



**International Seed Testing Association**

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**Document OGM19-12**

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# **Strategic plan for the International Seed testing Association 2019-2022**

This document was prepared by the Executive Committee of the Association and is endorsed 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 prior to the ISTA Ordinary Meeting 2019.

It will be discussed and voted on at the Ordinary Meeting 2019, to be held on Thursday, July 02, 2019 in Hyderabad, India under Agenda point 14: *Any other business raised by consent of the Executive Committee.*

## Introduction:

Founded in 1924, with the aim of developing and publishing standard procedures in the field of seed testing, ISTA now has 230 member laboratories and 138 accredited laboratories in 79 countries/distinct economies. ISTA membership is a truly global network.

The Vision of ISTA is Uniformity in seed quality evaluation worldwide. The objects of the Association are laid down in the Article 3 of the Articles of the International Seed Testing Association<sup>1</sup> (ISTA) as 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 second 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 evolutions 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*".

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

- strong support and input from the **Designated Authorities**, through participation in ISTA and in voting the Rules for seed testing, guaranteeing official recognition of the ISTA seed testing methods as tools for the national and international regulations.
- **Technical Committees** of ISTA comprising over 255 seed experts and scientists. These develop new methods, adopt new or developing technologies, undertake validation studies that validate new methods and propose new Rules for seed testing every year that are voted on at the Ordinary General Meeting.
- **ISTA accreditation** scheme combined with the **Proficiency Test (PT) programme** guaranteeing the competency and the harmonized results of the accredited Laboratories worldwide.
- the link to **Science and Technology** which facilitates and stimulates innovative research contributing to the development of improved methods in seed sampling and testing.
- strong links to **Industry** to ensure that progress in seed testing and sampling fits the needs of the seed sector.
- the Orange and Blue International Seed Certificates that are the outcome of all that ISTA provides: expertise in seed sampling and testing, links to seed science and technologies, input of industry, and official support, all recognized by the ISTA accreditation.
- **collaboration** with other **international organisations** built over the years to help promote harmonisation.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 July 10, 1924 and amended at subsequent Ordinary Meetings. The current Articles were amended at the ISTA Annual Meeting 2018, Sapporo, Japan on 14 June 2018.

All these achievements require strong means in terms of:

- Time provided by the voluntary active members and non-members of the Association supported by the permanent staff of the secretariat.
- Strong finances to support the administration of the Association (Secretariat), technical work, and method development including new technologies, the accreditation scheme and the proficiency test programme.
- Communication and training tools available for the members and available to the seed community worldwide, supported by the proactive marketing in ISTA.

ISTA must continue to fulfill the primary and second purposes laid down in the Articles, while at the same time continuing to develop ISTA beyond these basic missions. The purpose of this Strategy 2019 to 2022 is to define the goals to implement the Articles and to propose further developments for the coming triennium. For the 2016-2019 strategy the idea was to not only to plan a 3-year strategy but also to look to long term over three triennia covering nine years, giving a global view of where ISTA wants to go. The 2019-2022 Strategy will also look over three triennia taking into account the experience of the 2016-2019 triennia and the environment ISTA is operating in in 2019.

The draft nine-year strategy 2016-2025, included four key assumptions that will guide ISTA into the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

1. ISTA is the leading International organisation setting and publishing seed 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 and capability in all regions of the world.
3. ISTA has a consolidating role as an international accreditation body in seed sampling and seed testing recognizing competency of any laboratory or entity involved.
4. ISTA is the leading international organisation for seed science and technology where innovative research makes the link between scientific developments and applications in seed sampling and testing and enables meeting the needs of the seed sector.

The 2016-2019 triennium has seen progress in all of these areas with, for example, the continued evolution of the ISTA Rules and their translation into Spanish, workshops and seminar / symposia over the triennium, growth in the number of ISTA-accredited laboratories and Seed Science and Technology moving to open access. None-the-less these four key assumptions remain relevant for the next nine years (2019-2028).

As in 2016-2019 the draft strategic plans for the triennium 2019-2022 flow from the four key assumptions above. For 2016-2019 the Executive Committee with the membership defined six key goals that will make major strides toward accomplishing the general aims of ISTA, with actions for each of the six goals. While the six key goals are unchanged the planned actions have been updated to reflect the responses to the survey to members and other stakeholders in July 2018 and the environment ISTA is operating in in 2019.

#### **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's) to attract more contributors to the TCOM's as members and through collaboration.
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 tests and methods based on science and new technologies and facilitate the application of new or emerging technologies into current methods.

5. Facilitate the access to rules by encouraging translation of the ISTA Rules into more languages.

**2. Goal: contribute and develop collaborations to increase seed testing capacity and capability worldwide**

Planned actions:

1. Develop ISTA training programme to facilitate implementation of sampling and testing methods:
  - Online
  - Continue to organize training sessions including workshops
  - Develop capability to train trainers regionally
2. Provide online access to ISTA Handbooks.
3. Grow ISTA membership sustainably.
4. Continue marketing and promotion into regions to attract new members.
5. Improve communication within the membership and stakeholders including social media.

**3. Goal: Strengthen the accreditation system to ensure it meets the needs of ISTA members and other stakeholders**

Planned actions:

1. Maintain and develop the accreditation services, providing high quality audits and proficiency tests, and training in Quality Assurance.
  2. Continue to evaluate and improve the structure and scope of accreditation for seed sampling and testing, to meet the needs of stakeholders, member laboratories and sampling entities, and relate this to the cost.
  3. Continue the process aimed at introducing electronic certificates.
  4. Investigate options to cooperate with other accreditation bodies with the aim to improve the efficiency of the ISTA accreditation system.
  5. Investigate opportunities to expand the Proficiency Tests programme with the inclusion of new kinds of test and species covered by the ISTA Rules.
- 4. Goal: Strengthen the Science and Technology underpinning ISTA to develop innovative research to make the link between scientific developments and applications in seed sampling and testing and to allow the requirements of the seed sector to be met**

Planned actions:

1. Develop mutually beneficial collaborative opportunities with other science and technology organisations.
2. Encourage the application of new and emerging technologies where appropriate in seed sampling and testing to increase efficiency and that meet the needs of stakeholders.
3. Build science capability through attracting more scientists and researchers into ISTA work either directly or through collaboration.
4. Facilitate science capability through information technology.

**5. Goal: Seek the needs of members, stakeholders**

Planned actions:

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

## **6. Manage ISTA affairs**

Planned actions:

1. Promote and communicate the Association worldwide.
2. Provide tools for training and facilitating the technical work of the TCOMs.
3. Manage finances of the association to provide resources to achieve the goals