



LEGISLATIVE

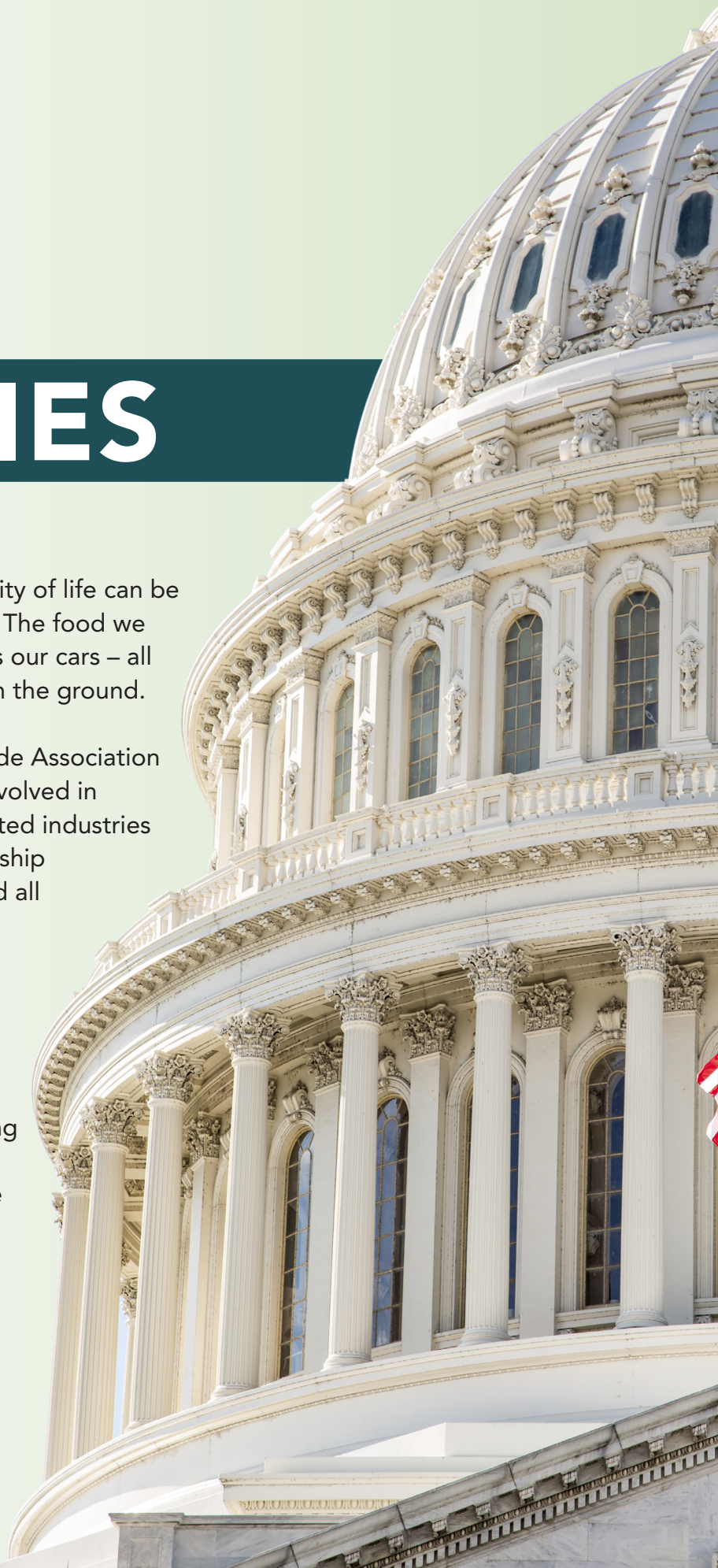
PRIORITIES

Many of the things that enhance our quality of life can be traced back to a seed someone planted. The food we eat, clothes we wear, the fuel that powers our cars – all these things and more start with a seed in the ground.

