



**The view and experience of Seed Companies on the
Implementation of the COMESA Harmonized Seed Regulations**

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SEED INDUSTRY VIEW

- ✓ Seed companies play a significant role in curbing the food insecurity through provision of affordable and accessible quality seed to the farming community
- ✓ Clear regulatory framework is crucial in delivering improved seed to the farmers
- ✓ Implementation of the harmonized regulations is yet to take effect in entirety.
- ✓ Not all of the 19 member states have signed and even those on board have not fully implemented free trade.

Major policy constraints

- ✓ Lack of harmonized plant variety protection guidelines in the region
- ✓ Slow process of national seed laws alignment to conform to the COMESA seed regulations. Need political goodwill of member states to pass laws.
- ✓ Seed standards still vary among the member states. For example Kenya has Breeder seed and standard class in addition to pre-basic, basic and CIG class
- ✓ Lack of Crop specific requirements for registration through the COMESA system
- ✓ Weak human resource capacity in seed certification and seed value chain.

Policy Constraints Contd.

- ✓ Insufficient number of ISTA accredited labs in the region. Member states need to upgrade their labs to ISTA standard to allow acceptability and trade of tested seed.
- ✓ Weak regulation enforcement system. COMESA depends on willingness of member states on the ground to adhere to the harmonized regulations.
- ✓ Phytosanitary procedures put in place by some member states are restricting free movement of seed. MLN occurrence in East Africa has become a major challenge in seed trade with the southern African Countries. As a result, seed samples are screened in a quarantine facility in Zimbabwe before release to the intended destination.
- ✓ The status of the implementation of the harmonized regulations is not well communicated to seed industry players.

Key areas of focus for seed industry

- ✓ Breeding
- ✓ Variety registration
- ✓ Seed production and certification
- ✓ Quality control

Breeding and Variety Registration

- ✓ Germplasm access is still a major challenge especially vegetable and self pollinated crops
- ✓ Long and costly release procedures...Data transfer across countries for faster registration should be advocated
- ✓ Plant variety protection is non existent in some COMESA countries. OPVs and self pollinated crops can then be reproduced without owners approval.

Certification and quality control

- ✓ Need to standardize protocols on seed certification.
- ✓ FastTrack printing of COMESA seed labels for regional seed trade.
- ✓ COMESA Seed labels to have advanced security feature for traceability

Way Forward/suggestions

- ✓ Harmonize plant variety protection roadmap
- ✓ Awareness creation at the country level; Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya and Zimbabwe among other member states.
- ✓ Develop COMESA seed manuals.
- ✓ Finalize printing of COMESA seed labels.
- ✓ Finalize COMESA Virtual Trade Facilitation System (CVTFS)

Way forward Cont.,

- ✓ Improve Institutional and Human resource capacity building of member states.
- ✓ Data transfer across countries for faster registration should be advocated
- ✓ Prioritize full implementation of harmonized COMESA regulations
- ✓ Advocate for removal of restrictive trade policies such as the ban of maize grain imports from some member states.
- ✓ Improve germplasm accessibility

Conclusion

- ✓ Seed companies need a clear legislative framework and implementation of the harmonized regulations for a competitive agricultural sector.
- ✓ AFSTA to strengthen National Seed associations for timely and accurate updates on COMESA harmonized Seed regulations and their implementation.
- ✓ AFSTA to establish and manage ISTA labs in COMESA member states in collaboration with ACTESA

Thank you