



ISTA
Seed Quality Assurance

ISTA Secretariat

Address: Richtiring 32, 8304 Wallisellen
Post Address: Richtiarkade 18, 8304 Wallisellen
Switzerland

Press Release

Calgary hosts the 2026 Annual Meeting of the International Seed Testing Association

Wallisellen, Switzerland - 17 August 2026 - The International Seed Testing Association (ISTA) successfully concluded its 2026 Annual Meeting in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, bringing together seed testing experts, researchers, regulators and industry representatives from around the world for four days of scientific exchange, technical collaboration and professional networking.



Together with ISTA, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) on behalf of the Government of Canada, the CFIA Saskatoon Laboratory, the CFIA Ottawa Plant and Seed Pathology Laboratory, Seeds Canada, 20/20 Seed Labs Inc., and SGS Canada Inc., welcomed participants to the Annual Meeting from **22-25 June 2026** at **The Westin Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada**.

The 2026 ISTA Annual Meeting provided an important platform for members of the international seed community to exchange knowledge, discuss emerging challenges and advance cooperation in seed testing, seed quality assurance, and international seed trade. The event reflected ISTA's continued commitment to developing internationally harmonised testing methods and supporting innovation in the seed sector.

Canada has long played a significant role in international seed testing and standardisation. As a founding member of both the International Seed Testing Association (ISTA) and the Association of Official Seed Analysts (AOSA), Canada has contributed to the development of reliable seed testing systems and continues to serve as an important link between North American expertise and the global seed community.



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Canada is home to five ISTA member laboratories, four of which are accredited, demonstrating the country's strong commitment to scientific excellence, quality assurance and international collaboration.

The 2026 Annual Meeting highlighted Canada's important contributions to plant breeding, seed certification, regulatory cooperation and technological innovation, bringing together perspectives from government institutions, research organisations and the seed industry.

Calgary, one of Canada's most dynamic and welcoming cities, provided an outstanding backdrop for the ISTA Annual Meeting. Located in the province of Alberta, a region with a strong agricultural heritage and thriving innovation ecosystem, Calgary offered delegates a modern and accessible venue for scientific discussions, committee meetings and networking activities.

Known for its high quality of life, diverse population and vibrant cultural scene, Calgary welcomed participants with its combination of urban amenities, international connectivity and renowned hospitality. The city's proximity to the Canadian Prairies, one of the world's major agricultural regions, further reinforced its suitability as a meeting place for the global seed community.

'Canada not only invited ISTA for this Annual Meeting, but they also did their utmost to make the meeting a success. The amount of work the local Organising Committee put into this event was extraordinary. And I am not only talking about the great number of sponsors, but also the ideas on keynote speakers for the seminar.'

Andreas Wais, ISTA Secretary General

The 2026 ISTA Annual Meeting officially opened on Monday, 22 June 2026, with an Opening Ceremony led by **Andreas Wais, ISTA Secretary General**. The ceremony began with an Elder Blessing by Elder Ruby Eagle Child, recognising the significance of place, community and connection. Participants were then welcomed through a video message from Heath MacDonald, Canada's Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, followed by opening remarks from Tara Sawyer, Alberta's Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.



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Ernest Allen, ISTA President, delivered the official opening remarks, welcoming delegates and highlighting the importance of international cooperation in advancing seed testing standards and supporting global agriculture.



'North America maintains a dominant share of the global commercial seed market capturing nearly 33% of total global revenue... all driven in large part



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by high-tech seed genetics. With its abundant farmland and thriving seed market, Calgary Canada, was perfect place to discuss the issues that ISTA has championed for over a century: global harmonization, smoother seed trade, and faster adoption of new technologies. The standards we strengthened in Calgary will give every member laboratory greater confidence, every seed lot greater integrity, and every farmer a predictable, reliable outcome for each seed they plant.'

Ernest Allen, ISTA President

The **ISTA Annual Seminar**, held on 22 June 2026, addressed key developments shaping the future of seed testing and quality assurance. Through three thematic sessions, experts explored innovation in plant breeding, emerging technologies and regulatory perspectives affecting the global seed sector.

The first session examined the evolution of Canadian plant breeding and its practical implications for seed quality and seed testing.

Presentations were delivered by:

- **Curtis Pozniak**, Professor and Director, University of Saskatchewan, College of Agriculture and Bioresources, Crop Development Center
- **Logan Skori**, Chief Executive Officer and Founder, AgGene
- **Jodi Souter**, Founder, J4 Agri-Science

The session concluded with a panel discussion moderated by **Doug Miller**, former Executive Director of the Canadian Seed Growers' Association (CSGA), providing further insight into the relationship between plant breeding innovation and seed quality assurance.

The second session focused on the growing potential of artificial intelligence and advanced computational approaches in agriculture and seed testing.

The keynote presentation was delivered by **Nikolas Badminton, Chief Futurist and Hope Engineer at Futurist.com**, who explored future technological developments and their potential impact on the seed sector.