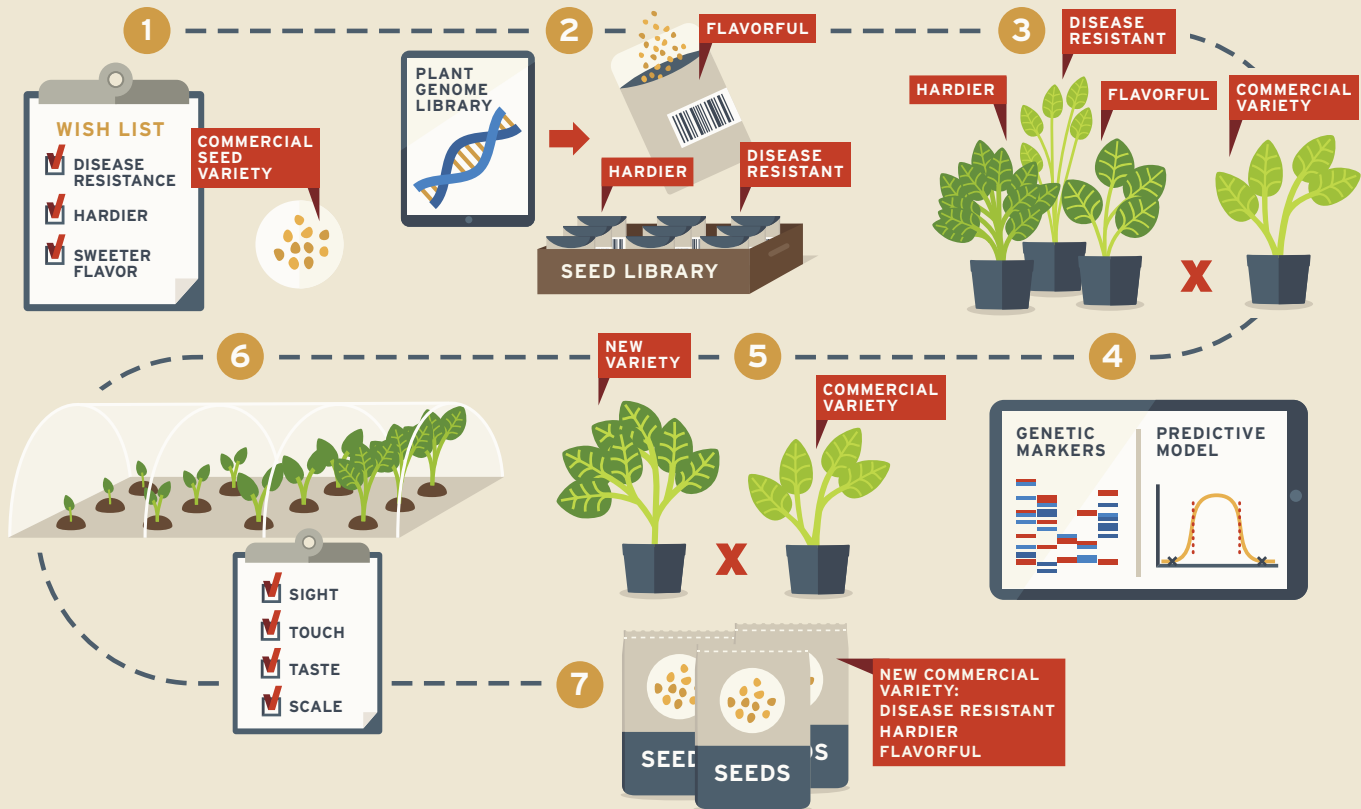
Founded in 1883, the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA) represents over 700 companies involved in seed production, plant breeding and related industries in North America. ASTA's broad membership offers varieties from alfalfa to zucchini and all production types including conventional, organic and biotech.

The U.S. is the world's largest seed market and exporter. Some of the biggest challenges we face as a global society in the years ahead – from achieving food security to protecting our natural resources - can be addressed through the smallest of solutions: improved seed.

The following Legislative Priorities outline ASTA's positions on some of the most pressing issues facing the industry that will impact our ability to continue improving seed in the years ahead.



