

ISSD Ethiopia

Newsletter - July 2018



A new vision guiding seed sector transformation

A self-sufficient, independent, market-oriented and internationally competitive Ethiopian seed sector. This is the vision of stakeholders who, from their diverse positions and perspectives, explored what transformation in the seed sector looks like, what it means for their roles, and how such transformation increases farmers' income and wider food security.

Transformation of the Ethiopian seed sector requires a shift in thinking. It requires stakeholders in the sector to examine their role, their contribution, and their ambition. It starts though, with understanding the sector and the diverse range of actors and processes within it.

This was the starting point for discussions on April 20th-21st in Bishoftu. Circa thirty representatives of various public and industry bodies came together to assess the status of the Ethiopian seed sector at regional and national levels, and their roles in the governance of the seed sector.

The goal of the workshop was to take this understanding of the seed sector and its governance, agree on clear priorities for change and formulate a joint vision towards which collective transformational efforts could be harmonised.

National level debate and planning on new governance arrangements has far reaching impacts, from government buildings to local markets

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Multiple benefits of smaller seed packs identified

Seed pack sizes are commonly too large, too expensive, harder to check the quality of, more difficult to transport and represent a barrier for farmer's trialling. ISSD Ethiopia initiated the trialling of smaller seed packs. Farmers, as well as suppliers, woreda agriculture bureaus and marketing agents all report highly-positive experiences.

The average holding of an Ethiopian farmer for most crops is less than a quarter of an acre. When accounting for multiple varieties on the same plot, it's clear that standard seed packages, which are designed to fill half an acre, are far too large. Such seed packs don't consider the actual need of farmers, or their purchasing power.

A common example can be seen with Maize; seed packs for maize are commonly 12.5kg, enough to plant half an acre. However, analysis shows the average holding for maize is less than a quarter of an acre, thus warranting roughly only 6kg of seed.

In line with ISSD's core objective of increasing male and female smallholder farmers' access to quality seed of new, improved and preferred varieties, 2017 saw a number of initiatives to trial and promote smaller seed packs.

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A new vision guiding seed sector transformation

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Visioning seed sector in 2040

The Ethiopian seed sector is in a state of change. New systems and innovations are taking hold and the workshop enabled varied expertise to collaboratively reflect on whether all actors' activities are working toward the same vision. With eyes on the future, individual and regional priorities were shared and debated, with an initial vision statement showing agreement on the path ahead:

"In 2040, the seed sector contributes to increased productivity, food security and income. It is self-sufficient, economically viable and efficient in its delivery of high quality, whilst ensuring availability, accessibility and affordability to the farmer. It is competitive internationally and harmonized regionally. The sector is market-oriented, able to adapt and innovate continuously and is inclusive of different actors' needs. Biodiversity is maintained through the sector's conservation of plant genetic resources and provision of a diverse range of crops and varieties. The sector is environmentally sustainable. Furthermore, the seed sector in Ethiopia is well-organized, -coordinated and -regulated, and is independent and transparent in its dealings."

Guiding transformation through sector governance

AidEnvironment, a Dutch 'value-driven consultancy', has developed a sector governance framework. BENEFIT-ISSD Ethiopia in collaboration with its partners at regional state and national levels is operationalising the framework to guide transformation in the Ethiopian seed sector.



Developing a shared vision is not easy - participants debate the priorities, agree on compromises and learn about each other's perspectives

The framework promotes a more coordinated approach to drive seed sector transformation at scale. The roles that various actors traditionally played in the seed sector have changed and continue to do so mainly due to widespread and on-going policy reform and shifting economic and environmental contexts. The framework calls on actors to take a bird's-eye view of the sector to realise its integrated nature and aim for 'seas of change' instead of 'islands of success'.

