

Report to the National Plant Germplasm Coordinating Committee

June 1, 2017

Submitted by Chet Boruff, Chief Executive Officer

AOSCA - The Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies

I am sorry that I am unable to attend the meeting, but I hope that this brief report will highlight some of the activities of AOSCA and its member agencies that may overlap with other organizations represented on the NPGCC. AOSCA and seed certifying agencies recognize the importance of maintaining a close working relationship with other NPGCC members and appreciate the opportunity to provide input.

We are in the midst of planning our upcoming AOSCA annual meeting that will be held in Cleveland, Ohio, June 11-14. In addition to the general sessions and commodity committee meetings, the AOSCA Advisory Committee will meet to review the actions taken by our membership and provide an update from across the seed industry. Eric Young represents the Experiment Stations and our members always appreciate his attendance at AOSCA meetings and the report he brings.

AOSCA's membership includes seed certifying agencies from 44 states and seven other nations, including Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. The registration list for the Cleveland meeting includes attendees from most of the states and four countries. The delegates will be considering several topics that I will briefly explain below.

Seed certification uses field inspections to look for phenotypic characteristics to identify off-type plants and in many varieties, it is getting increasingly more difficult to identify differences in the field. Of course, some genetic traits, such as herbicide tolerance, are impossible to identify without further testing in the laboratory. In the case of wheat, once the seed is submitted for routine seed testing, it is difficult to distinguish between red and white seed coats, especially when this is often impacted by environment and a pure variety may exhibit slight variations in seed color from one sample to the next. Red wheat in white wheat shipments can disrupt the grain trade in some parts of the U.S., primarily the northwestern States. To address this, AOSCA changed its standards last year by including a provision to assess all wheat seed samples for seed color. However, acting on advice given by the Advisory Committee, implementing this standard change was postponed until this year and in fact, the entire matter will be taken up again at the upcoming meeting. Both sides of this matter have submitted lots of information to support their case and we expect robust discussion about this matter. We will also welcome input from the seed industry and AOSCA advisors.

Committees that deal with grasses and sorghum will consider some minor changes dealing with isolation distances and references within the AOSCA Standards. Even though these seem to be minor, we go to great lengths to make sure that the seed industry and seed certification agencies have ample input and we work with the USDA to make sure that changes are in compliance with the US Federal Seed Act.

A few years ago, AOSCA implemented seed certification standards for industrial hemp, since limited research and development was included in the current US Farm Bill and it was evident there was a growing interest in this new, but old, crop that was commonly grown in the U.S. during World War II. AOSCA has refined its seed certifying standards in the years since and this year, we will be discussing a formalize variety review process to handle the increasing numbers of new varieties being developed and imported. To say that industrial hemp is a challenge would be an understatement in several states.

Later this month, I will be representing AOSCA at the OECD Seed Schemes Annual Meeting, as well as meetings for ASTA and the joint meeting of AOSA/SCST/ISTA.