



Seed Regulatory and Testing Division Summer 2024



ITEMS OF INTEREST IN SEED

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RECENT ACTIVITIES

SRTD WILL SOON RELEASE THE UPDATED AGRICULTURAL HANDBOOK 30

SRTD staff have updated Agricultural Handbook 30: Testing Agricultural and Vegetable Seed. The handbook will serve as a resource to new and experienced seed analysts. The previous version was printed in 1952. Testing procedures, scientific names, and laboratory equipment photos were updated.

USDA TO USE ELECTROPHORESIS PROTIEEN TESTING TO DISTINGUISH KENTUCKY 31 TALL FESCUE VARIETIES

Beginning October 1st, seed lots that are labeled as Kentucky 31 Tall Fescue and are submitted to AMS as a complaint sample will be tested using the IEF gel method instead of the traditional field grow-out test. Interstate shippers that receive a Kentucky 31 violation notice based on an IEF gel test may request consideration from SRTD for a field grow-out test. If approved, and a trial is conducted, the results of the field trial will be used to determine compliance status. Where field test results corroborate the IEF gel results, the interstate shipper will be responsible for the TTV costs in addition to any penalty amounts. Where

field tests do not corroborate IEF gel results, the shipper will not be charged.

ASSOCIATION OF OFFICIAL SEED ANALYSTS/ SOCIETY OF COMMERCIAL SEED TECHNOLOGISTS ANNUAL MEETING

The Association of Official Seed Analysts (AOSA)/Society of Commercial Seed Technologists (SCST) held a joint annual meeting in Rapid City, South Dakota from June 1 – 6, 2024. This year’s meeting attracted a large number of analysts, due in part to its proximity to areas like Mt. Rushmore and Badlands National Park. The weekend before the meeting included workshops on germination and method validation and tolerances.

The two organizations are moving closer to combining into a single non-profit entity. Much of the Long Range Planning meeting was devoted to this topic. Based on feedback from a membership survey, most analysts are in favor of the merger, as it will create cost savings and reduce redundancy for the committees and executive boards. Items discussed during the Long Range Planning meeting that still require some work include finalizing the by-laws for the new organization; deciding on a membership dues structure; identifying permanent, standing, and ad hoc committees; and deciding where to incorporate the new organization. The target for final consolidation is 2026.

There were 12 proposals for changes to the AOSA Rules. One was withdrawn at the request of the germination committee and the remaining proposals passed with a large majority. Half of the

proposals regarded updates on common names in Volume 3. Other changes included the addition of balansa clover to the rules, increasing the working weights for sorghum, and addition of organic media as a method for pea germination.

For more information regarding this article, contact Laboratory Manager Todd Erickson, (704) 810-8877; todd.erickson@usda.gov.

OECD SEED SCHEMES ANNUAL MEETING

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Seed Schemes is an international agreement involving 62 countries. It was created for the purpose of promoting the use of high-quality seed around the world through the establishment of harmonized standards for certified seed moving in international trade. AMS serves as the National Designated Authority, representing the U.S. to the Seed Schemes and coordinating the OECD Seed Schemes activities performed by 30 state Seed Certification Agencies (SCA's) under a cooperative agreement.

2024 Annual Meeting Outcomes:

The Annual Meeting of OECD Seed Schemes was held in Nice, France on June 13-14, 2024, and was preceded by Ad Hoc Working Groups (AWHG) meetings on June 10 and the Technical Working Group (TWG) on June 11.

Pending confirmation by the Committee on Agriculture (CoAg) and the OECD Council, the following approved changes will go into effect on January 1, 2025:

- The Action Plan based on the 2023 Strategic Plan.
- Accession of Burkina-Faso to participate in the Cereal, Maize, and Sorghum & Pearl Millet Schemes.
- Accession of Paraguay to participate in the Cereal and Grass & Legume Schemes.
- Reinstatement of Zimbabwe to the Maize Scheme. Zimbabwe's request for reinstatement to the Sorghum & Pearl Millet, Cereal, Grass & Legume, and Crucifer and Other Oil & Fibre Seed Schemes will be reevaluated in 2025 after additional training for Zimbabwean certification inspectors.