During the workshop, attendees separated into groups and envisioned transformation in each of the blocks, with the below outputs discussed in plenary:

In 2040, the seed sector contributes to increased productivity, food security and income. It is self-sufficient, economically viable and efficient in ensuring availability, accessibility and affordability of high quality seed. It is internationally competitive and regionally harmonized. The sector is market-oriented, able to adapt and innovate continuously and is inclusive of different actors' needs. Biodiversity is maintained through conservation of genetic resources and seed provision of diverse crops and varieties. The sector is environmentally sustainable. Furthermore, it is well-organized, -coordinated and -regulated, independent and transparent.

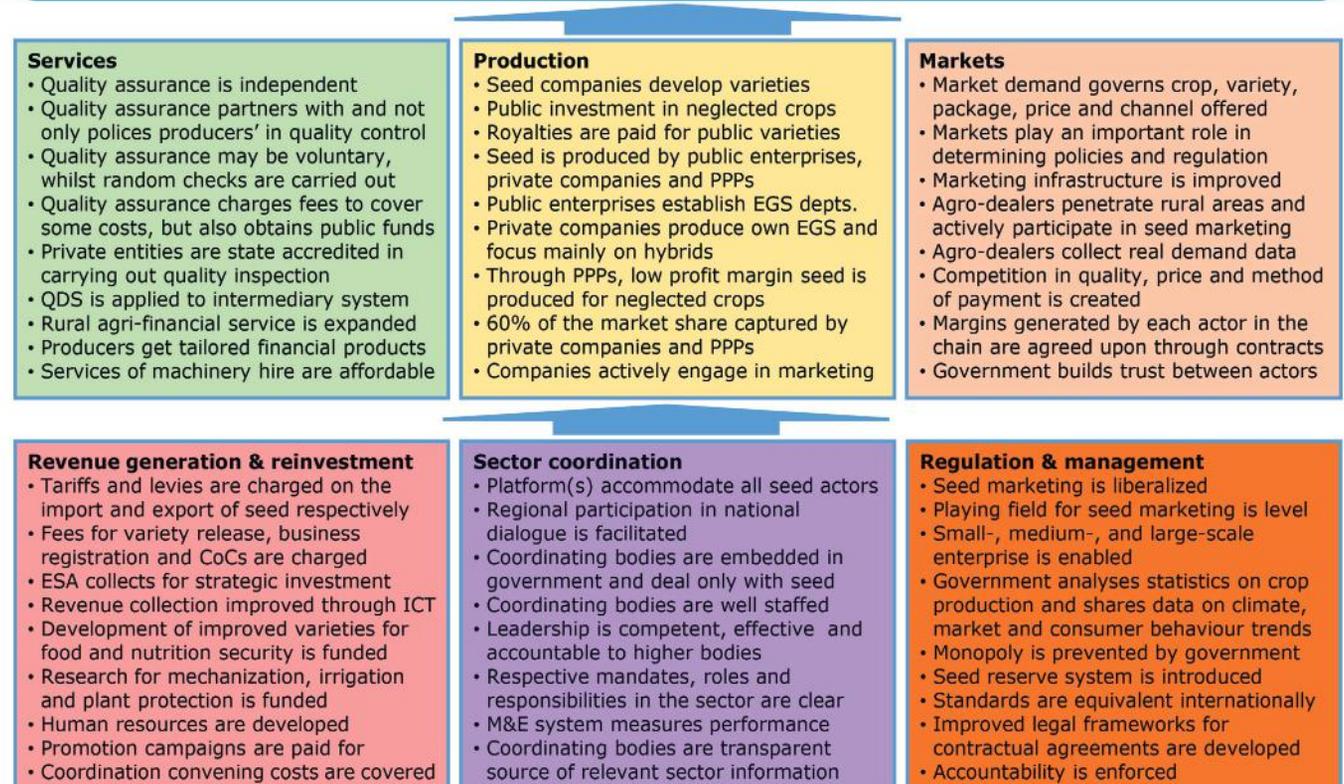


Fig 1: Sustainable sector performance is only achievable through effective engagement and collaboration on strategies and implementation

Transformational strategy on the ground

Strategies formed at regional level are key to achieving the changes prescribed in the blocks. Regional core groups and other participants discussed the current situation in their region for each block and what needs to change for this vision to be realised.

