

Africa RISING Early Wins Project Proposal

CIAT, 16 April 2012

Identifying efficient seed system (s) practices/models to accelerate the access to quality seed of improved varieties legumes, maize and forages to small scale farmers particularly poor and women farmers in Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia

Background

Several seed system models to supply improved varieties to farmers have been tried in East and Southern Africa in the last decades to disseminate improved seed varieties developed for years by CGIAR and NARS with government and donor-led efforts. Many of these high performance varieties are available in these regions, but limited disseminated. The challenges in making this technology more commonly adopted lie in the poor understanding of seed systems, gaps in access agricultural inputs in general and farmers' lack of knowledge about how improved varieties can affect their yields and their lives. Attempts to devise more effective seed dissemination schemes (seed supply chains) have been tried. These range from decentralized seed production to semi-centralized models with the partnering private sector operators. While the latter has provided some positive results for hybrid maize, the development of legume and forage seed sector continue to be limited despite meaningful subsidies in countries like Malawi.

In response to this weakness in seed systems, Tanzania and Zambia adopted decentralized seed schemes such as Quality Declared Seed (QDS) or standard seed grades aiming at improving the availability of quality seed at local level. Most recently, the use of small and affordable seed pack approach has emerged as an alternative to facilitate access to seed by a larger number of farmers, particularly women and extending the use of certified seed to farmers and creating business opportunities for seed companies. Despite these attempts, no rigorous assessment has been carried to identify the best models to efficiently reach farmers with quality seeds of improved varieties. This initiative proposes to review critically a range of seed dissemination models for legumes, maize and forage seed across the region to identify promising and scalable models (or a combination thereof) to accelerate the supply of quality seed of improved legume, maize and forage varieties. It will also assess what basic information should be delivered with seed to help farmers make informed choices on the varieties available. This study will produce the missing information that will guide FtF/Africa RISING the design elements for a sustainable and impact-oriented seed information system to market improved varieties with a strong history of success more widely and efficiently.

Approach

Carry out assessment of the representative of seed systems models related to production efficiency, scale and speed of seed and variety access and information with consideration of the different farmers categories particularly women and poor.

Process and key activities

1. Identification of the current and past seed systems models tried or going across in three countries and neighboring countries;
2. Identification of representative seed models to be assessed;
3. Design of appropriate study tools and share them with partners;
4. Review and assess the representative seed models across the three countries and the region;

5. Comparison of existing seed-related policies across the three countries and their implications on seed access of improved varieties to small scale farmers particularly women;
6. Data analysis and report outlining a typology of seed system clients, regulatory and technical environments for the three product categories: legumes, maize and forage;
7. Recommendations on appropriate strategies to develop a sustainable and impact oriented seed systems;
8. Knowledge-sharing with key stakeholders (government, NGO and seed industry, farmers);
9. Draft inclusive seed systems models that can be implemented in different types of seed markets

Principal partners: CIAT, DGP-CRSP and Selian Agriculture Research Institute –Tanzania

Other participant centers include IITA, CIMMYT and ICRISAT, Selian Agricultural Research Institute (SARI- in Northern Zone), Zambian Agricultural Research Institute (ZARI)-Msekera in East Zambia and the Department of Agricultural Research and Technical Services (DARS) in Malawi. Other support organizations to be invited are the National partners in the three countries such as MoAgriculture/policy makers and national Seed services e.g. TOSCI (TZ), NSSCI (Zambia) and seed services of DARS in Malawi. The NARS’ commodity programs, local and national district extension. Seed industry actors and local farmers’ organizations will be major partners.

Outputs

1. A documented and evidence-based understanding of how some representatives of existing seed systems models serve farmers (across economic and gender strata)
2. Understanding of the existing seed policies (related) and their implications for farmers’ seed access /seed industry development
3. Documented evidence of existing varieties and farmers’ capacity to identify varieties
4. An inclusive seed systems strategy with at least three proposed models for an impact-oriented and sustainable seed system development with key stakeholders
5. A catalogue of seed suppliers and related input suppliers per country

Timetable

Partner	Activity	Timeline (April-September 2012)					
		A	M	J	J	A	S
CIAT, Dry Grain Pulses CRSP and, CIMMY, ICRISAT, IITA NARS, private sector	Identification of the current and past seed system models that have been tried or used across the three countries and other neighboring countries	x					
	Selection of representative seed models (representing others)	x					
	Design and produce appropriate study tools	x					
	Hold a workshop to validate the tools with partners		x				
	Review and assess representative seed models across the three countries and within the region		x	x			
	Analyze existing seed related policies across the three countries and their implications on seed access		x	x			
	Carry out data analysis and prepare report			x	x	x	
	Suggest appropriate strategies to develop a sustainable and impact oriented seed system				x	x	x

	Share the results with local research for development actors and seed industry actors (farmers and seed producers)						x
	Develop inclusive seed systems with three proposed seed system models catering the extremely poor and women.						x