

AMERICAN SEED TRADE ASSOCIATION

Strategic Plan

2021

asta

**BETTER SEED
BETTER LIFE**





The American Seed Trade Association has served the United States seed industry for 135 years as an effective voice of action in all matters concerning the development, marketing and movement of seed, associated products and services throughout the world.

ASTA is better prepared today than ever before to carry out its mission as a strong advocate on issues impacting our industry and provide services to enhance the business effectiveness of our members.

Because of its broad and diverse membership, ASTA is uniquely positioned to influence the business environment that confronts its membership today. We have a strong and professional staff, well established consensus positions on key issues, and a member-led organizational structure that allows for rapid response to issues at the local, national and international levels.

This document is an example of the member-led efforts of the association. The plan was developed with input from hundreds of members on how ASTA can be most effective. The members identified the key focus areas of Domestic Policy, Innovation, Communications, Intellectual Property Rights, International and ASTA Membership & Internal Matters. The ASTA Board of Directors then took a significant amount of effort to develop the goals and action plans to address these key focus areas for 2018 and forward.

The ASTA Board of Directors realizes that the rapidly changing nature of the seed industry facilitates the need to continually review the strategic focus areas that the association has identified. Therefore, the Board and Executive Committees will review the Strategic Plan on a continual basis and report their findings and actions to the ASTA membership.

ASTA MOTTO

"Better seed, Better life"

ASTA VISION

To contribute to global agriculture and food security by creating an environment where each ASTA member company has the opportunity to create an innovative, sustainable and successful business.

ASTA MISSION

ASTA's mission is to be an effective voice of action in all matters concerning the development, marketing and movement of seed, associated products and services throughout the world. ASTA promotes the development of better seed to produce better crops for a better quality of life.

ASTA CORE VALUES

Members drive the ASTA agenda and identify the issues relevant to the seed industry. ASTA's commitment to one company, one vote ensures that issues affecting the many are identified and result in effective and proactive advocacy and support.

KEY STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

1. DOMESTIC POLICY

OBJECTIVE: Be the leading voice on domestic policy issues impacting the seed industry. Implement a comprehensive government affairs program and regularly engage and communicate with ASTA members and stakeholders on federal, state and local issues. Determine action on active issues – identify where ASTA should lead, support or monitor.

Goal #1: Enhance ASTA's relationship with strategic legislators. Identify key legislation that either directly or indirectly impacts the seed industry. Determine action on active issues – where ASTA should lead, support or monitor.

- Identify key decision makers in the House of Representatives and the Senate – members and staff – that can potentially impact the seed industry. Implement plan to outreach to these key Members/staff on a regular basis in Washington D.C. and in states and districts. Identify ASTA members in the districts/states of key Members of Congress and facilitate stronger relationships between them.
- Identify key decision makers in the State Legislatures that can potentially impact the seed industry. Implement plan for outreach to both policy makers and ATA members.
- Organize advocacy opportunities for ASTA members and targeted outreach for specific issues.
- Provide briefings to members of Congress and their staff on seed issues.
- Increase awareness and support of the industry led SeedFirstPAC.

Goal #2: Identify key regulations and policies that either directly or indirectly impact the seed industry. Drive science-based and efficient regulatory policies. Determine action on active issues – where ASTA should lead, support or monitor.

- Participate in industry efforts related to sustainability, to share past successes and future opportunities for the seed industry to contribute to environmentally sound policies.

