

Lightening the burden for seed of field crops – lessons from the vegetable seed sector

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Outline

- Liberalization of the seed sector
- To regulate or not?
- Commercial seed companies
- Seed trade harmonization
- COMESA case study
- Accreditation
- SANSOR Model
- Innovations
- Conclusions

Background

- Liberalization of seed sector in 1990's
 - Emergence of more commercial seed companies
 - Increased choice of seed to farmers
 - Development of agro dealer networks
 - Rise in counterfeit seed and other inputs

To Regulate or Not?

- Regulations impose costs
- Lead to more expensive seeds for farmers
- Examples
 - Three years (seasons) of testing prior to release
 - Field inspections
 - Laboratory testing
- Not just what is required but how it is done

Policies and regulations



What is our understanding of a seed company?

- An individual or group of individuals that are willing to produce and market high quality seed under their own responsibility

Seed Trade Harmonization

- COMESA
 - COMESA Seed Trade Harmonization Regulations that are in the COMESA Gazette Volume 19 No. 1 of February 2014, Annex VII.
- SADC
 - Memorandum of Understanding on the Harmonization of Seed Regulations in the Southern African Development Community Region that entered into force on July 7, 2013.
- ECOWAS
 - ECOWAS Seed Trade Harmonization Agreement that was adopted by the ECOWAS Council of Ministers on 18 May 2008 in Abuja, Nigeria.

COMESA Seed Trade Harmonization Regulations

- Objectives
 - Harmonize phytosanitary measures for seed in the region in order to facilitate the safe movement of seed within Member States, in a transparent manner and without dissemination of any pest of quarantine importance
 - Ensure that varieties listed in the COMESA Variety Catalogue and traded among Member States are of high and known quality and that movement of seed is more efficient
 - Encourage investment in seed business in the Member States
 - Increase access to existing varieties in the Member States; and
 - Stimulate the breeding and availability of improved seed varieties resulting in increased variety choices for all farmers

COMESA Variety Catalogue



www.comesa.int



Welcome to the COMESA Plant Variety Catalogue

The objective of the COMESA Variety Release System is to encourage investment in seed business in the COMESA Member States, to enhance access to new and existing varieties in the COMESA Member States, and to stimulate the breeding and availability of seed varieties resulting in increased variety choices for all farmers.

This website allows plant breeders/ seed developers to register varieties in the COMESA Catalogue and seed users to find varieties which can be legally commercialized among the 19 COMESA countries.

Seed users can select varieties adapted to their Agro-Ecological Zones, with short technical descriptions. For more detailed descriptions or orders, they will find commercial contact references associated to each variety.

Plant breeders who want to apply for regional registration of a variety fulfilling the COMESA Variety Release System requirements have to create a breeder's account in the restricted access area.

National Seed authorities will also have access to the varieties database through the restricted area.

Accreditation

- Certification of competence in a specified subject or areas of expertise, and of the integrity of an agency, firm, group, or person, awarded by a duly recognized and respected accrediting organization

Dominant Models

- Government authority
 - All field inspections carried out by government inspectors
 - Seed laboratories government operated
 - Resource limitations, inefficiencies, and lack of innovation
- Delegation of authority e.g. SANSOR
- “Light touch”

Seed certification and accreditation

- Same field and laboratory standards for 14 most traded crop seeds in SADC, 12 in ECOWAS and 11 in COMESA
- Accreditation for field inspection, seed sampling and testing approved
- Quality manuals development for seed companies and seed laboratories

SANSOR Model

- Since 1989 SANSOR has been the designated authority
- This includes not only the National Seed Certification Scheme, but all international seed schemes such as AOSCA, OECD and SADC.
- Achieved by means of a core administrative staff and the use of more than 160 private seed inspectors
 - Trained, examined and authorized to conduct specific functions
 - Total seed certification has almost doubled over the past five years
 - Presently, SANSOR is responsible for certification of seed crops produced on more than 60 000 hectares

“Light Touch”

- Vegetable seeds
 - No official variety release procedures
 - No mandatory certification
- Field crops
 - USA and New Zealand similar to vegetable seeds

Innovations

- Use of ICT for traceability
- Labeling and packaging to reduce fraud
- Improved laboratory techniques for varietal identification – e.g. DNA finger printing
- Improved farmer education and compensation
- Training and licensing of seed inspectors, seed samplers, and seed laboratories

Conclusions

- Seed delivery is the domain of commercial companies not public sector
- Greater collaboration needed between public and private sectors
- Enabling regulatory environment needed to improve seed quality and to increase choice
- Regulatory agencies should devote more attention to building capacity, licensing etc.

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