

# Seeds in Ethiopia Working with policy and research to foster a more inclusive seed system



## Impact Stories

This is one of a series of impact stories from the Future Agricultures Consortium.

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Future Agricultures work on seeds in Ethiopia has made a significant contribution to influencing the development of the seed policy and wider seed system in the country, towards a more decentralised and liberalized system, which recognises both private and public actors, and informal as well as formal actors.

## Background

In 2009 Ethiopia's cereal seed system was based on central planning, on the assumption that farmers demand seed of one type of variety with limited consideration of

demand. Very little recognition was given to informal seed systems, and the role of markets in seed distribution. This reduced the efficiency of the overall seed system,

with considerable challenges in ensuring that seed was made available in the required quality, at the right time, and at a reasonable price.

Photo credit: Seed producer from central Ethiopia.  
Credit: alina/Flickr (cc-by-nc 2.0)



Future Agricultures research looked at the political factors shaping access on seeds, documented the informal seed system, and produced policy-relevant publications. In 2011, we supported an International Workshop on Seeds systems organised by the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR), which shared knowledge from within Ethiopia and brought in experts from our wider network in Malawi, Kenya and Zimbabwe, to share learning from their seed systems.

Key changes have included:

- the establishment of regional public seed companies and a number of private seed companies including multinationals;
- the successful piloting of direct seed marketing to farmers
- the development of independent regulatory authorities
- the adoption of a new Seed Proclamation in 2013.

FAC's pioneering research on the political economy of the cereal seeds system in 2010 was a timely and distinct contribution to the policy debate in a context of seed system improvement to address the endemic low major crops' productivity.

The lead FAC researcher on seeds in Ethiopia (based in the EIAR) has been effective in networking and influencing policy processes informally and formally via engagement in discussions in the Agriculture Ministry, and numerous consultancy assignments.

## Integrated Seed System Development in Africa

Smallholder farmers face challenges in getting reliable and timely access to good quality seeds at the right price.

Future Agricultures has provided advice to the Integrated Seed System Development (ISSD) in Africa project<sup>1</sup> run by Wageningen University's Centre for Development Innovation (CDI), which has pioneered direct seed marketing in the four main regions of Ethiopia and is widely acknowledged as having the largest single influence on changes to the cereal seed system.

Now, the ISSD Africa project is creating a network of expertise across several African countries with core participation from Future Agricultures. A two-year pilot phase was launched in Nairobi in 2014.

The Piloting phase of ISSD Africa works on the establishment of an African-embedded structure and network of experts, seed programs and associated organizations in the public and private sectors. Future Agricultures is involved in project co-ordination, thematic working groups and in setting up the Africa-based Secretariat of the project.

<sup>1</sup> [future-agricultures.org/issd-africa](http://future-agricultures.org/issd-africa)

This is one of a series of impact case studies drawn from an independent evaluation of the Future Agricultures, which was carried out by Upper Quartile for the UK Department for International Development and published in 2015. Find out more at [future-agricultures.org/impact](http://future-agricultures.org/impact)