- Taxonomic update in the Sorghum & Pearl Millet Scheme, specifically the elimination of Sorghum spp. as a recognized species.
- The progress report on the work by the software contractor on the Digital Hub Pilot Project, including fixes based on initial testing and phase 2 and 3 development.
- Several updated and new training modules for various species and an updated pool of trainers who could be utilized to conduct capacity building trainings in participating countries or potential new countries.
- Updates to the list of recognized Biochemical & Molecular Techniques (BMT) for evaluation of varietal identity.
- Monitoring tools that can be used by evaluation teams for assessment of potential new countries or for self-evaluation by current participating countries.
- Clarification to the selection process, duties, and terms of the Bureau officers which keeps the regional distribution of bureau members. However, it changes the start of the term of the newly elected Vice-Chair to January of the following year rather than waiting an entire year to the next annual meeting.
- Establishment of two new AHWGs to (1) evaluate possible regrouping of species within the current schemes and/or creation of new schemes, (2) consider changing the standards for off-types from a number of plants per area to a percentage basis in some species.

U.S. Program Notes:

Assessment Fees:

As of July 1, the current U.S. OECD Seed Schemes Program assessment fees are 42 cents per hundredweight for corn; 34 cents per hundredweight for cereals, cotton, soybean, sunflower, and sorghum; and 32 cents per hundredweight for all other species and mixtures. Program revenue and expenses will be reviewed this fall and a decision on the fee structure to be effective July 1, 2025, will be announced by January 2025. Due to continuing inflation pressures and fluctuating volumes of OECD certified seed, another increase in 2025 is likely, but the exact amount is to be determined.

A new billing and fee collection process will begin with the CY2024 3rd quarter (July-September) cycle. The new process will give agencies some electronic payment options. Between now and

October 1, AMS will be working directly with agencies to get the necessary items in place to move forward.

The next meeting of the TWG is scheduled for week of January 21-23, 2025, at the OECD Headquarters conference center in Paris. The 2025 annual meeting is scheduled for June 16-20, 2025, in Hyderabad, India.

For more information regarding this article, contact OECD Manager Steve Malone at (704) 810-8888; stephen.malone@usda.gov.

ASSOCIATION OF OFFICIAL SEED CERTIFYING AGENCIES ANNUAL MEETING

The Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies (AOSCA) held its annual meeting on June 16-19, 2024, in Miramar Beach, Florida. The meeting was hosted by the Southern Seed Certification Service and Alabama Crop Improvement Association.

AOSCA's mission is "to promote and facilitate the movement of seed or plant products in local, national, and international markets through the coordinated efforts of official seed certification agencies acting to evaluate, document, and verify that a seed or plant product meets certain accepted standards." Under a Memorandum of Understanding, AOSCA is the official liaison with Seed Regulatory and Testing Division (SRTD) to ensure that seed certifying agencies meet or exceed the Certified Seed provisions of the Federal Seed Act.

OECD Manager Steve Malone and Regulatory Manager Lan Chi Trinh represented SRTD at the meeting. The AOSCA Advisory Committee meeting was held in early August via Zoom.

Participants in the General Membership meeting and the Standard Council discussed amendments to the existing AOSCA Standards Book. The revised Standards book is updated to a streamlined and consistent format which will promote uniformity by providing clarity. The new format has a user friendly index and links to important documents which will make future updates easier.

During the awards banquet, Ben Lang (former CEO of Minnesota Crop Improvement Association) and Randy Judd (former CEO of Michigan Crop

Improvement Association) were given the AOSCA Honorary Member Award.

Dates and locations for the 2025 AOSCA Annual Meeting and regional meetings will be posted on the AOSCA website <https://aosca.org>.

For more information regarding this article, contact Regulatory Manager Lan Chi Trinh at (704)810-7272; lan-chin.trinh@usda.gov.

ISTA ANNUAL MEETING 2024

SRTD Director Ernest Allen participated in the ISTA annual meeting on July 1-4, 2024, in Cambridge, UK. Mr. Allen served as the voting delegate on behalf of the Agricultural Marketing Service, which is the U.S. Designated Authority to ISTA.

The meeting started with a seminar on seed quality assurance and its important role in food and nutritional security. Key topics included discussions on seed longevity and genetic variation, seed storage, cryopreservation, mass sequencing as a tool to control plant diseases, and the benefits of variety traceability. The presentations for all topics can be found on the ISTA website (www.seedtest.org).