- Provide input into implementation of the 2018 Farm Bill and other proposed regulations at USDA. Monitor/address specific regulations related to the Federal Seed Act, the Plant Variety Protection Act and state seed laws.
- Develop proposals for consideration for the 2023 Farm Bill.
- Monitor/address the implementation of USDA conservation programs. Work with State Technical Committees to address NRCS seed mix recommendations. Encourage the use of professionally produced seed through joint communications efforts.
- Continue to develop relationships with Bureau of Land Management officials on seed procurement policies and programs. Develop relationships with Forest Service personnel responsible for seed purchases. Create a campaign to educate the Bureau of Land Management to help them align their field office messaging with their administrative offices. Educate key personnel at the Bureau of the economic advantages of strategic seed procurement.
- Provide information to USDA, EPA and state officials on the important role of seed treatment in all seed industry sectors. Promote stewardship of treated seed at the Federal and State level. Protect the Treated Article Exemption for treated seed.
- Work with allied organizations to promote stewardship of treated seed.
- Support AOSA/SCST with their efforts to identify and correct causes of inconsistent lab uniformity.
- Provide input on seed issues to the National Organic Standards Board and the USDA National Organic Program.
- Identify priority issues for the grass, turf, and forage seed industries.

Goal #3: Advocate for agricultural program funding to support the advancement of the seed industry.

- Increase support for USDA research programs including the National Plant Germplasm System and the Germplasm Enhancement of Maize program.

KEY STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS *CONTINUED*

- Increase support for the USDA Cooperator Programs that funds ASTA's international activities.
- Increase support for USDA's Plant Materials Centers. Identify priority centers and opportunities for greater collaboration between these centers and ASTA members.
- Promote the benefits of cover crops in sustainability efforts and carbon initiatives, and their role in soil health.

Goal #4: Continue to enhance partnerships with academia, organizations and other associations key to ASTA's member companies.

- Enhance strategic partnerships between ASTA and allied organizations such as the Independent Professional Seed Association, BIO, Crop Life America, and the Agricultural Retailers Association to maximize ability to address issues impacting the seed industry.
- Enhance and maintain relationships with the state and regional seed and agribusiness associations.
- Increase coordination with universities, academics, NAPB, etc.
- Maintain cooperation with AASCO, AOSCA, AOSA-SCST.
- Enhance cooperation with grower organizations such as the American Farm Bureau Federation, National Corn Growers Association, American Soybean Association, United Fresh Produce Association, Western Growers, etc.
- Increase cooperation with organizations in the agriculture and food value chain, such as the Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance, Tri-Societies, Produce Marketing Association, Consumer Brands Association, Food Marketing Institute, National Grain and Feed Association, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, etc.
- Identify key partners and meetings in the environment and conservation area for ASTA participation.
- Work with SARE, Noble Foundation, and others on cover crop programs including investigating cover crop standards, planting recommendations and research collaborations.

2. INNOVATION

OBJECTIVE: Advocate for a domestic and international environment that facilitates the development and implementation of innovation in breeding of seed crops and in seed associated products.

Goal #1: Advocate for a domestic policy environment that fosters innovation and ensures broad access to innovative tools for the seed sector

- Engage federal policy makers and regulators to garner support to implement science based, risk proportional, implementable regulations that achieve consistent policy approaches coordinated across the agencies.
- Advocate across all levels of the executive and legislative branch for the positive inclusion of innovation in plant breeding and seed science in government mandate/policy actions pertaining to sustainability and a climate resilient agriculture and food system.
- Outreach, as needed, across all levels of the executive and legislative branches to build understanding and support for the utilization of innovation by private and public seed breeders and scientists for plant science research and product development.
- Proactively engage value chain members to further their understanding and acceptance of new breeding technologies, seed associated products, and the impact on the product improvement pipeline.
- Enable federal policy makers and regulators with examples of food, feed and fiber innovations that will drive environmental sustainability, improve human health and food safety over the long-term, and improve economic resiliency of rural communities.

Goal #2: Encourage alignment among countries on science-based, risk proportional, consistent policies

- Participate in international and regional seed association committees that are working toward alignment of scope of regulatory oversight and globally harmonized procedures.
- Seek opportunity and engage with Federal agencies (State, USDA FAS, USAID, USTR, etc) that are involved in foreign relations, trade, and international development to ensure consistency within the United States Government in support of plant breeding innovation and seed associated products.

