



International Seed Testing Association

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ISTA Strategy 2016-2019

This document was prepared by the Executive Committee of the Association and is endorsed by the Executive Committee for discussion and consideration at the upcoming Ordinary General Meeting of the Association.

It is submitted to all ISTA Designated Authorities, ISTA Members and ISTA Observer Organisations for information two months prior to the ISTA Ordinary General Meeting 2016.

It will be discussed at the 31st ISTA Congress and voted on at the Ordinary General Meeting 2016, to be held on Tuesday, 21 June 2016 in Tallinn, Estonia.

Strategic plan for the International Seed Testing Association 2016-2019

Introduction

Founded in 1924, with the aim of developing and publishing standard procedures in the field of seed testing, ISTA now has 226 member laboratories in 82 countries/distinct economies, of which 136 are ISTA Accredited Laboratories. ISTA membership is a truly global network.

ISTA's vision is: "uniformity in seed quality evaluation worldwide". The objects of the Association are laid down in Article 3 of the Articles of the International Seed Testing Association¹ (ISTA) as the primary purpose and secondary purposes:

- a) The primary purpose of the Association is to develop, adopt and publish standard procedures for sampling and testing seeds, and to promote uniform application of these procedures for evaluation of seeds moving in international trade.
- b) The secondary purposes of the Association are actively to promote research in all areas of seed science and technology, including sampling, testing, storing, processing and distributing seeds to encourage variety (cultivar) certification, to participate in conferences and training courses aimed at furthering these objectives, and to establish and maintain liaison with other organisations having common or related interests in seed.

The strategy detailed below is aimed at implementing the primary and the secondary purposes of the Association to guarantee the continuity of the Association and to adapt to the evolution in the environment within which ISTA operates.

Today, in application of the Articles, there is no doubt that the International Rules for Seed Testing (ISTA Rules) are an international standard reference. The ISTA Rules are recommended for national and international trade by many national regulations and international systems, such as the OECD certification seed scheme, EU regulations and many national seed laws. The seed industry also recommends the ISTA Rules in the "*ISF Rules and Usages for the Trade in Seed for Sowing Purpose*".

¹ The Articles of the International Seed Testing Association (ISTA): Adopted at the 30th ISTA Congress in Antalya, Turkey on 18 June 2013, and amended at subsequent Ordinary General Meetings, these articles supersede the previous ISTA Constitution adopted at the Fourth International Seed Testing Congress in Cambridge, on 10 July 1924 and amended at subsequent Ordinary Meetings. The current Articles were amended at the ISTA Annual Meeting 2014, Edinburgh, United Kingdom on 19 June 2014.

The ISTA Rules are supported by the strong pillars built in ISTA over the years:

- The ISTA **Technical Committees** comprise more than 255 seed experts and scientists. They develop new methods, lead validation studies that validate new methods and methods for new species, and propose new Rules for seed testing every year to be voted on at the Ordinary General Meeting for standardisation.
- The links to **science** which facilitate and stimulate innovative research contributing to the development of new and improved methods in seed sampling and testing.
- The strong support of the **Designated Authorities**. Through participation in ISTA and in voting for the ISTA Rules, they guarantee the official recognition of the ISTA seed testing methods for national and international regulations.
- The strengthened links with the **industry** to ensure that the progress in seed testing and sampling fits the needs of the seed sector.
- The **ISTA accreditation** scheme, combined with the **Proficiency Test (PT) programme**, is a guarantee for harmonized results and the competence of accredited laboratories worldwide.
- The Orange International Seed Lot Certificate and the Blue International Seed Sample Certificate are the materialization of all that ISTA provides: expertise in seed sampling and testing, links to seed science, input of industry, and official support, all recognized by ISTA accreditation.
- The **collaboration** with other **international organisations** built over the years and recently strengthening helps to promote harmonisation.

All these achievements require strong means in terms of:

- **Personal engagement**, provided by voluntary active ISTA members and non members, and supported by the permanent staff of the Secretariat.
- **Solid finances**, to support the technical work, the accreditation scheme, the Proficiency Test programme and the Secretariat.
- **Communication and training tools** available for members and open to the seed community worldwide, supported by proactive marketing in ISTA.

