



A new Africa wide programme to boost the seed sector

PRESS RELEASE

A novel plan for the development of a vibrant, market oriented and pluralistic seed sector in Africa for providing smallholder farmers access to quality seed

[NAIROBI, KENYA, September 18, 2014]

Access to quality seed remains a great challenge for smallholder farmers across Africa. This affects their agricultural productivity, income and resilience. Addressing this challenge is a complex task and cannot be done at national levels alone.

A new Africa-wide programme aims to support the development of a vibrant, market oriented and pluralistic seed sector in Africa. Launched on 18 September in Nairobi, it will use an Integrated Seed Sector Development (ISSD) approach to address the challenges.

The ISSD approach is endorsed by the African Union Commission as contributing to the implementation of the African Seed and Biotechnology Program (ASBP) program and the seed agenda of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP).

The Comprehensive Programme on Integrated Seed Sector Development in Africa (ISSD Africa) aims to enhance reliable access of smallholder farmers to sufficient quantities of quality seed of superior varieties at the right time and at an affordable price.

The programme — supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Dutch Government — will be conducted in phases.

The Piloting Phase of ISSD Africa -running from September 2014 to August 2016, will contribute to the development of the five-year Comprehensive Programme.

During the piloting phase, ISSD Africa will work with existing seed programmes in 8-10 countries to explore how seed sectors can be integrated at local and national level. The organisers hope to draw out lessons that will inform international dialogues on seed policy.

Four priority themes have been identified:

- Promoting entrepreneurship in the seed value chain
- Access to varieties in the public domain
- Matching global commitments with national realities
- Supporting African Union programmes and seed sector development

Addressing these themes will be done through action research, innovation trajectories, policy dialogues, capacity strengthening, and joint learning in eight to ten pilot countries.

The project aims to set up an Africa-wide network of experts, seed programs and related organizations, and encourage those working in the seed sector to learn from each other and work together.

“A well-functioning seed sector is vital to food security and farmers’ livelihoods, but making it work is a complex challenge. Governments, businesses, farmers and researchers all need to work together to make Africa’s seed sector more vibrant, dynamic and resilient for many years to come,” said Marja Thijssen, ISSD Africa Coordinator based in the Netherlands.

The project will be coordinated by a consortium of an African-based secretariat working closely with the Centre of Development Innovation (CDI) of Wageningen University and Research Centre (Wageningen UR), the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) and Future Agricultures Consortium (FAC).

The Tegemeo Institute of Agricultural Policy and Development — a policy research institute of the Kenyan-based Egerton University — will host the African-based Secretariat.

ISSD Africa will operate under a set of [Guiding Principles](#) on seed programs and policies. These stress the importance of pluralism, diversity and interaction between formal and informal systems. They also focus on entrepreneurship and markets, policies to support a dynamic sector, and high-quality evidence.

Media contact:

Beatrice Ouma,

Mobile: +254 721463952

Email: b.ouma@future-agricultures.org

More information:

<http://www.issdseed.org/>

<http://www.future-agricultures.org/issd-africa>