Leading seed sector transformation in each region, new 'seed units' were contemplated. These would operate separately from the input directorates of the Bureau of Agriculture. In Tigray though, the need for a separate seed unit goes one step further, with regional players envisaging a completely autonomous seed coordinating agency. For all regions though, clear expectations of what such bodies would deliver were agreed as 1) providing overall leadership and coordination; 2) coordinating the identification of systemic challenges; 3) further developing and sharing the initial shared vision and strategy for transformation; 4) steering stakeholders in follow-up strategies and implementation; and 5) monitoring and evaluating performance.

Next steps

The full report of the event is available on our website: www.issdethiopia.org. The report details all of the discussion and regional strategies and action points. Regional core groups have taken their initial plans from the workshop back to the regions for extended consultation with wider groups of stakeholders. This collaborative analysis will further inform the best forms of governance for that specific region's transformational ambitions.

Throughout this process, ISSD value chain experts and staff from the project management unit in Addis Ababa will facilitate information exchange and offer strategic advice and support. This will help the national seed unit to develop a national seed sector governance strategy which considers and aligns to the unique situations across the regions.



Workshop participants break the seed sector down into its key components and pick out what stakeholders need to do to achieve their shared vision

Researching how best to govern the seed sector

ISSD Ethiopia is commissioning Wageningen University & Research in the Netherlands to take a look at the impacts of fast-changing seed sector governance. Such research is critical to inform collective national efforts to transform the seed sector for better income and food security. The results will inform government, ISSD and partner strategies.

In recent years, Ethiopia has seen the rise of new entities in order to contribute to and improve seed sector governance. On national level, a Seed Unit has been set up. This Seed Unit is part of the Ministry of Agriculture and one of ISSD's senior seed sector experts is seconded to this unit. Next to this, a National Seed Advisory Group and National Seed Stakeholder Platform have been organised to advise the Ministry on technical aspects and/or on a strategic sector level.

On regional level, the Regional Core Groups have been established, consisting of decision makers from the Bureau of Agriculture and multiple other stakeholders. The Regional Core Groups have, among other things, been a driving force in promoting Direct Seed Marketing.

In order to document and explain the changes these new entities evoke in seed sector governance, scientific research will be conducted. A central component of ISSD Ethiopia is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the institutions, policies and regulations that govern the Ethiopian seed sector.

The project aims to contribute to ISSD's work on seed sector governance by documenting the current work and challenges

under the ISSD Ethiopia programme on how to best govern the seed sector in Ethiopia through legal measures and institutional reform of the Ethiopian seed sector. The study strives to include governance on the national as well as on the regional level (i.e. Amhara, Oromia, SNNPR and Tigray).

An important concept of the research is collaborative governance. In order to give insight in the establishment, functioning and effectiveness of collaborative governance arenas, provide the aforementioned needed input to the work of ISSD Ethiopia, and contribute to the body of knowledge on collaborative governance, the research asks a number of questions. Among these are: how can the complexities, perceived interdependencies and dynamics of seed governance in Ethiopia be described; to what extent has ISSD been able to establish arenas that practice collaborative governance and are the Regional Core Groups an effective arena to give direction to the governance of the seed sector; and how can the success or failure of new collaborative governance bodies be explained?

Findings will be published in the form of policy briefs, plus at least one article will be submitted to an international peer reviewed journal. Also, two workshops of and for stakeholders and researchers will be held. A first workshop has already been held (above). A second workshop will focus on the results of research on governance of the seed sector and implications for stakeholders in terms of policymaking, decision-making, legal innovation and institutional reform.

The study, led by Sanne Herpers, is a collaboration between the ISSD Ethiopia and the Public Administration and Policy (PAP) and Law and Governance (LAW) groups of the Social Science department of Wageningen University (WU).

