

# Eastern and Southern Africa Seed Alliance - ESASA

## The ESASA Team

*International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics  
Seed Science Center-Iowa State University  
CNFA, Inc.*

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The Seed Science Center of Iowa State University (SSC-ISU), the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), and CNFA, Inc. (CNFA) [collectively *The ESASA Team*] are launching the *Eastern and Southern Africa Seed Alliance* (ESASA) to build on the cooperation begun under the *West Africa Seed Alliance* (WASA), as well as in Mozambique and elsewhere. ESASA's goal is to develop a competitive seed industry providing smallholder farmers with affordable, timely and reliable access to high quality seeds and planting materials.

ESASA will operate at two levels; multilaterally through the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and bilaterally with Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania by building initially on existing activities. The program will include other countries and new activities as it gains momentum, to create viable agricultural inputs delivery systems and an improved enabling environment to support growth of barriers to improved genetics by rural intends



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the agricultural sector linked to the wider international arena. Specifically ESASA will:

- Increase smallholder farmers' yields and incomes by offering them increased access to inputs, financing, production technologies and output markets;
- Improve access by commercial seed enterprises to improved traits developed by both public and private research;
- Achieve a regional seed policy environment that allows for the unimpeded import and export of seeds across borders within Africa;
- Foster the expansion of existing seed companies and the creation of new seed companies; and

- Train, certify, and develop a network of agrodealers providing improved inputs, extension services, and market access to smallholder farmers.

The weak seed industry in Eastern and Southern Africa prevents smallholder farmers from gaining the inputs and technologies needed to increase their productivity and raise their incomes. Small and fragmented national markets and a lack of regional integration due to poor policies discourage regional seed trade. There is also disconnect between the research and development of new varieties needed by farmers and the systems to release, multiply and distribute new varieties to farmers. Weak local seed companies and agrodealers further increase



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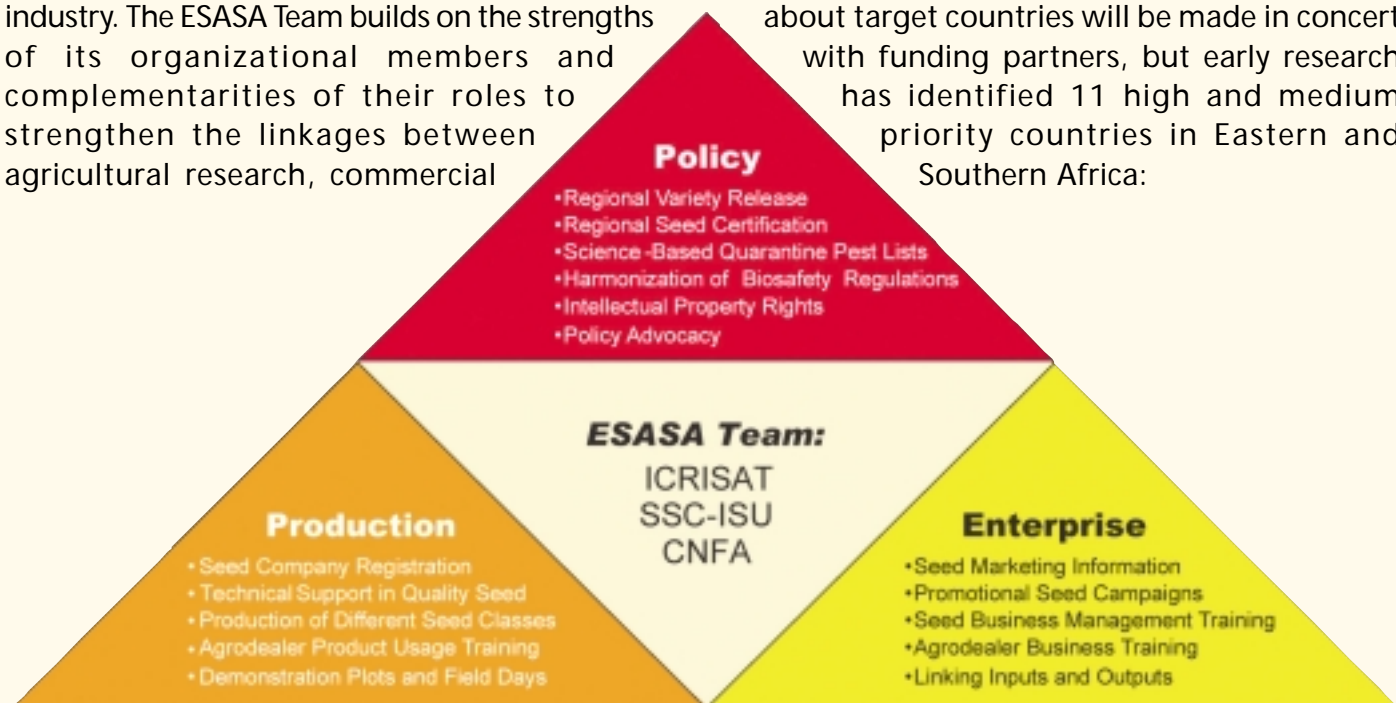


