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PRESS RELEASE - CROP TRUST: Sorghum breeding with Wild Relatives: Evaluating pre-breeding material with farmers in Kenya

The launch of CROP TRUST-Sorghum project that will participatorily evaluate pre-breeding sorghum materials with farmers in Kenya at KALRO-Kibos research station beginning Long rain season of March-December 2018 and Later in selected farmers fields.

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Farmers selecting sorghum varieties in western Kenya

The objective of the project is to: (i) Diversify sorghum breeding material for drought prone areas in Kenya and (ii) Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the sorghum breeding efforts in Western Kenya to address climate change and other challenges using farmer participatory approaches. This proposal was in response to the problem of low sorghum productivity in western Kenya due to production constraints including; frequent droughts as a result of changing weather patterns among others. The proposal was submitted following a call for application from Crop trust with the support of Dr. Eva Weltzien (Consultant and former Researcher of the Sorghum Program at ICRISAT- Mali) who identified Rongo University as a potential partner to facilitate further testing and selection of the pre-breeding materials in western Kenya where sorghum is an important staple crop and farmers in the region experience challenges related to climate change. Through Dr. Eva, the proposal was accepted and considered for funding. Farmer/researcher participation will facilitate joint learning for increasing genetic diversity needed for adaptation to climate change under farmers' conditions and final acceptability that will bring faster adoption and

utilization of successful varieties by farmers for enhanced food security and improved livelihoods in western Kenya.

The collaborators of this project include; Ugenya Banana farmers group, Aminyasa youth group and Dr. Eva weltzien who is independent consultant. The key beneficiaries will be the farmers who rely on sorghum for food security and income in the face of climatic and demographic stresses. Others include breeders who will get opportunity to work with increased genetic diversity because of exploitation of the new gene pool from the wild relatives. The challenge is to obtain early, high yielding, drought-, disease- and insect-tolerant varieties with high adoption rates and capacity building for all partners.

All materials and related data will be made available to the global community. This work was undertaken as part of the initiative “*Adapting Agriculture to Climate Change: Collecting, Protecting and Preparing Crop Wild Relatives*” which is supported by the Government of Norway. The project is managed by the Global Crop Diversity Trust with the Millennium Seed Bank of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew UK and implemented in partnership with national and international genebanks and plant breeding institutes around the world. For further information, please go to the project website: <http://www.cwrdiversity.org/>

- Project duration: Start: 1st March 2018 and end: 30th September 2020
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