For more information, contact us through our website: www.issdethiopia.org

The (re) emergence of seed sector governance in Ethiopia

Current efforts to establish collaborative and dynamic seed sector governance are underway, with new structures emerging. But there has been a long road to this point in time.

In 2004, the National Agricultural Input Authority, which governed the seed and fertilizer sectors was dissolved. Since then, there has not been a structure or entity with the clear responsibility for seed sector governance, neither at national nor regional levels. As a complex and key determinant of agricultural productivity, and thus food and income security, the seed sector needs a strong coordination system at both national and regional levels. The need for such extensive coordination has though been challenged by a perception that seed should only be seen in terms of input supply and quality assurance. A main objective of ISSD Ethiopia has thus been to facilitate learning and an understanding of the potential benefits of collaborative governance toward the development of the seed sector.

Whilst revising the 2013 seed law, seed sector governance was one of the contested issues among participants in the process. The ministry defended the exclusion of articles related to governance, by indicating that reorganizing the governance structure is within the responsibility of the ministry and should not be considered for legislative inclusion. Such a standpoint enabled seed sector governance to remain elusive, particularly at the national level.

Regional initiative

At regional levels, change has been more noticeable. 2010 saw the initiation of 'seed core groups' in the four regions where ISSD operates. The core groups are comprised of key seed sector stakeholders from public and private actors. In most cases, the Deputy Head of the regional Bureau of Agriculture serves as chairperson of the core groups, while ISSD experts provide facilitative support. The core groups represent a key regional seed sector

Seed sector governance may have at times seen like a long and winding road, but progress is being made.

governance structure and a key contributor to decision-making in regional Bureau decisions. The main challenge they face though, is the lack of formal national coordination. This gap limits their ability to effect change on regional and national issues which are inherently interlinked.

To address this shortcoming, ISSD and MoANR began national-level discussions in 2013. Early discussions were not fruitful due largely to a lack of a formal relationship between the Ministry and ISSD. In 2016 however, new motivation which arose through the BENEFIT Partnership, more intensive discussions restarted, with clear progress being seen in 2017.

Emergent leadership

The Ministry initiated a 'Seed Unit' within the Ministry itself. This would be the new hub for seed sector governance. To lead the new unit the Ministry committed two senior experts, complimented with one expert from each of ATA and ISSD. Matching seed units were also formulated at regional-level bureaus and now function as committees. The seed units enable direct communication between and across regions, an important first step.

To advise efficient and effective decision-making, the Ministry established a national 'seed advisory group'. The group is comprised of seasoned seed experts and provides technical advice to inform ministerial decision-making. To enable the seed units, core groups, advisory groups and other key stakeholders to connect, the Ministry has also initiated a national 'seed platform'. The platform enables the various regional and national players to stay updated as to what is happening, what is being learned and who can be engaged for what specific expertise.

Forging forward

Such fast-moving change means that specific roles and responsibilities, as well as services and service limitations, can remain unclarified. As time progresses however, expectations and needs are becoming clearer, as is the collective ability to meet these. What is clear however, is that the existence of these structures represents a clear leap in seed sector governance which has been lacking since 2004.



Small seed bags piloted

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Innovation grants

ISSD Oromia and SNNPR regional units provided 'innovation grants' - financing mechanisms designed to enable trialling and piloting of potential solutions to identified constraints - to three private seed producers (PSPs). 'Amuari High Yielding Varieties and Agricultural Products PLC', 'Nono Agricultural Development PLC', and 'Zi-Andeta PLC' each received innovation grants. The three producers were selected with close collaboration from the Ethiopian Seed Association (ESA).

The grants stimulated the PSPs to test pack sizes which they normally would not. In providing the grant, ISSD was able to show the companies that by producing smaller packs, not only would their customers benefit, but their market share would also increase, as more farmers, who could not normally afford their products were now able to do so. The grants enabled thousands of farmers in Oromia and SNNPR to buy smaller packs of preferred seed of teff, chickpea, maize and wheat. In total, close to 1,450 quintals of seed was distributed in some 9,000 packs during the cropping season (2017).