barriers to improved genetics by rural smallholders. At the farm level, smallholders often not only cannot access seed and other inputs, but also must rely on obsolete production technologies and poor access to financial and output markets. Improvements at the national and regional levels are urgently needed in the policy environment, industrial competitiveness, and acquisition of improved planting materials and seeds in order to overcome these barriers.

ESASA is the result of extensive dialogue between donor agencies, government organizations, research institutions, NGOs, and the private sector. From this dialogue, it is evident that an Alliance of public and private partners will bring new ideas, expertise, and solutions to problems that have consistently thwarted independent efforts by donors, government, and private industry. The ESASA Team builds on the strengths of its organizational members and complementarities of their roles to strengthen the linkages between agricultural research, commercial

interests and farmer interests. Together, the ESASA team intends to promote the development of seed systems to overcome the *policy, production, and enterprise* constraints of the eastern and southern Africa region. In particular, the Alliance will seek out African private sector partners through the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) and its member national associations to effectively solve country-specific problems and constraints, empower and strengthen local organizations, and foster sustainability.

In selecting countries in which to implement ESASA programs, the Alliance targets countries where policy makers are supportive of public-private partnerships in input supply and output marketing, where donors and potential Alliance partners have interest in working, and where the private sector is involved. Initial decisions about target countries will be made in concert with funding partners, but early research has identified 11 high and medium priority countries in Eastern and Southern Africa:



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- Angola (high)
- Democratic Republic of Congo (medium)
- Ethiopia (medium)
- Kenya (medium)
- Madagascar (high)
- Malawi (high)
- Mozambique (high)
- South Africa (medium)
- Tanzania (high)
- Uganda (high)
- Zambia (medium)

In each country, programs will be tailored to meet the specific needs of that country's seed industry, addressing policy, production, and enterprise challenges through the following activities:

### ***Policy Activities***

An improved policy enabling environment is critical to the Eastern and Southern Africa seed industry. Policies to facilitate the import and export of seeds across borders would allow national markets in Eastern and Southern Africa to grow to support a viable, thriving seed industry. The Eastern and Southern Africa regional market would become commercially viable and attract investment. Policy harmonization across the region is a critical step to realizing this and will require the involvement of regional economic institutions and national governments. SADC has made substantial

progress in developing technical agreements on regional variety release, seed certification, and science-based quarantine pest lists, but there is the need to achieve similar results with COMESA and the East African Community, essential partners for obtaining the needed political support to adopt and implement technical agreements across the region.

The ESASA Team, led by the SSC-ISU, will work with COMESA, SADC, and others to improve the regional policy framework. As policy harmonization gains ground, the necessary processes and procedures will be introduced to facilitate implementation of these policies with support from the ESASA Team. In addition, regional and national seed trade associations, plant health authorities, seed certification agencies and other key stakeholders will be informed and trained to implement the new policies and regulations.

In the area of policy advocacy, the ESASA Team, led by CNFA, will encourage and support existing seed trade associations and agrodealer networks in policy advocacy to improve the commercial







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seed production targets. ESASA will foster linkages between sources of breeder and/or foundation seed and registered seed companies.

