



INTERNATIONAL SEED TESTING ASSOCIATION

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Draft ISTA Strategy

This document was prepared by the ISTA Executive Committee to be submitted as proposal to the ISTA Ordinary Meeting 2007 for voting by the nominated ISTA Designated Members voting on behalf of their respective Government.

It is submitted to all ISTA Designated Authorities, ISTA Members and ISTA Observer Organisations for information two months prior to the ISTA Ordinary Meeting.

It will be discussed and voted on at the Ordinary Meeting 2007 to be held on Friday, May 11, 2007 at the Rafain Hotel, Iguacu Falls, Parana, Brazil under the Agenda point 14. Any other business raised by consent of the Executive Committee.



Draft ISTA Strategy

ISTA IS THE INDEPENDENT INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR SEED TESTING

Vision: *Uniformity in Seed Testing world wide*

Mission: *ISTA achieves its vision by producing internationally agreed rules for seed sampling and testing, accrediting laboratories, and providing international seed analysis certificates, training and dissemination of seed science and technology knowledge to facilitate seed trading nationally and internationally.*

Some headlines in the development of ISTA over the past ten years

- ISTA continued its role as the international association for seed science and technology and seed testing;
- ISTA membership increased from 64 countries (April 1994) to 76 countries and from 136 laboratories to 171 laboratories;
- ISTA opened its membership for seed company and private seed testing laboratories;
- ISTA has added method validation as an important part of method development;
- ISTA reviewed the referee tests system and transformed it into a proficiency test system, including clear and transparent standards for the required performance;
- ISTA introduced an accreditation standard for seed testing laboratories that meets the standards of internationally accepted accreditation, including an audit procedure that guarantees a worldwide uniform application of the standard;
- ISTA decided to open the accreditation system for seed company laboratories, including the issuance of the ISTA international certificates;
- ISTA has enhanced the decision-making process by introducing annual meetings;
- ISTA professionalised its internal organisation, including the introduction of modern office tools and techniques for communication;
- ISTA strengthened the relation and collaboration with international operating organisations and associations;
- ISTA and FAO concluded upon a Memorandum of Understanding for future co-operation.

Considerations

The increasing interest in ISTA and its activities indicates the importance of ISTA as a service provider for governments, international organisations, and the national and international seed trade. In a time of globalisation, seed industries in many countries have entered into the international market. Governments want to support the seed industry and seek for co-operation with internationally operating associations such as ISTA. The ISTA Rules and the accreditation standard, are of increasing value for the goal of uniformity in seed testing. More and more, companies are doing business on the basis of bilateral agreements, including reference to the ISTA Rules and methods.

In conclusion

The work of ISTA is very much appreciated and valuable for governments, international organisations and the seed industry. ISTA should continue its work and the development of the association.

ISTA will help its members to make substantial and lasting improvements in their performance and to build an association that can attract, excite and retain excellent people and laboratories.

To achieve this, the following Strategy has been developed:

1. Method development

Method development is an important activity for ISTA. The respective technical committees play a leading role in these activities. ISTA will make a study of the process of method development in order to examine whether the current structure needs changes. Important issues for the study are: the adjustment of the work to market demands, the availability of experts, financial aspects, etc.

The association will continue to organise annual meetings in order to facilitate contacts between the experts. Contacts between experts, either as members of committees or as individuals, are important for the exchange of information and ideas.

The association will continue to give support to the activities of the committees by supplying assistance from the secretariat.

2. Method validation

Method validation is an important element of method development and recognition. ISTA is restructuring its method validation system to increase efficiency and better meet today's market needs. Methods developed by any person or laboratory can be submitted to ISTA for validation. A business plan will be elaborated.

3. Certificates

The ISTA certificate is a valuable document, providing a lot of information about quality of the seed involved. The association will examine how to increase the usefulness of ISTA certificates. Advantages and disadvantages of changing the wording from 'ISTA Certificates' to 'ISTA Seed Testing Reports' will be explored.

4. Accreditation

The accreditation programme of ISTA is very well accepted. Worldwide around 100 laboratories have been accredited. The performance of the laboratories has improved. The ISTA audits are very well received by most of the laboratories. The association sees the accreditation standard as an important part of the ISTA work. The basic principles of the audit procedures will remain untouched. However as before, comments and advice of auditees will be continuously subject to discussion and consideration in order to remain as effective and efficient as possible. The audits on the recently agreed performance based approach for testing on specified traits will continuously be reviewed, in order to find the best way to assure the quality of the laboratory.



5. Training

ISTA will continue to organise workshops. ISTA wants to extend the collaboration with other organisations, especially for workshops in areas where seed testing is still in an early stage of development. ISTA realises that a professional approach to training programmes and workshops is needed.

In response to the expressed wish for ISTA training, the association is developing a seed analyst training system.

The association will explore the possibilities of distance learning programmes.

6. Publications and Products

ISTA's publications and products are of great value to members to improve their performance and are also sold to non-members. The association is investigating ways to increase sales and reduce costs. Electronic publishing and distribution will be investigated.

7. Seed Science

ISTA seed symposia have to compete with more specialised congresses and symposia. Nevertheless, part of the core business of ISTA is seed science. Therefore, the association will redefine the aim and structure of its symposia. The executive committee will seek cooperation with other associations that are active in the field of seed science. Furthermore the executive committee is considering other avenues for expanding seed science.

8. International recognition and cooperate governance

ISTA is a well-known international association. However, the association feels that not all governments, institutes, organisations and seed companies are aware of the benefits and possibilities ISTA can offer them. ISTA wants to show its value to all those who are working in the seed science and seed testing area. ISTA will start a campaign to enhance international recognition.