Additional presentations were given by:

- **Sandra Zilles**, Canada Research Chair in Computational Learning Theory, Alberta Machine Intelligence Institute (AMII), University of Regina
- **Jan J. Slaski**, President, Mirabilis Hemp Consulting Ltd.



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The session included a panel discussion moderated by **Bert van Duijn, Chair of the ISTA Advanced Technology Committee**, examining opportunities and challenges associated with the adoption of artificial intelligence methodologies.

The third session addressed regulatory approaches to seed certification and the importance of international cooperation in maintaining reliable seed systems.

Speakers included:

- **Wendy Jahn**, National Manager, Seed Section, Canadian Food Inspection Agency
- **Ruihong Guo**, Branch Chief, United States Department of Agriculture
- **Aurelia Nicault**, Programme Officer, Trade and Agriculture Directorate, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

The session was moderated by **Jennifer Scott, Seeds Canada**, and provided valuable perspectives on regulatory frameworks, certification systems and international alignment.

On 23 and 24 June 2026, ISTA Technical Committees (TCOMs) met in joint, parallel open and closed working sessions. These meetings brought together TCOM members - specialists from laboratories, universities & research institutions, regulatory authorities and industry organisations - to discuss ongoing projects, review technical developments and discuss internationally recognised seed testing procedures.





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The open meetings covered a wide range of technical areas, including Advanced Technologies, Bulking and Sampling, the Editorial Board of Seed Science and Technology, Rules, Germination, Moisture, GMO, Nomenclature, Proficiency Testing, Flower Seed Testing, Seed Health, Statistics, Storage, Tetrazolium, Variety, Wild Species, Purity, Vigour, and Forest Tree and Shrub Seed.

A dedicated session on **“The Use of AI in Seed Testing and Seed Testing Research”** highlighted ISTA’s commitment to evaluating emerging technologies while maintaining scientific rigour. Presentations explored artificial intelligence models, statistical considerations, advanced technology applications and the use of AI tools in seed testing workflows.

The closed parallel sessions allowed specialised committees, auditors and designated members to focus on detailed technical discussions and ongoing activities supporting ISTA’s mission.



In 2024 ISTA and the National Seed Association of Rwanda (NASR) signed a Letter of Collaboration (LoC), to help the national Seed Testing Laboratory (RW02) to become accredited. As an accreditation body, ISTA could not directly train their staff, but together with NASR found the right trainers and training programmes. This LoC was prolonged until 2028 with the goal of RW02 achieving accreditation before the ISTA Congress 2028 in Kigali.



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A highlight of the social programme was the ISTA Gala Dinner held on **Wednesday, 24 June 2026**, at **The Hudson in Calgary**.



Ernest Allen and Sergio Pasquini took part in a traditional White Hat Ceremony. The White Hat is a symbol for Calgary. After being sworn in as honorary ambassadors of Calgary, both were officially presented with their White Hats-earning the right to proudly wear this distinctive symbol of the city.

The evening provided delegates with an opportunity to mingle and connect beyond the technical programme, strengthen professional relationships, and celebrate the achievements of the global ISTA community.



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A band added to the festive atmosphere, taking special care to uplift the spirits of our dear guests.



The event reflected the welcoming spirit of Calgary and the collaborative nature of ISTA, bringing together professionals from across the world in an atmosphere of exchange and friendship.





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The final day of the Annual Meeting, **Thursday, 25 June 2026**, featured the ISTA Ordinary General Meeting.

During the meeting, ISTA Designated Members gathered to discuss matters related to the governance and future direction of the Association. Delegates considered reports from ISTA leadership, reviewed ongoing activities and addressed topics important to the continued development of international seed testing standards. Besides the finances of the organisation, the Rules Process was the highlight of the meeting. Janek Bartel guided the delegates through this process. His first Rules Session, as the new Rules Chair. Other topics with special attention were wild species, the Strategic Advisory Panel, and a new approach for seed health accreditation.



The 2026 Annual Meeting of the International Seed Testing Association in Calgary demonstrated the strength of the ISTA family and the spirit of the international seed community in advancing seed quality, innovation and scientific excellence through collaboration and cooperation.



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ISTA extends its sincere appreciation to the Canadian host organisations, the **Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), CFIA Saskatoon Laboratory, CFIA Ottawa Plant and Seed Pathology Laboratory, Seeds Canada, 20/20 Seed Labs Inc., and SGS Canada Inc.**, for their invaluable support, collaboration and contributions to the success of the meeting.

The dedication of these organisations, together with the active engagement of ISTA members and participants from around the world, created a successful and memorable Annual Meeting experience.

As the seed sector continues to evolve, the collaborations and knowledge exchanged during the 2026 ISTA Annual Meeting will contribute to strengthening international seed testing practices and supporting sustainable agriculture worldwide.

ISTA wishes to welcome everybody next year in Angers, France.

For additional materials from the 2026 ISTA Annual Meeting, please visit the event page available in our past events section [here](#).