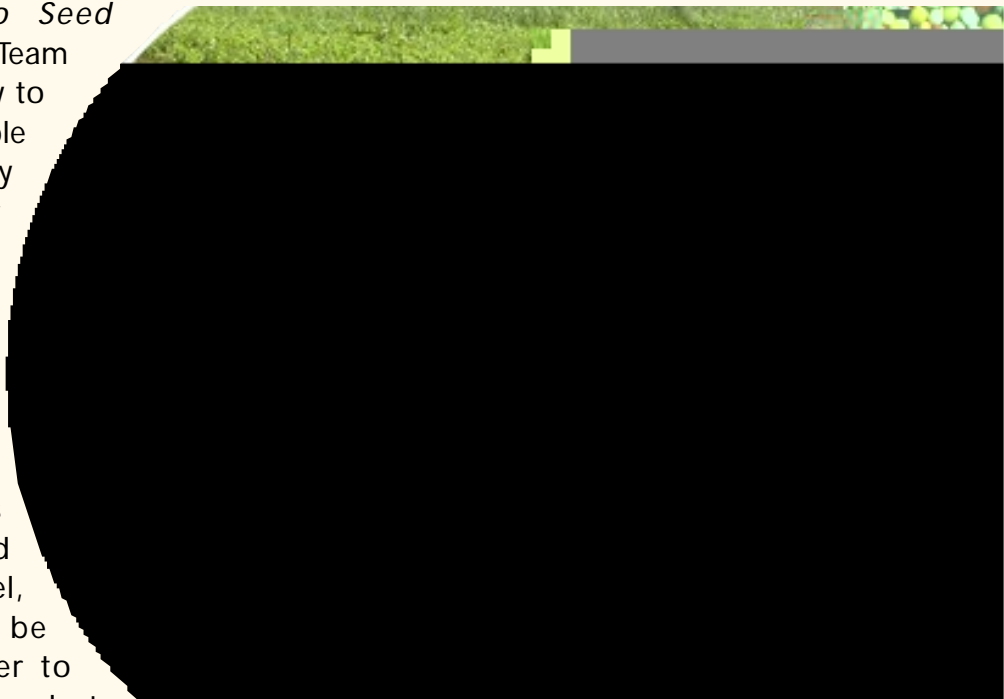
- *Technical Support to Seed Production:* The ESASA Team will provide technical support to seed company staff in the production of different seed classes.
- *Quality Assurance to Seed Companies:* The ESASA Team will work in each country to develop enterprises capable of offering quality assurance services for seed testing with the expertise and equipment to conduct field inspections and sampling.

While breeders and commercial seed companies are critical links in the seed system distribution channel, agrodealers must also be technically expert in order to ensure the dissemination of product information and production best practices to smallholder farmer customers. Therefore, the ESASA Team will introduce programs to strengthen agrodealers' and farmers' technical capacity:

- *Agrodealers Trained on Product Usage:* Farmers desperately need sound technical and product advice and agrodealers are well

placed to provide that. The ESASA Team will build the technical capacity of agrodealers through training in product handling and usage by input-supply companies themselves.

- *Demonstration Plots and Field Days:* ESASA will create greater awareness of the availability of improved seed through demonstration plots and farmer field days,



in cooperation with agrodealers and input supply companies. The ESASA Team proposes to hire demonstration coordinators to match agrodealers with input suppliers, assist in technology introduction, and to organize demonstration plots and field days.



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## Enterprise Activities

representation resulting in poor strategic planning and decision-making, poor knowledge of the business environment, and little influence on policies affecting their sector. The ESASA Team will provide business management training, seed market information, along with other financial and marketing services, to local seed enterprises and agrodealers, drawing on CNFA's proven experience with seed-oriented programs.

- *Seed Marketing Information:* ESASA will assist seed companies and associations to establish sustainable seed marketing strategies.
- *Promotional Seed Campaigns:* ESASA will assist seed companies to build awareness of and promote high-quality seed and new varieties among seed companies, agrodealers, and farmers.

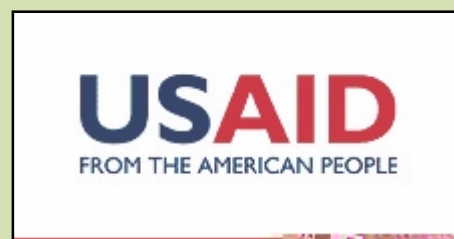
business planning, supply chain management and marketing.

- *Agrodealer Business Training:* Similar programs based on CNFA's franchised agrodealer business management training program will be carried out for agrodealers, focusing on basic business management skills and aspects for managing distribution of multiple product lines (seed, fertilizer, and crop protection products).
- *Linking Inputs and Outputs:* Agrodealers play a central role in linking farmers to inputs, technical product and agronomic information, and output marketing information and linkages. The ESASA Team will work to integrate input and output distribution systems by linking to commodity traders and crop processors to create market pull for farmer production.

The ESASA team gratefully acknowledges the financial support and encouragement of USAID through the program for the Sustainable Commercialization of Seeds in Africa (SCOSA) in building this alliance, and is soliciting for other public, non-government and private-sector partners interested in supporting ESASA's goal to join the alliance by contacting any member of the ESASA Team.



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