asta | american seed trade association

About ASTA

Founded in 1883, the American Seed Trade Association is one of the oldest trade organizations in the United States, with a membership consisting of nearly 700 companies involved in the breeding, production, distribution, and marketing of seed and seed-related products.

ASTA members supply a broad range of high-quality seeds – including row crops, grasses, forages, flowers, vegetables, and cereals – developed using a variety of breeding methods, such as conventional, organic, and biotech.

Rooted in innovation and growth, the seed industry continues to develop and improve seed varieties specifically designed to address critical challenges impacting U.S. farmers, from drought to pests and disease. ASTA promotes the development of better seed to produce better crops for a better quality of life.

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.

MEMBERSHIP

ASTA's broad membership includes seed companies of all sizes, spanning various geographies and production types. Together, they offer varieties ranging from alfalfa to zucchini.

ROBUST U.S. AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

Investment in agriculture research has allowed the U.S. seed industry to continue to develop better seed, enabling farmers to produce better crops for consumers. Adequate funding for U.S. agencies, programs, and initiatives that support the research and development of these critical technologies is essential in maintaining our position as a world leader in agricultural innovation. These investments drive innovation and put new and improved seed varieties in the hands of farmers.

The National Plant Germplasm System (NPGS), housed within the USDA Agricultural Research Service, is an essential tool in supporting agriculture production. Since the late 1800s, this essential system provides both public and private sectors with the genetic diversity needed to develop new and improved crop varieties with desirable traits, providing growers with seed specifically designed to combat specific challenges and increase productivity.

Research agencies like the Agriculture Research Service (ARS), Economic Research Service (ERS), National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), and National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), are key partners in addressing major challenges impacting food and agriculture. Programs within these agencies, like the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), satisfy a critical need for continued, long-term investment in research, and enable the U.S. to remain a global leader in agricultural innovation.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

ASTA members provide seed for a broad range of initiatives, including restoring lands devastated by wildfires, natural disasters, and invasive weeds, to name a few. Seed serves as the foundation of healthy landscapes, promoting stable ecosystems, erosion control, and biodiversity. Years of innovation have led to the development of seed that is specifically designed to combat critical challenges such as drought, soil health variability, nutrient management, and water availability.

Access to reliable data that supports the seed industry's ability to accurately forecast demand. This allows for more options and greater availability for producers, ensuring they have access to high-quality seed that is best suited for their operations.

TRADE

The ability to move seed internationally is a fundamental component of the years-long research and development (R&D) pipelines that allow U.S. farmers to have access to the best seeds and agricultural innovations in the world. Plant breeders rely on trade to expedite crop improvement, test-drive new crop varieties in specific environments, and conduct critical functions to increase volumes of seed in a clean and efficient way – all before those seeds can be sold to farmers. Many aspects of this seed research, development, and production cannot be relocated, and aligned international trade policies that accelerate innovation benefit both our national security and our food security.

Continued U.S. leadership in trade negotiations can solve many tariff and non-tariff barriers that prevent U.S. seed exports. Additionally, the Market Access Program (MAP) and the Foreign Market Development (FMD) Program are two proven tools U.S. agriculture must must continue in order to expand U.S. agricultural exports, protect and create American jobs, and strengthen farm income. For ASTA and its members who represent the U.S. seed industry, MAP and FMD funds have supported U.S. leadership in key international venues to influence customs, intellectual property, labeling, marketing, phytosanitary, and biotechnology regulatory policies. Sustained, long-term engagement supported by these funds, which the seed sector has matched with investments and in-kind contributions to amplify impact, is critical to the development of new markets.

Plant Health Trade Challenges

Americans rely on healthy crops to provide the food, feed, fiber, and fuel that support our daily lives. Among its many vital responsibilities, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) plays a key role in safeguarding our agricultural systems. Through its Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) division, APHIS ensures that agricultural commodity shipments to and from the United States comply with phytosanitary standards, while also defending against unfair trade barriers related to plant health.

By enabling early detection and timely mitigation of these threats, we protect national security, preserve the global food supply, and safeguard the livelihoods of American farmers.

REGULATORY POLICIES

As USDA, EPA, and FDA work together to conduct reviews of new biotechnology products for commercialization, it is imperative that these agencies operate under a harmonized regulatory approach. By increasing transparency, consistency, and predictability through inter-agency coordination, product developers can better understand what the regulatory pathway for their product may look like, further enabling innovation and access to new technologies.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

Developing innovative seed technologies and placing them in the hands of U.S. farmers requires years of research, trials, and regulatory approvals. Intellectual property (IP) protection and enforcement incentivizes investment in the seed sector but also protects the long-term investments made to bring the best seed technologies to U.S. farmers.

The USDA Plant Variety Protection Office (PVPO) and U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) work together to provide different forms of IP protection that apply to many forms of innovation in seeds. Each cycle of innovation adds to the knowledge base and is critical for the continued development of better crops that benefit farmers, growers, and consumers. The research and development necessary to create and introduce new plant varieties often requires millions of dollars in investment and years of testing of testing before a product enters the market. Effective IP protection helps the seed sector recoup that investment and spur further innovation to provide benefits to society as a whole.

21ST CENTURY SOLUTIONS TO 21ST CENTURY CHALLENGES

Through the use of technologies such as biostimulants, treated seed, and advanced breeding techniques, U.S. farmers have access to effective tools that enhance crop performance, protect genetics, promote environmental stewardship, and improve resilience to pests and diseases.

The U.S seed industry is the foundation of our food system, and a critical driver of agricultural innovation, economic strength, and national security. These technologies help ensure resilience within the seed industry and allow for better seed to support a better life for all.

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