Select decisions approved during the Ordinary Meeting:

- ISTA annual membership fees for 2025 will remain unchanged. No increase was proposed by the Executive Committee or the Secretariat of the organization.
- ISTA members approved the use of electronic certificates (eCertificates) effective as of July 5, 2025. The membership set the cost of the eCertificates at 10.00 Swiss Francs per certificate.

Key takeaways from this decision:

- The current reporting system on blank paper ISTA certificates will continue to be available to laboratories that choose not to use the eCertificate system. These systems will operate in parallel.
- For laboratories that choose to use both systems, the laboratory must choose to report on either an eCertificate or use a blank ISTA paper certificate for each

sample. However, they cannot use both for the same sample.

- A paper pdf version of the eCertificate can be printed but not onto a blank ISTA paper certificate. The printable eCertificates will be in PDF format on the ISTA website and may be printed for receipt and filing purposes. Only eCertificates displayed on the website are valid ISTA certificates.
- ISTA eCertificates issued with a provisional status will automatically update on the website as the status changes.
- The ISTA Executive Committee approved a new Chair to lead the ISTA Rules Committee. Jodi Keeling has been involved with seed quality and ISTA for many years. Most of that time was spent working in the ISTA accredited Oregon State Seed Laboratory in the United States. Currently, she works for the Oregon Seed Certification Service and serves as an ISTA Technical Auditor.

Rules Changes for the *International Rules for Seed Testing*, 2025 Edition:

For the 2025 edition of the ISTA rules, technical committees submitted seven editorial corrections and 17 rule change proposals for consideration. Those proposals approved by the membership at the Cambridge, UK 2024 Ordinary General Meeting are summarized below. The complete record of voting is available on the ISTA website. Approved changes to the Rules will be incorporated into next Edition of the ISTA Rules, which will become effective 1 January 2025.

Part C. Rules Changes and New Methods Requiring a Vote

Chapter 2: Sampling

- Revised Table 2C to include minimum moisture weights.

Chapter 3: The purity analysis

- Table 3B Part 2 PSD 36. Revised to remove the requirement to examine the caryopsis of *Megathyrus*, *Panicum*, and *Digitaria* in PSD 36.
- Revision of PSD 15 to make it more inclusive by classifying a schizocarp more than one-half the original size.

Chapter 5: The germination test

- Clarified the accepted use of various paper growing mediums in germination testing.
- Expanded ISTAs list of species that exhibit hard seeds.
- Added a pre-soaking method for *Beta vulgaris*.
- Merged Table 5A Part 1 and Part 3 into Table 5A Part 1.

Chapter 7: Seed health testing methods

- Added a method to detect *Ascochyta rabiei* in *Cicer arietinum* (chickpea) seed (7-033).

Chapter 9: Determination of moisture content

- Added Table 2C to Chapter 9 as a point of reference.
- Clarified testing for ISTA recognized *Lupinus* species for moisture.

Chapter 15: Seed vigour testing

- Added a new species for the radicle emergence test.
- Added text clarifying the effect of temperature on final radicle emergence percentages.

For more information regarding this article, contact SRTD Director Ernest Allen at (704) 810-8884; ernest.allen@usda.gov.

ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN SEED CONTROL OFFICIALS ANNUAL MEETING

The Association of American Seed Control Official (AASCO) held its 38th annual meeting on July 16-18, 2024, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The meeting was attended by a total of 60 participants including State Seed Control Officials, seed companies, and representatives of several seed industry organizations.

S&T Deputy Administrator Ruihong Guo and SRTD Regulatory Manager Lan Chi Trinh gave updates on the 2024 AMS SRTD activities.

During the general session, Lan Chi Trinh presented on the Federal Seed Act, how SRTD enforces the Federal Seed Act, and issues related to labeling. The presentations generated lively discussions among the attendees.

There were several other interesting presentations given at the AASCO meetings. Topics included:

- Seed innovation and protection.
- Plant breeding and seed development.
- Seed labeling project and seed health database, to seed enhancement technologies.
- Germination standards for hemp in small seed packets.
- QR codes.
- Sampling high value seeds.
- Cover crops.
- Labeling that includes that phrase “Variety Not Stated”.

For more information regarding this article, contact Regulatory Manager Lan Chi Trinh at (704) 810-7272; lan-chin.trinh@usda.gov.

