

Nearly 300 delegates from across the globe have gathered in Kigali for the 25th African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) Annual Congress, which opens this Monday at the Kigali Serena Hotel.

The event, which runs until March 6, 2025, brings together key figures in the seed sector, with a focus on advancing Africa's agricultural future.

The congress will officially be inaugurated by Eric Rwigamba, Rwanda's Minister of State for Agriculture and Animal Resources, marking a milestone in AFSTA's mission to drive innovation in Africa's seed industry.

This year's theme, "25 Years Strong: Innovating Quality Seed for Africa's Sustainable Agriculture," highlights the importance of innovation, collaboration, and sustainability in Africa's agricultural sector.

The event serves as a major gathering for seed traders, producers, policymakers, and stakeholders from 48 countries. It covers a broad range of topics in the seed value chain, with a particular focus on future trends that will help position Africa as a leading global hub for seed trade.

Delegates will discuss key issues such as scaling up technologies, improving plant breeding innovation, enhancing plant variety protection systems, and strengthening public-private partnerships to unlock opportunities for seed SMEs.

"This congress is not only a celebration of our 25 years of achievement, but also a platform to discuss the future of seed trade in Africa," said Amadou Sarr, President of AFSTA. "Our new strategic plan, under the leadership of Secretary General Dr. Yacouba Diallo, will be instrumental in fostering industry innovation and ensuring the sustainability of the association."

Dr. Diallo, who took over as AFSTA's Secretary General, emphasized that the event in Kigali offers a unique opportunity to reflect on the changes and challenges facing Africa's seed industry. "The seed sector in Africa is evolving due to factors like climate change, new farming technologies, and evolving market demands. This congress will help us chart a path forward," he said.

For Rwanda's seed industry, the congress is an opportunity to further integrate technical innovations and institutional collaboration. Innocent Namuhoranye, Chairperson of the National Seed Association of Rwanda, noted that the event aligns

with Rwanda's shift from being a market actor to becoming a market enabler in the seed sector. "Public-private partnerships are key to improving seed quality and accessibility," he said.

The congress also highlights the importance of regional cooperation. Representatives from key organizations, including the International Seed Federation (ISF), the African Union, and the World Vegetable Centre, have confirmed their participation.

As AFSTA celebrates its 25th anniversary, the congress in Kigali promises to be a turning point for Africa's seed industry, providing a platform for meaningful dialogue and collaboration on the future of agriculture across the continent.