JOURNEY TO BETTER SEED



1 EVALUATE FARMER/
CONSUMER NEEDS TO
ESTABLISH BREEDING
GOALS

2 IDENTIFY VARIETY
COMBINATIONS WITH
DESIRED
CHARACTERISTICS

3 CROSS POLLINATE
PLANTS

4 PREDICT
OUTCOMES

5 CREATE A NEW
VARIETY

6 SCALE QUANTITIES,
TEST FOR DESIRED
FLAVOR, HARDINESS
AND DISEASE RESISTANCE

7 HARVEST SEED,
CONDITION, PACKAGE
AND DELIVER

BETTER LIFE, BETTER SEED

asta

Innovation in Plant Breeding

Plant breeders have always strived to provide solutions for disease and pest resistance, increase plant tolerance to environmental stresses, achieve higher yields, and meet consumer expectations. Today, plant breeders are able to meet these goals more precisely and efficiently than ever before. The continuous advancement in the understanding of plant genomes provides new opportunities to meet the challenges facing agriculture today and in the future. However, application of some of the latest breeding methods is being stalled because of uncertainty over public policy and unclear regulatory status of the new varieties.

ASTA Recommended Action:

- Support predictable, government policies that are science- and risk-based to promote innovation and advancements in breeding.
- Ensure plant varieties developed through the latest breeding methods are not differentially regulated if they are similar or indistinguishable from varieties that could be produced through earlier breeding methods.
- Harmonize government policies to avoid creating trade barriers and disrupting markets.

International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

Seed researchers need a broad array of parent material, also known as plant genetic resources, from all corners of the globe to produce the plant varieties needed to meet farmer and consumer needs. Such materials can be found in the USDA's National Plant Germplasm System (NPGS) which is housed within USDA's Agricultural Research System. It collects unique plant germplasm from around the world and provides access for plant breeders in the U.S. and globally. However, the NPGS is not all encompassing due to limited funding.

The seed industry has long supported ratification of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture that creates a specialized, global system for the management and exchange of plant genetic resources from international gene banks. Without ratification, the U.S. is missing opportunities to protect our national interests. The U.S. signed the International Treaty in 2002 but Senate ratification is still pending. No other U.S. laws would need to be changed after ratification. Right now is a pivotal time as countries that have been involved in the implementation and commercial implications of the Treaty are discussing ways to improve its functionality.

ASTA Recommended Action:

- Urge the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to hold a hearing on the Treaty as soon as possible and support ratification.

International Trade Agreements

In 2014, U.S. agriculture exports reached a record \$152.5 billion. Seed exports are valued at over \$1.25 billion annually. America's farmers, agribusinesses and economy would benefit from expanded trade opportunities and removal of trade barriers that will come with new free trade agreements such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and Trans-Pacific Partnership.

ASTA Recommended Action:

- Pass Trade Promotion Authority in the House of Representatives and move an aggressive trade agenda so the U.S. can compete on a more level global playing field.

Voluntary Labeling System

ASTA is part of a coalition advocating for federal legislation to address the proliferation of state labeling initiatives for food and beverage products made with GMO ingredients. A patchwork of mandatory state labeling regulations would only serve to mislead and confuse consumers and raise the price of groceries for American families.

ASTA Recommended Action:

- Urge the Senate and House of Representatives to consider legislation that would provide for a voluntary federal system for the labeling of non-GMO foods and prohibit a patchwork of mandatory labels on foods containing GMO ingredients.

Pollinator Health

Pollinators are vital in seed and agriculture production, as well as general ecosystem health, and ensuring their wellbeing is a priority as recognized in the recently released national pollinator strategy. There is concern about the decline in the overall health of honey bee colonies and experts agree that bee health is affected by numerous factors. Singling out pesticides as the main cause of colony health decline is misguided and not warranted based on the latest research.

ASTA is pleased to be a founding partner of the National Pollinator Garden Network which is encouraging Americans to plant one million gardens for pollinators.

ASTA Recommended Action:

- Urge the USDA and Department of Interior to collaborate with the seed industry on pollinator strategies.
- Support funding for additional research on bee health.
- Reject bans of neonicotinoid pesticides.

Conservation Programs

The land and our environment play critical roles in the success of America's farmers, who depend on nature for their livelihood and realize it must be protected. ASTA advocates for investments in flexible and efficient conservation programs that provide producers the financial and technical assistance needed to conserve our nation's most precious resource. Working lands conservation is an important element for sustainable growth of agriculture. Significant use of cover crops in production agriculture is also one of the most promising practices to address both the stewardship of our soils and nutrient reduction in our environment.

ASTA Recommended Action:

- Continue to invest in effective conservation programs through the USDA's Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Programs.

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