ISTA must continue to fulfill the primary and second purposes laid down in the Articles, but we have to be more ambitious and develop ISTA beyond the basic mission. The purpose of this Strategy 2016–2019 is to set out the goals, implement the Articles, and propose further developments for the coming period. The idea is not only to plan a three-year strategy but also to look to the long term, covering nine years (three triennia), giving a global view of where ISTA wants to go.

As with any long-term plan, this will be subject to revision to follow the evolution of the environment that ISTA operates in.

The nine-year strategy 2016–2025 includes four key assumptions that will guide ISTA into the third decade of the 21st century:

1. ISTA is the leading international organisation in developing and publishing sampling and seed testing methods for trade, national and international regulations, export and import.
2. ISTA is a leading international organisation for cooperation in building seed testing capacity in all regions of the world.
3. ISTA has a consolidated role as an international accreditation body in seed sampling and seed testing, recognizing competence of any organisation or laboratory involved.
4. ISTA is a leading international organisation for seed science and technology, where innovative research links scientific developments and applications in seed sampling and testing, and allows the requirements of the seed sector to be met.

The strategic plan for the triennium 2016–2019 flows directly from these four key directions. To achieve these, the Executive Committee has defined six key goals that will make major strides to accomplish the general aims of ISTA. These can be translated into actions for each of the six key areas. The planned actions are presented in order of priority. For information, the priority order of the items is coming from the analysis of the survey sent to the membership.

1. Goal: Develop scientifically sound rules and methods for seed sampling and testing that meet the needs of the seed sector

Planned actions:

1. Support the Technical Committees (TCOM) by incentivizing TCOM membership, to attract more Contributors to the TCOMs
2. Strengthen the 'basic' tests of purity, other seed determination, moisture and germination including developing methods for new species
3. Develop additional sampling methods, where required
4. Develop and implement new tests based on new technologies
5. Facilitate access to the Rules by encouraging translation of the Rules into more languages

2. Goal: Contribute and develop collaborations to increase seed sampling and testing capacity worldwide

Planned actions:

1. Assess the needs for sampler and analyst training
2. Continue to organize training sessions, including workshops and develop training
3. Increase the membership

4. Develop marketing and promotion into regions to increase recruitment of new members and accreditation of laboratories
5. Improve communication via the ISTA website and social media

3. Goal: Strengthen and adapt the accreditation system to ensure that it meets the needs of stakeholders and accredited laboratories

Planned actions:

1. Review and lower the cost of ISTA accreditation for accredited member labs, in accordance with the service provided
2. Review the structure and scopes of accreditation for seed sampling and testing, to meet the needs of stakeholders and member laboratories, and relate this to the cost
3. Implement the option for electronic certificates
4. Review the option to recognise laboratories that already have ISO 17025 accreditation as equivalent to ISTA accreditation, thereby reducing the number of laboratory audits and thus accreditation costs

4. Goal: Strengthen the science and technology underpinning ISTA to support innovative research and to link scientific developments and applications in seed sampling and testing, to allow the requirements of the seed sector to be met

Planned actions:

1. Seek collaborative opportunities with other seed science and technology organisations
2. Encourage the application of new technologies, where appropriate, in seed sampling and testing, to increase efficiency and meet the needs of stakeholders
3. Build science capability by attracting more scientists and researchers into ISTA work
4. Build science capability through delivery of information technology

5. Goal: Seek and understand the needs of members and stakeholders in order to respond to those needs

Planned actions:

1. Increase consultation with Designated Authorities, member laboratories and industry, with the aim of strengthening their role
2. Increase consultation with organisations and stakeholders involved in the seed industry, with aim of strengthening their role

6. Manage ISTA affairs

Planned actions:

1. Strengthen and adapt the organisation and role of the Secretariat to support the Association
2. Define and allocate the available means to the priority actions defined above
3. Increase the membership, supported by marketing actions
4. Develop promotion and communication tools to promote the Association worldwide
5. Provide digital tools for training and facilitating the technical work of the TCOMs