SEED TRAINING WORKSHOP IN GASTONIA, NC

SRTD held Seed Analysts Training Workshops in Gastonia, NC, on August 5-7, and August 12-14, 2024. Thirty-six seed analysts from State and private laboratories attended. The workshop focused on purity and identification of similar crop and weed species with emphasis on identification of noxious-weed seeds. Other topics included: seed and seedling structures, germination, botany terms, pure seed unit definitions, uniform blowing procedure, and various calculations.

Following the second workshop, the purity and germination exams were given to analysts to become either a Certified Seed Analyst (CSA) or a Registered Seed Technologist (RST).

The workshop promotes uniformity in testing by fostering greater compliance with State and Federal seed-labeling laws. The mission of the Federal Seed Act is to promote uniformity in seed laws and fair competition within the seed industry. This effort is supported by State seed control programs through authorization provided by cooperative agreements between the States and the USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).



Participants from the August 5-7 SRTD Seed Workshop. (AMS SRTD 2024)



Participants from the August 12-14 SRTD Seed Workshop. (AMS SRTD 2024)

For more information regarding this article, contact Laboratory Manager Todd Erickson, (704) 810-8877; todd.erickson@usda.gov.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- American Seed Trade Association Forage, Turf and Conservation Seed Conference
Kansas City, MO; October 30, 2024
- American Seed Trade Association Field Crop Seed Convention
December 10-13, 2024
- Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies Southern Regional Meeting
Savannah, GA; March 24-26, 2025
- Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies Western Regional Meeting
Hood River, OR; April 16-18, 2025
- ISTA Seed Symposium
Christchurch, New Zealand; May 4-5, 2025
- AOSA/SCST Annual Meeting
Missoula, MT; June 6-12, 2025

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2025 Seed Industry Policy and Rule Changes

All updates harmonize with the Federal Seed Act.

Association of Official Seed Analyst Rules for Testing Seeds	International Rules for Seed Testing	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Seed Schemes
<p>Added PSU definition and working weights for balansa clover.</p> <p>Increased the working weights for the purity analysis of sorghum and sorghum-sudangrass to 70g.</p> <p>Added organic growing media as an optional/alternative method for testing of field and garden pea.</p> <p>Clarified when the number of seeds found of other crop seeds and weed seeds are stated on the Report of Analysis. The number may be reported upon request or at the discretion of the laboratory.</p> <p>Reclassified <i>Trifolium michelianum</i> from weed to crop and added the common name balansa clover in Volume 3.</p> <p>Reclassified the species class of <i>Thelesperma filifolium</i> to Flower and Range in Volume 3.</p> <p>Added <i>Bromus riparius</i> Rehmman × <i>B. inermis</i> Leyss., hybrid brome grass, to Volume 3.</p>	<p>Table 2C for lot sizes and samples sizes were merged into one table with all species listed in alphabetical order instead of three parts of agricultural and vegetable seeds; tree and shrub seeds; and flower, spice, herb, and medicinal species.</p> <p>The list of families that have hard seed was expanded in section 5.2.10.1.</p> <p>Added a presoaking method to remove inhibitory substances on <i>Beta vulgaris</i>. The method states to soak seeds for 2 hours in 250ml of water per 100 seeds. Rinse in running water and blot the surface dry. This will reduce the amount of water required.</p> <p>Table 5A (methods for determining germination) Part 1 (agricultural and vegetable seeds) and Part 3 (flower, spice, herb and medicinal seeds) were combined. However, Part 2 (tree and shrub seeds) will remain unchanged.</p> <p>The listing for <i>Spinacia oleraceae</i> in Table 5A (method for determining germination) under “additional advice” column were updated to recommend “low moisture level advisable”.</p> <p>A seed health testing method was added for <i>Ascochyta rabiei</i> in chickpea seeds.</p> <p>A seed vigor testing method was added for <i>Glycine max</i> by radicle emergence method.</p>	<p>Taxonomic update in the Sorghum & Pearl Millet Scheme, specifically the elimination of Sorghum spp. as a recognized species.</p> <p>Updated the list of recognized Biochemical & Molecular Techniques for evaluation of varietal identity.</p> <p>Accession of Burkina-Faso to participate in the Cereal, Maize, and Sorghum & Pearl Millet Schemes.</p> <p>Accession of Paraguay to participate in the Cereal and Grass & Legume Schemes.</p> <p>Reinstatement of Zimbabwe to the Maize Scheme.</p>