



Seeds, Smallholders, and the SDGs: Africa and Building Forward Better

Side event of the 7th Session of the UN Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

The 2020 “State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World” report shows that climate-related shocks continue to accelerate food insecurity. Exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the world is well off track to achieve the goal of zero hunger by 2030. Success is still possible, but only by ensuring access to nutritious foods part and parcel of healthy diets. Improving smallholders’ access to seeds is an essential part of the solution by increasing crop productivity, diversification and facilitating economic empowerment in Africa and elsewhere.

Amidst these developments this multi-stakeholder ARFSD-7 side event will explore the findings of the World Benchmarking Alliance’s Access to Seeds Index Regional Landscaping Reports for Southern and Eastern Africa (ESA) as well as Western and Central Africa (WCA). These reports provide an overview of the seed sector in the region and main seed industry players identified for benchmarking in the 2021 Access to Seeds Index. The report will also summarise the region’s main crops, the enabling environment, observations on the results of the 2019 ESA and WCA Access to Seeds Index and recent events affecting seed sector development, notably the COVID-19 pandemic. The roundtable will seek to provide clarity on both gaps and good practices under the ARFSD-7 theme of “Building forward better: towards a resilient and green Africa to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063” as well as SDGs 2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16 and 17.

As there is a consensus that insufficient access to quality seeds cannot be solved by individual companies alone, the roundtable will also address the urgency of a path forward that is cross-sector, transcends “North-South” silos, and adopts a systems-level approach. Governments play a critical role in creating the right conditions for markets to flourish and reporting on SDGs progress through Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). Other actors, such as nongovernment organisations and farmer organisations, can join forces with seed companies to accelerate smallholder farmers’ capacity to integrate new technologies and open new markets across borders. Similarly, greater awareness is needed among public and private investors that can help incentivise a race to the top among seed companies in line with the Decade of Action.

Objectives

- Spotlight how seed companies can use the 2021 Access to Seeds Index’s findings to implement sustainable strategies and practices that support smallholder access to quality seeds.
- Assess how seed industry is responding to smallholder needs in the wake of COVID-19.
- Identify steps for governments – including those undertaking VNRs at the 2021 HLPF – as well as investors to empower smallholders and promote inclusive growth
- Develop recommendations ahead of the 2021 HLPF and UN Food Systems Summit to accelerate transformation of food systems

Speakers

- H.E. Mrs. Marie Chantal Rwakazina, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Rwanda to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva **(Invited)**
- Stephen Mugo, Center for Resilient Agriculture for Africa Ltd **(CONFIRMED)**
- Rogers Mugambi, Chief Operating Officer, East African Seed Co. Ltd **(CONFIRMED)**
- Harrie Oostingh; Program Manager Sowing Diversity Harvesting Security, Oxfam Novib **(CONFIRMED)**
- Alice Ingabire, Access to Seeds Index Lead, World Benchmarking Alliance **(CONFIRMED)**
- Yacouba Diallo, Agri-Input Expert, CORAF (Moderator) **(CONFIRMED)**