KEY STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS *CONTINUED*

- Support the participation of the seed industry, whether through the International Seed Federation or appropriate regional/national seed associations, in international fora, for example IICA, OECD, FAO, etc).
- Encourage strategic, international engagement by US regulatory, trade, and foreign relations agencies to support coordinated international policies.
- Develop and maintain strong partnerships with other agriculture sectors, food industry, grain trade, academia, and scientific societies to improve collaboration in advocacy and communication outreach on the importance of innovation in plant breeding and seed associated treatments.

Goal #3: Undertake outreach, engagement and transparency initiatives to build consumer trust

- Create opportunities for all stakeholders of the value chain to deliver common messaging around plant breeding innovation and seed associated products, particularly around sustainability, climate change, food safety and nutrition.
- Continue to support the Innovature website with new content and to engage with identified thought leaders and influencers.
- Seek active engagement with media and the public, in addition to the Innovature website, to provide transparency and build trust.

3. COMMUNICATIONS

OBJECTIVE: Reinforce ASTA's role as the authoritative voice and trusted resource for the U.S. seed industry. Maintain the association's position as the go-to source on seed matters for ASTA members, member organizations, state and federal government leaders, commodity groups, and media; while continuing to build its brand with consumers, consumer influencers, students, educators, and other stakeholder groups along the ag and food value chain.

Goal #1: Increase ASTA Brand Awareness

- Increase awareness of ASTA among the seed industry and key stakeholder groups, as outlined above.

Goal #2: Implement Strategic Issues Management Plan

- Expand upon, and keep up to date, ASTA's inventory of proactive and reactive communications resources, in an easily-accessible platform, that will be utilized by members, and state and regional associations for outreach activities.

- Coordinate industry messaging—working collaboratively with communications, technical and policy representatives, when relevant—on the wide variety of issues impacting the seed industry.
 - Maintain an inventory of past issue-specific messaging to help inform future communications as similar issues arise.
- Utilize Communications Committee and SALT team to amplify proactive messages as well as to engage in crisis response as needed.

Goal #3: Coordinate messaging around seed innovation, sustainability and other industry matters

- Continue to promote and provide new communications tools to ASTA members and key stakeholders. Package into clear, shareable, relevant, visually compelling content that includes the innovative nature of the seed industry.
- Train and empower members to use the available tools, and track their usage to help guide future strategy.
- Collaborate and build coalitions with other industry associations and stakeholder groups to ensure message alignment whenever possible.

Goal #4: Build up Diverse Network of Trusted Subject Matter Spokespeople

- Develop a network of scientists, farmers and other trusted issue-matter experts who are willing and able to serve as spokespeople on key seed topics, including sustainability and innovation.
- Identify opportunities to utilize the network, and innovative ways of delivering the content, to engage key audiences.

4. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

OBJECTIVE: Advance the use and respect of intellectual property rights (IPR) for the seed sector globally. Increase awareness for how intellectual property contributes to the success of seed systems and supports sustainability goals.

Goal #1: Promote the adoption and enforcement of intellectual property rights laws and regulations for the seed sector globally.

- Broaden the adoption of UPOV 91 globally and support the adherence to UPOV 91 through effective implementation, including enforcement with an emphasis on ASTA's key markets. International

KEY STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS *CONTINUED*

Executive Committee will identify priority countries through their work.

- Maintain leadership in IPR policy development globally, coordinating and aligning with ISF, regional seed associations, government organizations, UPOV, Agreements on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO).

Goal #2: Facilitate policy development regarding access to technologies and germplasm for the seed industry.

- Work within international treaties such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) to advocate for reasonable mechanisms and scope for access and benefit sharing.
- Encourage national-level implementation of policies and legislation promoting mutual implementation of the UPOV Convention and the ITPGRFA to achieve the proper balance between IPR protection and farmers' rights.
- Advocate for a more effective U.S. National Plant Germplasm System and other public seed repositories to create access to a wide range of public seed materials.

Goal #3: Advocate for improved processes and additional capacity within the existing U.S. intellectual property rights programs for the seed industry.

