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## PRESS RELEASE

### Africa Strategic Grain Reserve Conference Kicks Off Next Week in Kenya June 8, 2016

**Nairobi, Kenya** - National governments across Africa are storing grain in large quantities, often with disappointing results.

From infestation to mold, inadequate storage facilities lead to large grain losses for many countries, while also hampering efforts to improve national food security for the poorest families.

To address this challenge, the first *Africa Strategic Grain Reserve Conference* is kicking off next week in Nairobi, Kenya - bringing together governments, grain traders, researchers, international organizations and innovative storage technology companies.

The Conference, sponsored by the African Union's Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA), GrainPro, the Schooner Africa Fund, Abt Associates and AGCO/GSI will focus on providing safe storage solutions for national grain reserve agencies, while bringing together the ecosystem that supports them – producers such as smallholder farmers and coops, grain traders, government ministries, researchers, funders and international organizations.

Post-harvest grain losses are a major contributor to global food insecurity, with estimates that 30% of grain is lost in developing economies due to many factors, including poor storage facilities. This year, the United Nations declared that halving food loss by 2030 is a key Sustainable Development Goal.

**Anne Mbaabu, Head, Markets & Harvest Management at AGRA**, says post-harvest loss is “the most unanswered and ignored challenge” to food insecurity in Africa, representing more than US\$4 billion in lost value every year.

"Governments, coops and farmers need to have better access to appropriate storage facilities and access to new technologies to reduce losses," said Mbaabu.

One of the major food safety and storage issues to be addressed at the conference is the high prevalence of Aflatoxin found in maize and other staple commodities.

Aflatoxins are poisonous and cancer-causing molds that can lead to stunting in children and severe health problems in adults. They are regularly found in improperly stored commodities such as maize, cassava, millet, rice, sorghum, and wheat. When contaminated grain is processed, aflatoxins enter the general food supply where they have been found in both pet and human foods.

“Aflatoxin contamination across food systems undermines the gains made in improving production systems in the developing world,” said **Amare Ayalew, Program Manager of PACA**. “A major part of the solution to the aflatoxin challenge lies in adequate handling and storage of grains. Increased understanding of challenges and opportunities of grain reserves in the African context will go a long way to mitigating aflatoxin contamination in strategic crops.”

There is wide recognition that strategic grain reserves play a vital role in ensuring the food security of their people by distributing food to the poorest regions and reducing large fluctuations in staple commodity prices as available grain supplies dwindle between growing seasons.

“In the past, grain reserves have been instrumental in stabilizing food prices, managing disasters, and protecting poor with social safety nets programs,” **said Shahid Rashid, Senior Research Fellow, International Food Policy Research Institute.** “The challenge has been implementing a grain reserve system in a socially optimal way. However, thanks to technological advancements, the feasibility of setting up an efficient grain reserve, with links to agricultural price policies and social safety nets, is now better than ever before. “

Governments often buy grain at harvest time from small farmers, creating demand when it is most needed to benefit farmer incomes. Smallholder farmers, as the key producers of grain, are the backbone of this supply chain.

“We believe that solving the problem of post-harvest losses and securing safe, long-term storage for grains will have a major positive impact on the financial lives of small holder farmers as well as the health of their communities and environment,” **said Cynthia Ryan, Director of the Schooner Africa Fund.**

The African Strategic Grain Reserve conference is scheduled for June 14-15, 2016 in Nairobi, Kenya.

“GrainPro is committed to improving large-scale storage, reducing food losses and protecting African consumers from the serious health consequences of high aflatoxin levels,” **said Philippe Villers, President of GrainPro.** “We believe the conference is an important step in combating hunger and poverty, particularly in the face of climate change. We are excited about the opportunity to learn from each other and improve grain reserves.”

Presenters at the conference include:

- The Honourable Willy Bett, Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (Kenya)
- Betty Kibaara, Rockefeller Foundation
- Shahid Rashid, International Food Policy Research Institute
- Philippe Villers, GrainPro
- Amare Ayalew, Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa
- Gerald Masila, East Africa Grain Council
- Alexander Dietz, Cargill
- John Lamb, Foodknow
- Philip de Leon, AGCO/GSI
- Lars Lindkvist, Schooner Africa Fund
- David Miller, Abt Associates
- David Ruchiu, Farm Concern International
- Brett Rierson, UN World Food Program
- Jean Njiru, Purdue Improved Crop Storage (PICS)
- Newton Terer, Nationals Cereal and Produce Board, Kenya
- M.O. Adewoye, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Nigeria
- Nasinuku Saukila, National Food Reserve Agency, Malawi
- Lungameni Lucas, Agro-Marketing and Trade Agency, Namibia
- Lawrence Jasi, Grain Marketing Board, Zimbabwe

In addition to the sponsorship of GrainPro, PACA, Schooner Africa Fund, Abt Associates and AGCO/GSI, conference partners include the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), Kenyan Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Farm Concern International (Kenya), and the World Food Preservation Center.

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**About PACA:** The Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA) is a flagship program of the African Union Commission. PACA is on a mission to support agricultural development, safeguard consumer health and facilitate trade by catalyzing, coordinating and increasing effective aflatoxin control along agricultural value chains in Africa. PACA works with country governments directly while forging strong partnerships with diverse stakeholders to achieve systemic change in aflatoxin control in Africa. PACA invites stakeholders to collaborate toward a common vision of “an Africa free from the harmful effects of aflatoxins”.

**About AGRA:** AGRA is an African-led alliance focused on putting farmers at the center of our continent’s growing economy. AGRA advances uniquely African solutions to sustainably raise farmers’ productivity and connect them to a growing marketplace. Together with its partners—including researchers, donors, African governments, the private sector, and civil society—AGRA seeks to create an environment where Africa feeds itself. AGRA works across 18 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and maintains a head office in Nairobi, Kenya and country offices in Ghana, Mali, Mozambique and Tanzania.

**About GrainPro:** GrainPro, Inc., a green, “not-only-for-profit” company, focuses on the safe storage and drying of grains and seeds. Using the principles of Ultra Hermetic™ technology and modified atmospheres, GrainPro is a leader and a key proponent of the Second Green Revolution – the proper storage, handling and distribution of food commodities, without using chemicals or pesticides.

**About Schooner Africa Fund:** Schooner Africa Fund is an impact investment fund based in Nairobi, Kenya that focuses on the agricultural sector in East Africa.

**About IFPRI:** The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) seeks sustainable solutions for ending hunger and poverty. IFPRI was established in 1975 to identify and analyse alternative national and international strategies and policies for meeting the food needs of the developing world, with particular emphasis on low-income countries and on the poorer groups in those countries.

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