety of the Nation's Agriculture and Food Supply

- The seed industry employs best management practices in quality assurance and tracing and labeling of its products from breeder seed to commercial. These practices are valuable tools in dealing with events relating to food, crop or plant security
- The industry also has a knowledge base of plants, plant diseases, plant pests and pathogens as well as modern laboratories. These together with the industry's crop scouting knowledge of germplasm form a base of both rapid detection and analysis as well as surge capacity if needed. Unfortunately, CSREES, for the most part, has not taken advantage of nor utilized the expertise and capacity of the seed sector (both its human resource capital as well as the potential for using its agronomic and laboratory facilities) in National Plant Diagnostic Network or any other efforts. The USDA-APHIS-PPQ working with ASTA developed the National Seed Health System that includes specific standards for laboratory seed health tests and crop field inspections. (see <http://www.seedhealth.org/>) Similar efforts are possible with the NPDN. This type of activity support CSREES actionable strategies identified in **Component 3.2: Develop and Deliver Science- Based Information and Technologies to Reduce the Number & Severity of Agricultural Pests & Disease Outbreaks.**
- *There is no one organization in the nation that has more expertise on plant germplasm than ASTA.* Any national response plan under Homeland Security Presidential Directive #9 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/02/20040203-2.html>) must include input from ASTA, along with CSREES & APHIS officials. ASTA is a key partner in the development of an overall protection plan to meet the modern challenges of safeguarding American agriculture.

Summary: ASTA's strategic priorities and objectives are compatible with the strategic objectives of CSREES. ASTA is in the position to contribute in a major way to not only the strategic goals of CSREES, but also to the security of the nation's food supply (physical and supply) and to the competitiveness of American farmers. To take advantage of this opportunity, CSREES should embrace the offer of the seed industry to provide support to CSREES in NPDN and other activities related to CSREES's strategic goals. Such has not been the case to date but we look for future opportunities to work together and leverage the talents and resources of both organizations. The ASTA leadership does appreciate this opportunity for providing input at this CSREES stakeholders' workshop.