

Record attendance at World Seed Congress in Lisbon as global seed sector navigates geopolitical and economic uncertainty

World Seed Congress 2026 opens with calls for unity and action on trade, innovation, and global resilience

LISBON, PORTUGAL, May 18, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Seed experts and business leaders from more than 75 countries have gathered in Lisbon as trade disruptions, climate extremes, and conflicts converge to place global food security under growing threat.

The 2026 World Seed Congress - hosted by the International Seed Federation (ISF) in collaboration with the Portuguese Seed Association, ANSEME - is the largest annual gathering of the seed industry, with more than 1,700 delegates and guests representing over 900 companies and organizations meeting in Lisbon.

The Congress takes place amid mounting pressure on global agri-food systems, sparked by conflicts and exacerbated by worsening climate change. In 2025, two famines were [declared](#) in a single year for the first time. This year, recent geopolitical tensions continue to threaten global trade and economic stability. Meanwhile, an estimated [700 million](#) people worldwide – primarily in Africa and Western Asia – still face hunger each year, with experts warning that climate change, including a predicted El Niño event in mid-2026, could push an additional [132 million](#) people in vulnerable contexts into food and nutrition insecurity within five years due to rising temperatures' impacts on crop yields.

The 2026 World Seed Congress convenes under the theme “Joint Actions, Resilient Futures”, amounting to a call for collective commitment and action at a moment when the multilateral frameworks underpinning global food security are under unprecedented strain.

“It would be easy to look at the state of the world and conclude that international cooperation is in retreat. But the seed industry tells a different story,” said Michael Keller, Secretary General of ISF. “We are here in Lisbon in record numbers on this critical year because we know that collaboration, innovation, and joint actions are practical and appropriate responses to the scale of the truly global challenges we face now and in the future.”

Seed innovations alone account for 74 percent of the yield gains observed in crops in the European Union, according to S&P Global Commodity Insights. However, the global system of

crop variety development depends heavily on cross-border trade, with the typical novel variety bred, tested, produced, and distributed across multiple countries before it reaches a farmer's hands.

"Seed companies invest up to 30 percent of their turnover in research and development because we believe that innovation is key to solving problems at scale and for generations to come," said Arthur Santosh Attavar, ISF President and Managing Chair of the international seed company Indo-American Hybrid Seeds. "ISF continues to work with national and regional seed associations, as well as governments, to create enabling policy environments that help ensure innovations reach farmers quickly and without unnecessary delays or restrictions."

The Congress runs May 18-20, 2026 at the Lisbon Congress Centre. This year's attendance set a record for the diversity of companies and organizations participating. It will feature panel discussions on the global outlook for seed markets; regulatory alignment on plant breeding innovation and new genomic techniques (NGTs); the biodiversity framework for global plant genetic resources; the launch of the ISF Social Responsibility Guidelines; and a blueprint for inclusive seed systems.

The Congress is held in cooperation with the Portuguese Seed Association, ANSEME, whose membership represents almost 90 percent of the Portuguese seed market. Portugal's seed sector has long served as a bridge between Europe and the Lusophone world, a region encompassing some of the most agriculturally dynamic, yet food- and nutrition-insecure, farming communities worldwide.

"Hosting the World Seed Congress in Lisbon is a proud moment for Portugal's seed sector and for ANSEME," said Pedro Pereira Dias, President of ANSEME. "The sessions this week speak directly to the challenges facing farmers across the Portuguese-speaking world, from climate adaptation to access to quality seed. This Congress gives our industry the opportunity to show that innovation and collaboration are not abstract commitments, but practical tools for meeting the challenges ahead."

For more information about the ISF World Seed Congress 2026, including registration details and program highlights, visit congress.worldseed.org

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