



Concept Note

High-Level Dialogue on *Inclusive Seed Sector Development for Agricultural Transformation in Africa*

6 October 2023
10-11.30AM GMT

1. Context

AfricaSeeds' new strategy for '*inclusive seed sector development to support agricultural transformation in Africa (2022-2031)*' gives due attention to the diversity of seed systems in Africa with a special focus on enhancing smallholder seed systems and fostering closer links with the formal seed systems (institutionalized public and private seed systems) particularly in terms of producing and distributing quality seeds more widely, thus contributing to overall agricultural transformation. Inclusiveness of the seed sector recognizes the huge potential of smallholders to enhance agricultural productivity if they were to receive sufficient and well-targeted investment. The inclusive approach embraces all seed industry actors in the public, private and smallholder sectors and recognizes their respective strengths and contributions to the entire seed market of Africa. It is aimed at ending poverty through active engagement of all Africans in development processes in which no one is left behind or excluded on the basis of whatever factor, which is one of the key aspirations of Agenda 2063 of the African Union (AU).

The global commercial seed market size in 2021 was estimated at USD 63 billion, of which Africa accounted for only about USD 2 billion. The African continent is thus considered a minor player in the global seed trade, while excluding approximately 80% of its smallholder farmers outside the commercial sector who predominantly exchange seed between themselves or sell in their local markets. The value of this huge component of the seed sector comprising poor smallholder farmers is excluded from the commercial seed market analysis that is based on seed sales or turnover of mostly large private companies. An inclusive seed market comprising both large and small farmers can create a far bigger market share for Africa. An inclusive seed market can encourage greater participation, equity and fairness, efficient sharing of benefits as well as create greater awareness of seed sovereignty and ownership.

Inclusive seed sector development thus promotes economic growth and social progress that is equitable and sustainable, which benefits all farmers in the seed sector, regardless of their backgrounds, circumstances or identities. The aim is to create opportunities for everyone to participate fully and benefit from seed sector development, including the marginalized and disadvantaged farmers and their families in remote locations, women and the youth, farmers located in conflict or disaster-affected areas and farmers with disabilities.



In a related manner, Africa's current food imports bill of about USD 35 billion is estimated to reach USD 100 billion by 2030. The continent's main food imports are wheat, rice, soybeans and other oilseeds, much of which could be produced locally, saving a much-needed foreign exchange and creating significant income opportunities for smallholder farmers and jobs for the youth. Boosting such productivity in the agricultural sector would require access to and efficient utilization of quality seeds by smallholder farmers currently active outside the commercial seed sector. Therefore, turning Africa's growing food imports into domestic agricultural growth and prosperity will call for greater investment in smallholders particularly in promoting closer collaboration with the formal sector and engendering appropriate small-scale private seed enterprises in which smallholder farmers can play an active role. In this respect, formal sector and private seed companies which benefit from research in new varieties resulting from activities of small farmers over centuries as custodians of crop varieties, owe some social responsibility in enhancing an inclusive seed market. The smallholder seed sector remains predominant in Africa, and improving its productivity, profitability and sustainability is essential for fighting hunger and poverty, tackling malnutrition and ensuring food security.

2. Purpose of the Dialogue

The primary aim or purpose of the High-Level Dialogue is to bring together a panel of renowned experts and key stakeholders in the African seed sector to present, discuss and share ideas with the view to create greater awareness and impart informed knowledge and better understanding about inclusive seed sector development leading to an in-depth conference on this theme in 2024.

3. Speakers and Audience

Panel speakers will comprise eminent experts with knowledge and experience of the African seed sector and have good communication skills to engage a broad audience drawn from groups including African Union institutions and other continental entities, government ministries of agriculture, national and regional/sub-regional programs, international research and development organizations, academic institutions, civil society organizations, the private sector, knowledge/innovation platforms, farmer organizations and host government (Côte d'Ivoire) representatives.

4. Structure and Languages

The dialogue will be held on the margins of the Salon de l'Agriculture et des Ressources Animales (SARA), an international agriculture fair which will take place in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from the 29th September to the 8th October 2023.



A moderator will facilitate the dialogue, during which a panel of speakers will be invited to make presentations before engaging the audience in an interactive session of questions and discussions, with a view to exchanging ideas and reaching consensus.

English and **French** will be used in all sessions through simultaneous translation.

5. Key Messages Emanating from the Dialogue

Some key messages to be disseminated during the Dialogue include the following:

- Successful agricultural transformation requires considerable investment in quality seeds as the prime and basic input for enhancing agricultural productivity to achieve the goals of food and nutrition security, better employment particularly for women and the youth, increased income opportunities and overall livelihood improvement of farming households.
- Harnessing the diversity of seed systems in Africa and giving them equally deserving focus and opportunities will transform the agricultural landscape and put the African seed industry in a position to account for a much larger share of the global commercial seed market than is currently recorded.
- AfricaSeeds needs close partnership with important seed sector stakeholders within and outside Africa to mobilize resources for effective implementation of its flagship program on Inclusive Seed Sector Development for Agricultural Transformation in Africa (ISSATA) through joint action plans and collaborative engagement.
- The AU Commission and AU Member States need to prioritize the role of quality seeds and give deserving support to the AfricaSeeds' ISSATA program, given its close alignment with aspirations of the AU Agenda 2063 on inclusive and sustainable development.
- Insights obtained from the dialogue are intended to serve as good basis for a conference in 2024, where in-depth discussions and analysis about inclusive seed sector development will be undertaken.

6. Expected Outcomes

Outcomes expected from the Dialogue include:

- Greater awareness and knowledge on inclusive seed sector development generated and the roles of AfricaSeeds and its partners in implementing this flagship program defined.
- Potential resource and implementation partners identified for effective collaboration in putting inclusive seed sector development into practice to generate the intended results.
- Consensus reached on relevant issues to be included in the 2024 conference to showcase the benefits and positive potential of inclusive seed sector development in the context of the AU Agenda 2063.



7. Conclusion and Next Steps

The Dialogue is an initial step to collect useful information to plan the next stage, that is the organization of an in-depth conference on the inclusive development of the seed sector for the transformation of agriculture in Africa, in 2024.

8. Contacts

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