



# AfricaSeeds

*For a seed secure Africa*



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Cover photo: *A woman looking at seeds of an improved bean variety (Kenya) ©CIAT*

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# Seeds and agriculture transformation

Seeds<sup>1</sup> are the building blocks of agriculture and their genetic outfits have been sustaining humanity for millennia. Today, if used in the right way, quality seeds can contribute enormously to transform agriculture by generating more productive, sustainable and resilient systems. Transforming agriculture and accelerating its growth – a key priority for the African Union (AU) – can have a significant impact on African economies, in which almost two thirds of the population is still dependent on agriculture for subsistence and income.

As reaffirmed by the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) and the Malabo Declaration adopted by the AU Member States, at the top of the list for the transformation of African agriculture is the production and use of quality inputs that are accessible and profitable to farmers. It is therefore necessary to build a functioning African seed sector, in all its local variations and by according due importance to the diversity of its components and stakeholders.

There is a widespread recognition of the synergistic effect that the use of quality seeds of the appropriate variety at the right moment in time, coupled with soil fertility and good practices, have on agricultural productivity. Improvements on income generation and gender equality can derive from increased productivity. At the same time, efficient seed systems can support the diversification of crops, diets and incomes, reduce risks from pest, drought and disease pressure and therefore promote climate change adaptation, better nutrition and increased resilience.

The achievement of seed security through a competitive and efficient seed system should be considered a potent tool to address the challenges that African agriculture is facing and to support progress towards shared prosperity and improved livelihoods in Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> Seeds refer here to conventional seeds and any vegetative material that can be used to deliberately propagate new plants.





Quality seeds of an improved maize variety (Kenya) ©CIAT

# AfricaSeeds and seed sector development

A strong and effective seed sector can contribute to the achievement of agricultural advancement in Africa. However, the limited and fragmented efforts in seed sector development of the last four decades on the continent have resulted in more than 80 percent of African farmers having to rely on suboptimal quality seeds. Overall, the sector is still plagued with serious inequities that prevent it from playing its full and timely part in agricultural transformation and growth.

Fortunately, African Heads of State and Government have grasped the scale of the challenge and, under the auspices of the AU, have unanimously adhered to the CAADP in 2003, the Malabo Declaration in 2014 and the Addis Ababa Communique on Early Generation Seeds in 2016. In 2007, the AU Commission (AUC), in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization, has also supported the development of the African Seed and Biotechnology Program (ASBP), an African-driven program that frames the development of the seed sector on the continent.

These agreements all clearly recognize seed security as a necessary step towards a food and nutritionally secure Africa.

To further reinvigorate the seed sector landscape, the AUC decided to address the need for leadership in the implementation of the ASBP. In 2010, after a thorough selection process, the Commission identified AfricaSeeds – known at the time as the “African Seed Network” – as the best placed institution to play this leading role.

AfricaSeeds has been strengthened since then to support its new mission as a fully fledged AU agency in charge of the implementation of the AU Seed Program (i.e. ASBP). First, in December 2013, a new Executive Director was appointed; then, at the inaugural meetings held in August 2014 in Abidjan, the new organizational vision, mission and mandate were approved. As a Member State and host, Côte d’Ivoire has set an example by backing up most of the restructuring process and offering to headquarter the agency in Abidjan.



AfricaSeeds Governing Board meeting (Côte d'Ivoire) ©AfricaSeeds/Michela Paganini

# Who we are

AfricaSeeds is an intergovernmental seed organization mandated by the African Union to be the Implementing Agency for the ASBP. AfricaSeeds is based on principles and values aimed at promoting a more coordinated, sustainable and inclusive approach to initiatives in the seed sector.

## Vision

A seed-secure Africa enabled for building efficient and sustainable seed systems that will contribute towards the achievement of agriculture transformation, food and nutrition security as well as wealth creation in Africa.

## Mission

To address the needs for seed sector development in cooperation with all seed

stakeholders and developmental partners, through integrated seed sector development actions, public-private partnerships and networking to achieve sustainable national, regional and continental seed programs and industries, in line with the ASBP and the goal of continental agriculture transformation, food and nutrition security, as well as poverty alleviation.

## Mandate

To coordinate and lead in the implementation of the ASBP, undertake an advocacy role to promote the importance of seed and provide greater visibility for seed systems development thereby assisting in the development of comprehensive national, regional and continental seed program development initiatives.

## Role

To contribute to the overall development effort of the seed sector, through partnerships and a holistic, integrated and coordinated approach for building efficient and sustainable seed systems that will lead to the achievement of agriculture transformation, food and nutrition security, poverty alleviation and creation of wealth on the continent.





Workers of a rice seed enterprise packaging paddy (Mauritania) ©FAO/Michela Paganini

# What we do

The overall objective of AfricaSeeds is to promote the development of efficient and sustainable seed systems and a dynamic and competitive seed industry in Africa in order to ensure the access to quality seeds by all categories of farmers.

In facing the challenges that are unique to the African seed sector development, AfricaSeeds has identified three strategic areas which are considered the organizational priority activities for the next ten years: 1) advocacy; 2) support to ongoing initiatives in Member States; and 3) the promotion of seed sector development.

