

Press Release

70TH WORLD SEED CONGRESS IN NICE: INNOVATION AT THE HEART OF DISCUSSION AMONG INTERNATIONAL SEED COMPANIES

More than 1,700 international professionals and business leaders from 63 countries are gathered in Nice for the 70th ISF World Seed Congress, the largest annual gathering of the seed sector which brings together seed industry players and key stakeholders. The congress is an opportunity to discuss the challenges of the sector, especially innovation and seed movement, as well as to reaffirm the sector's commitment to shared goals with the global community.

"The theme of this congress, 'Where knowledge flows', highlights the importance of international exchange and the sharing of knowledge, experiences and expertise to bring professionals to discuss the future of the industry," said Eduard Fito, president of the International Seed Federation (ISF), organizer of the congress alongside the Union Française des Semenciers (UFS).

"France, one of the historical leaders in the seed industry, is a destination of choice for the ISF International Congress," explains Michael Keller, General Secretary of ISF. The country has skills and recognized know-how, a public/private coordinated research, and a successful industry organization. "France is the world's leading exporter of seeds and the leading European producer," says Franck Berger, president of UFS. "We are small and medium enterprises, family businesses, international companies, cooperatives, all directly linked with the farmers and all creators of a great diversity of species and varieties of seeds, which are the starting point of our food chain. Our diversity is a strength." Seeds of cereals, turf, flowers, vegetables, oilseeds and more, comprise the 4.4 million metric tons of seeds which are exported globally within the international seed sector, representing a value of USD 11.4 billion.

Sector's outlook

The seed sector relies on three elements: breeding, production and trading, all subject to several challenges:

- **The lack of consistency in the regulation of the recent methods of plant breeding is a threat to innovation.** "The loss of our innovative ability is a real obstacle for breeders and farmers who, in the long run, will see fewer and fewer new varieties on the market. If this slowdown continues, the consequences will go beyond our sector and will jeopardize our future," explains Eduard Fito. Today, the sector invests 15% of its turnover in R & D each year.
- **The seed sector is faced with the issue of harmonizing regulatory frameworks on trans-border seed movement** and of combating illegal practices such as counterfeit seeds.
- **The international seed sector strives to harmonize its voice in an ever-changing political, economic and social context.** At international and national levels, there is a need to build trust in the complementary role of the public and private sectors. Clear, predictable, science-based and analysis risk-based cooperation and regulations, as well as effective implementation in the field, are essential to making seeds accessible to all.

The seed industry contributes to a majority of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as ending hunger, fighting poverty, climate change and others. "Although efforts that contribute to the SDGs are not new to our sector, it is a recent realization to make the SDGs more well-known within the seed sector, and to bring recognition within international organizations regarding the sector's contributions," concludes Michael Keller.

Key figures

4.4 million metric tons of seed exports, worth USD 11.4 billion (2016)
Tens of thousands of seed varieties registered with UPOV (internationally)
More than 15% of sales dedicated to R & D (internationally)
7,500 ISF member companies

On the French scale

#1 European seed producer and #1 international exporter
More than one million tons produced per year
12,000 direct jobs

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About ISF

ISF is the voice of the global seed industry. It has represented the interests of its members since 1924, and represents 96% of the international seed trade today. With a global reach extending to members around the world and official observer status in intergovernmental and international organizations, ISF is uniquely positioned to assist in the development of government policy and business strategy. www.worldseed.org

About UFS

French Seed Union (UFS) is the professional organization that federates and represents 130 seed companies established in France whose activities are the improvement, production and marketing of varieties, seeds and seedlings for agriculture, gardens and landscapes. As a key interlocutor, the UFS represents the voice of its members in the agricultural sectors and more broadly in society. www.ufs-semenciers.org