- Continue to advocate for an expanded on-line and automated plant variety protection (PVP) application process that allows for secured management and access for applicants for all crops.
- Support implementation of the use of genetic data for determining distinctness to obtain PVP protection and for IPR enforcement.
- Maintain close relationship with the US Plant Variety Protection Office (PVPO) and US Patent and Trademark Office (PTO) to ensure awareness for seed industry needs and positions and to support continuing PVPO representation in UPOV proceedings.
- Encourage greater capacity for deposits and PVP protection of asexually reproduced plants.

Goal #4: Develop and deliver effective education materials on the value and mechanisms of IPR protection in the seed industry.

- Foster recognition of the role of IPR protection as an incentive for public and private sector investment in R&D and innovation.
- Continue to expand programs and efforts to educate stakeholder groups and governments on the value to farmers and society of strong and equitable IPR protection in the seed industry, emphasizing the relationship between IPR and sustainability.
- Continue to support efforts of the Seed Innovation and Protection Alliance (SIPA).
- Increase awareness and understanding for how different forms of IPR protection, including labeling, can be compromised, for example, by illegal seed practices.

5. INTERNATIONAL

OBJECTIVE: Improve the opportunities for ASTA member companies to do business in international markets.

Goal #1: Improve the business environment for ASTA member companies in key markets.

- Identify key markets and critical issues that need to be addressed to enhance ASTA member companies' ability to develop viable opportunities in those markets. Successfully leverage USDA agricultural cooperator program funding to advance the US seed trade international business environment.

Goal #2: Address operational issues affecting the global movement of seed.

- In conjunction with the U.S. government and relevant organizations, advocate the use of science-based regulations and standards to ensure safe and streamlined international movement of seeds and plant materials while addressing import and export processes such as phytosanitary requirements, and other testing and registration practices.
- Provide issue and risk management support to members related to international seed movement.

Goal #3: Promote the development and global alignment of policies among governments and stakeholders.

- Support the adoption and implementation of recognized policies, conventions, and standards that enable the alignment or harmonized of seed regulatory approaches globally.
- Promote regional and international seed phytosanitary standards and measures that allow for

KEY STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS *CONTINUED*

clearly understood, predictable, and safe movement of seed among geographies.

- Influence development of systems approaches and support ISPM 38 implementation.
- Utilize domestic policy as a platform for advocating consistent policies internationally.
- Engage with relevant U.S. government agencies and private sector organizations to encourage proactive approaches internationally where agriculture and sustainability policies are discussed.

Goal #4: Through strong member engagement, represent the US seed industry at international and regional seed and intergovernmental organizations.

- Ensure strong participation in policy and position development with the ISF, and other regional and country seed associations.
- Monitor activities in the OECD, CBD, FAO, TRIPS, ITPGRFA, UPOV, ISTA, IPPC, NAPPO and use ASTA's influence to further key seed industry positions.
- Provide technical and practical advice to the U.S. government and relevant organizations to support international negotiations on issues important to the seed industry.

6. ASTA MEMBERSHIP & INTERNAL MATTERS

OBJECTIVE: Maintain and grow strong plans for membership retention, engagement and recruitment; meetings structure and management; and human and financial resource management to ensure the key issues of membership are addressed through a sound association foundation.

Goal #1: Membership – Recruit, retain, engage and grow ASTA membership – provide the highest standard of industry support to effectively represent the seed industry at the state, national and international levels.

- Maintain and update the ASTA member retention and recruitment plan.
 - Evaluate current membership for gaps
 - Target high risk and less engaged members
 - Promote active and diverse committee participation
 - Crop types, backgrounds, company size, etc.
 - Promote and develop committee leadership and succession
 - Foster opportunities for mentorship and informal engagement

- Increase and enhance the utilization of the ASTA member database.
 - Evaluate database systems to increase ASTA efficiency across all areas
- Develop targeted messages and collateral to match individual and organizational needs regarding ASTA's accomplishments and ROI in collaboration with the Vice President of Communications.
- Expand and Diversify Membership types – include companies throughout the food chain, start up and innovation in and on the seed, (biological seed enhancement).
 - Develop a prospective member list of complimentary member types. Evaluate value and opportunity.
- Increase member engagement and identify ways to allow smaller companies to engage.
 - Create sponsorship “shared” opportunities.
- Ensure that we have resources, including staff, to manage initiatives.

