2018 AKTC FIELD DAY AND GART SEED FAIR

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“Which seed company sells the best seed for this region? What is the best insecticide to manage the armyworm infestation in my field? Who is supplying the most durable agricultural machinery at affordable prices in our country? Does the Ministry of Agriculture have any programme that supports farmers in potato growing and market gardening? Is there any institution that can train my cooperative on how to handle their farming enterprise as a business?”

These and many more are the plights and/or questions of the more than 1.4 million small holder Zambian farmers out there.

To rise to such challenging questions, the Zambian- German Agricultural Knowledge and Training Centre (AKTC) in collaboration with its cooperating partner, the Golden Valley Agricultural Research Trust (GART) hosted the first ever 2018 combined field day and seed fair under the theme “Promotion of Climate Smart Agriculture for Improved Crop Productivity and Income”.

The event took place on the 1st of November 2018, at GART-Chaloshi Farm around the AKTC 10 hectare pivot situated along the great north road in Chisamba.

It was wholly organized by the combined efforts of the event’s committee comprising personnel from the participating institutions including: the Agricultural Knowledge and Training Centre (AKTC), the Golden Valley Agricultural Research Trust (GART), the Conservation Farming Unit (CFU), the Zambia Agricultural Research Institute (ZARI) and the Seed Control and Certification Institute (SCCI).

Gracing the event was Zambia’s Minister of Agriculture Hon. Michael Katambo and the Central Province, Provincial Minister Hon. Sydney Mushanga. Other special guests attending the event included a delegation from the German Embassy accompanied by the CEO of the Agriculture & Finance Consultants (AFC) Mr. Johannes Buschmeier from Bonn in Germany (since 2014, AFC is implementing the AKTC), Zambia’s Central Province, Provincial Permanent Secretary Mr. Chanda Kabwe, two District Commissioners (DC) for Chibombo and Chisamba Districts Mr. Barnabas Musopelo and Mr. Martin Chowa respectively and many more other senior government officials.
A total of 18 exhibiting companies were present at this year’s field day and seed fair. Exhibiting different products and services ranging from agricultural machinery, agro chemicals, seed varieties and fertilizers to over 1,000 attendees, most of them coming from Central, Lusaka, Southern and Northern Provinces of Zambia.

Among the exhibiting companies that participated in the event, four were AKTC private sector partners and these included Bayer AG, BHBW, Grimme and KSB-pumps. The event provided a platform for these companies to showcase their products and services to the general public.

Bayer AG had an opportunity to showcase and market their agrochemical products to various attendees. On the other hand, BHBW and Grimme did some field demonstrations using their agricultural machinery such as the Massey Ferguson tractors and soya beans planter by BHBW, potato equipment such as ridger, planter, haulm cutter and potato harvester machine by Grimme. KSB-pumps did some exhibitions of their irrigation and pumping systems at the newly renovated pump house situated at the AKTC-BayWa r.e. photovoltaic system.

Moreover, AKTC (the host) lined up a number of activities for the day. The successful activities for AKTC’s field day included a lead tour of farmers, students and lecturer’s to the solar photovoltaic system through to AKTC office building and the AKTC trainee accommodation. A “GPS use in Agriculture” training was also conducted by Mr. Michael Schwarzer who is an AKTC short term expert. The trainees for this particular training were the University of Zambia (UNZA) agriculture students and their lectures. At the AKTC stand, about 150 lucky farmers were given free handouts on “soya beans growing process”, as a way of helping farmers to increase their crop productivity for the next farming season. Furthermore, farmers who visited the AKTC stand were introduced to the various short course programmes offered for trainings at AKTC.

Additionally, a demonstration to determine the effects of climate smart agriculture was carried out in the AKTC 10 hectare pivot by the AKTC Crop Production Expert, Mr. Leslie De Jager. Half of this field was planted in a conventional way in which the Stover was burnt. After burning the Stover (crop residue), land preparation was then done using a disc harrow and the field was planted with soya beans seed. The other half of the field was planted the climate smart way. Soya beans seed was planted directly into the stover without burning or disking the land.

However, this was the first time AKTC carried out this trial and as such; we are looking forward to the results of this comparison. With the results of this trial, AKTC will be able to provide proper advice to our farmers pertaining to climate smart agriculture.
While AKTC is leading the activities of the field day, GART on the other hand leads the activities of the seed fair. Companies that showcased their products this day included GART itself (the host), CFU, ZARI, SCCI, AFRISEED, SEED.CO, KAMANO, K2, MONSANTO, MRI (Syngenta), PANNAR, PIONEER and ZAMSEED. Different seed varieties for different crops were showcased and marketed by these companies. The major seed varieties that were exhibited included maize, soya beans and groundnut seeds which are also the major crops grown by Zambian farmers.

In a nutshell, the 2018 AKTC field day and GART seed fair was one of its kind in the history of the two organizing institutions (AKTC and GART). As AKTC, we are grateful to our sponsors for this year’s combined field day and seed fair. We are also grateful to the positive responses from the invited exhibiting companies as well as all the attendees. Further, we hope that this year’s field day and seed fair was a beneficial platform to both the exhibitors and the farmers themselves to question and exchange new knowledge and technologies advancing in the agricultural sector.

AKTC, 2018.