## Priority activities 2016-2025

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### Advocacy for the importance of seeds

- Agricultural development.
- Food safety.
- Business opportunities.

### Support to ongoing seed initiatives in

#### Member States

- Strategic reflections on seed issues.
- Expertise / technical assistance.
- Other forms of support.

### Promotion of seed sector development

- Seed marketing and market development.
- Development of smallholder seed enterprises.
- Use of quality seed by growers.
- Implementation of national seed policies, as well as harmonized regional rules and regulations on seeds.
- Improvement of the resilience in agriculture.
- Facilitation of collaborations and partnerships.
- Seed information systems (including reliable and complete databases and seed statistics).





Workers building agricultural terraces to improve water management ©CIAT/Neil Palmer



# Our strategy

AfricaSeeds is active in the policy and advocacy spheres of seed sector development and will concentrate – in collaboration with all partners – on a four-fold agenda, where the role of seeds for the transformation and growth of the African agriculture has been recognized as prominent.

To significantly impact on food and nutrition security, AfricaSeeds will lead in initiatives on all crops (open- and cross-pollinated and vegetatively propagated crops). AfricaSeeds will also address challenges at all levels, supporting formal, intermediary, and informal seed systems, as well as ensuring involvement of both public and private sector stakeholders.

Our members are 40 African countries that have supported us from the creation of the institution in 1998. As per our AU mandate, we are working to extend our interventions to the entirety of the Member States of the Union.

## Agenda for 2016-2025

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- The rapid development and growth of small and medium scale seed enterprises with demand-driven marketing arrangements to improve access by farmers to quality seeds.
- The strengthening of an enabling environment to support seed sector development initiatives by all stakeholders in the short, medium and long term.
- The expansion of research and industry development initiatives to the large number of traditional and minor crops that have been hitherto neglected, and the support of the informal seed sector with varietal improvement and quality assurance.
- The holistic coordination and monitoring of all seed sector efforts through identifying gaps and duplications, enhancing collaborations and measuring progress.



Two members of a farmers' cooperative in a seed field (Côte d'Ivoire) ©AfricaSeeds/Michela Paganini



# How we work

One of the weaknesses of seed sector development is the fragmentation of stakeholders' objectives, approaches and targets. To cut down on misdirection and duplications, AfricaSeeds cannot and must not act alone. Close collaborations with key partners in all stages of its interventions are the crucial ingredient to achieve success in sustainable seed sector development on the continent. This subsidiary-based approach ensures that all partners, including AfricaSeeds, take responsibility for actions based on their strengths and comparative advantages at the continental, regional, national levels.

We therefore have to be continental, regional and national at the same time. First and foremost, AfricaSeeds is the only intergovernmental seed organization with a continental mandate. This is both a huge challenge and a sizeable opportunity to greatly impact on African agriculture. AfricaSeeds aims to occupy the vacant position of an overarching body that coordinates the empowerment of the seed sector in Africa through the concentration of efforts where they are most needed, the promotion of sustainability and subsidiarity in decision

making and the reporting on progress to AUC for evidence-based planning at the continental level.

All the same, AfricaSeeds is close to the ground as it operates through national and regional focal points who are already well established leaders in their respective programs. In addition, AfricaSeeds supports those focal points with technical assistance and capacity development. This type of arrangement increases the ownership and effectiveness of our interventions as we benefit from better communication, timely reporting and minimization of cost. In return, national and regional programs are empowered by accessing a wider network of actors, resources and opportunities.

The greater commitment of all seed sector stakeholders championed by AfricaSeeds will contribute to a more sustainable seed sector, towards the achievement of agriculture transformation, food and nutrition security and poverty alleviation in Africa.



Q&A session at an international meeting on seed indicators (Côte d'Ivoire) ©AfricaSeeds/Michela Paganini

# Our organization

AfricaSeeds is headed by the Executive Director, a chief manager with responsibility of providing leadership in all activities and functions of the organization.

A Scientific and Technical Committee is advising both the Governing Board and the Executive Director by providing technical guidance and promote advancements in technical subjects and research.

The Stakeholder Forum, convened every two years in collaboration with the AUC, aims to take stock on the work in seed sector development and shape responses to its upcoming challenges.

AfricaSeeds maintains at its headquarters a lean and efficient team consisting of the Executive Director, a Program Director with a minimum of professional staff, an Administrative and Finance Manager and some support staff.

For its emerging projects and extra missions, AfricaSeeds can count on a pool of national and international experts in different areas of the seed sector that are available to meet the human resources needs. While significantly reducing staff costs, this option allows AfricaSeeds to tap into a large base of knowledge and expertise to execute its implementation and coordination mission following high-quality international standards.

AfricaSeeds' Governing Board is made up of individuals with outstanding and varied expertise and experience in seed sector development. It is the overall oversight body that ensures guidance and harmonization on technical and policy issues and conformity to current norms in seed sector development.

AfricaSeeds works for more productive, sustainable and resilient seed sectors which can contribute to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals.



AfricaSeeds

*"La Moisson se Trouve dans la Semence"*  
*"The Harvest is in the Seed"*

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