

**11th Southern and Eastern Africa Cotton Forum (SEACF)
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Role of Knowledge Bank and Advisory Services in Crop protection

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It is my great pleasure to participate in this 11th Southern and Eastern Africa Cotton Forum, which brings together stakeholders to share experiences and forge partnerships towards promoting cotton production through collaborative research and technology transfer.

Before I proceed with my topic, I wish to point out that CABI, in partnership with Kenya Agricultural Research Institute, Cotton Development Authority (CODA) and the Mozambique Cotton Institute (IAM), among other stakeholders has been undertaking a project on *Improving Cotton Production Efficiency in Kenya and Mozambique*. This work has been made possible through financial and technical support from the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC), the European Union (through its All ACP Agricultural Commodities Programme (AAACP)), the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC) and the governments of Kenya and Mozambique, through the line Ministries, particularly the Ministry of Agriculture. Through dissemination of a training programme on Integrated Crop Management, positive results in terms of improvement in cotton yields are now being realised by the participating cotton farmers. However, the fluctuations in the price of seed cotton remain a major challenge, something that could be discussed in this forum.

Turning to my topic of the day, CABI has been at the leading edge of information and communications science from its first abstract journal in 1913 - the Review of Applied Entomology, among others. Today, CABI continues to help address the challenges of food security by helping farmers to grow more and lose less! Most of our work has been on promoting the use of integrated pest control management (IPM) which is one way of managing the environment sustainably through reduced use of pesticides.

Faced with the enormous challenge of making a real difference in the more than 1 Billion people who go hungry worldwide, CABI has initiated innovative ways of sustainably delivering results on the ground. This entails working with farmers, and providing them with tools and techniques that improve their livelihoods in a rapidly changing global climate!

Today, CABI is championing a new initiative to support improved plant health at community, country and global level, the main focus: **lose less feed more!** This CABI-led global alliance known as **Plantwise (PW)**, seeks to integrate two key elements:

- a) Establishment and/or Strengthening of National plant health systems in developing countries - at the heart of which, there are PW Plant Clinics that provide practical advice to farmers on pest and disease management, and;
- b) Establishment of a global PW Knowledge Bank of plant pests and diseases.

Together, this brings high-quality historical and up-to-date plant health information and pest and disease distribution data from a wide range of international sources and content partners, augmented by validated observations from the plant clinics. This is a comprehensive source of plant health intelligence and will be used by governments and other organizations as the basis of a global vigilance system, enabling accurate pest risk forecasts, with mitigation and adaptation planning prior to pest outbreaks.

Plantwise, Plant Clinics initiative has already been launched in DRC, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda, with an ultimate goal to improve farmer productivity and livelihoods through reduced crop losses! However, Plantwise, Knowledge Bank initiative is only being piloted in Kenya in 2012. Such support is critical in Kenya for example, where approximately 80% of the land mass is classified as dry land, and where the remaining 20% arable land must be used efficiently to feed a population projected to increase to approximately 60 million by 2030.

As it is, feeding our rapidly growing population is a daunting task for the country – even without the issues that pests, diseases and climate change portend. Unfortunately, plant health is often ignored despite the destructive

effects of plant pests and diseases on crop productivity, and despite the fact that smallholder farmers in Africa lose close to 40% of their produce to pests and diseases. Worse still, climate change is expected to have a major impact on the distribution of plant pests and diseases that will further frustrate many developing countries' efforts towards realising food security.

Finally, I thank you all once again for your commitment to be part of SEACF membership. CABI believes in good partnerships and so we look forward to working closely with all of you in addressing some of these development challenges facing our smallholder farmers in Africa.