Goal #2: Provide education and leadership opportunities to members.

- Grow the ASTA student membership program.
- Structure the LEAD Committee to be an effective resource of education for all members at all professional career levels.
- Create a micro site for educational and learning tools.
- Identify “segments of members” and how ASTA can meet their specific needs.
 - Develop educational opportunities by segment/region
- Create ongoing, additional educational offerings throughout the year for smaller virtual events between ASTA conferences.
- Collaborate with like organizations.

Goal #3: Meeting Activities

- Utilize strategic management to increase the value of ASTA events for its members and grow participation and engagement in those events. Develop strategies within the meetings to increase education and leadership opportunities.
- Support and promote new and varied sponsorship opportunities
 - Work to enhance opportunities for regional companies.
 - Create partnership opportunities for companies to be matched strategically with meeting content

KEY STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS *CONTINUED*

- Expand the ASTA Meetings Committee to develop and enhance the meetings structure and content, incorporating additional ASTA committee representation.
- Ensure that meetings support the financial health of the Association.
- Enhance and revise ASTA plan for emergencies, health and safety protocols at ASTA events and related communications.
- Foster collaborative opportunities and partnership with like organizations. IPSA, NAPB, Tri-Societies, state and regional associations, etc.
- Encourage global participation.
- Evolve ASTA hybrid virtual format and strategy to continue to gain new virtual audiences and increase meeting efficiency, based on events of 2020 and 2021.
- Foster collaboration with student groups and LEAD Committee to maximize early-career participation in ASTA events (in-person and/or virtual).
- Cross promote with state and regional associations.
- Continue to research and address evolving member needs at existing ASTA meetings, including format, location, frequency, time of year to maximize member value.

Goal #4: Human & Financial Resources

- Develop strategies and systems to emphasize strong, consistent staff and financial resource management.
 - Keep up-to-date employee and office policies
 - Evaluate and implement alternative work options
 - Update and enhance office technology
- Review job descriptions and parameters for each of the current ASTA employees to track industry comparables and analyze staff structure at least every three years.
 - Hire a firm to evaluate and benchmark job positions and salaries
- Update succession management plan to ensure a talented ASTA team for the future.
 - Review and evaluate the plan at least every three years.

- Continue a transparent budgeting process.
- Evaluate impact of mergers, acquisitions and consolidations in the industry.
 - Continue to work through the Visionary Committee to review and evaluate dues structure to ensure fairness and equitability across all membership levels
 - Evaluate the financial impact of virtual and/or hybrid virtual events
- Identify and develop non-dues and non-registration revenue for ASTA.
 - Evaluate new sponsorship opportunities, such as the ASTA newsletter
- Evaluate financial reserve levels to be maintained during uncertain industry times.
 - Continuously review and update investment and reserve policies
 - Remind leadership of policies when financial decisions are being evaluated

7. SUSTAINABILITY

OBJECTIVE: Recognize the role of seed in sustainable agriculture as policies are developed in the public and private sectors at the local, national, and international levels.

Goal #1: Develop tools and educational resources that enable member companies to adopt, evaluate and share their sustainability practices.

Goal #2: Support development of flexible, science-based sustainable agriculture policies which enable seed sector innovation to meet new challenges, including priorities outlined across ASTA's strategic pillars.

Goal #3: Working collaboratively with the greater agriculture value chain (including growers and retailers as well as food and feed industry stakeholders), position the seed industry as a sustainability enabler. Highlight sustainability messages within ASTA's overall communications efforts.



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