

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia-Africa plant biosecurity network underway

15 senior biosecurity fellows and 30 biosecurity fellows - change champions for African plant pest and disease protection - will meet today in Nairobi for the first Australia-Africa Plant Biosecurity Network meeting.

An initiative of the Australia-Africa Plant Biosecurity Partnership, the Fellows will be trained in a range of plant protection areas to improve plant biosecurity in ten east and southern African countries, including matched training in Australia and development of communication skills.

The aim is to assist African individuals to improve regional biosecurity, improving farmer incomes, food security and safe regional trade of agricultural products. The East and Southern African countries included are Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

"The initial Network meeting is the beginning of an ongoing network of plant biosecurity champions," said Dr Michael Robinson, CEO of Australia's Plant Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre (PBCRC).

"As well as providing placements in Australian plant industries and biosecurity agencies, the Network will bring African biosecurity professionals together to share information, provide ongoing development, and support Fellows to manage training and outreach in their own countries, improving biosecurity systems, policies and resources."

The main areas of biosecurity capacity development identified for the Partnership's initial are:

- Diagnostic skills for identification of key pests and diseases of concern
- Risk analysis and risk management with a focus on seed and live planting material
- Emergency response and eradication
- Surveillance and management of key pests and diseases affecting production and trade
- Early warning and biosecurity planning, and
- Listing and prioritisation of key pests and diseases on traded commodities, to reduce biosecurity constraints to imports and exports.

Training in skills to assist the Fellows as change agents was also supported.

The Australia-Africa Plant Biosecurity Partnership is led by Australia's PBCRC and funded by the AIFSRC within ACIAR, CABI and the Australia Awards scholarship program. The program is being delivered by a consortium of PBCRC, ACIAR, CABI, CSIRO and the Crawford Fund.

More information is available at www.pbcrc.com.au/research/east-africa/news

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