Partnering for scale

Public seed enterprises in Amhara and Oromia regions, as key seed producers in their respective regions, also took part in efforts to promote and use smaller seed packs. CIMMYT, the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center, joined forces with ISSD and provided grants to the public seed enterprises. These grants enabled the public seed enterprises to market small seed packs for seeds of quality protein maize varieties. The collaboration between ISSD, public seed enterprises and CIMMYT meant that over 40,000 farmers received smaller, more suitable seed packs, totalling circa 2,500 quintals of maize.

Economic sense

Farmers involved in the pilot report that smaller seed packs are far more preferable for their small plots. Previously, after buying larger seed bags, if they could not find a neighbour to share seed with, their seed would deteriorate and become wasted. With income margins so fine, this was previously a serious concern. The new seed pack sizes have greatly reduced this risk. Further, if there is an on-farm shortage at the time of planting, the relative cost is now not so high to fill the gap; previously such shortages would mean some land would not be utilised fully.

Not only are the piloted bags smaller, but also transparent. This enables a thorough quality check before purchasing the seed



A clear and very welcome benefit of smaller bags is the reduced weight that needs to be carried, often over long distances and on foot.

The first and perhaps most obvious benefit of the smaller seed packs is the increased ease to transport seeds. Farmers who would normally have to walk long distances to buy their seed, could do so with, in some cases, carrying half as much seed.

Because of the trial, suppliers have confidently adopted the smaller packs into their business models. The three PSPs supported by ISSD have confirmed their commitment to continue selling the packs. They have seen clear rises in their sales and exposure to new markets and customers.

Improved transparency and safety

Smaller seed packs also mean that farmers, to a much higher degree, buy only what they need themselves. This is as opposed to sharing with neighbours. Farmers and marketing agents see this as a potential benefit as a way to prevent contamination. Bag-size was not the only element of the innovation, with the smaller packs also being delivered in transparent plastic. This now enables farmers to see the seed inside the packs, which are often coloured and sealed. Farmers said that this is a major benefit, as they can now confirm that a sample they may have seen matches the crop type, seed size and other physical qualities of the produce they are actually buying. This helps to increase confidence and trust in the seed producers.

Adaptations still needed

Three other companies, in Amhara and SNNPR were also supported to trial the smaller packs through ISSD innovation grants. These trials are still on-going, with a delay arising due to the challenge of sourcing the packaging. In Amhara, the packing machine cannot process the smaller bags; so an alternative is needed. The motivation is there however to fix the issue, as the observed benefits are clear to see. ISSD will continue to promote and facilitate the use of smaller seed packs across the country. More innovation grants are being formulated, while experience-sharing fora are on-going and being planned. Awareness raising is aimed primarily at MoANR and seed producers, so that scale can be achieved quickly, and more seed, in suitable forms, can reach more farmers.

New energy behind EGS production and supply

Ethiopia's early generation seed (EGS) production and supply systems have been plagued with uncertainty and inefficiency. At the request of government, ISSD are facilitating a collaborative effort to design a new system.

To supply sufficient amount of seed of farmer-preferred varieties, the availability of early generation seed (EGS) is critical. So too is the functioning of the EGS production and supply system. The Ethiopian EGS supply system has traditionally been beset by challenges, which consultation shows are mainly due to a lack of clarity on the roles of actors across the system.

This includes uncertainty on the responsibility for production of pre-basic and basic seed; decision-making on how much seed and of which variety should be produced, and how the transactions have to be facilitated.

Who's doing what?

There are different producers and users of EGS. Research institutes are the producers, while public seed enterprises, private seed companies, and unions are both producers and users of EGS. Initially, research institutes took on the role of producing EGS, as varieties they had released were not reaching or preferred by farmers.

Over time, some public seed enterprises also engaged in the production and marketing of EGS. These producers supply pre-basic and basic seed of varieties they thought are demanded and/or are important. Different seed producers also access pre-basic and basic seed from multiple sources.

The vagueness as to 'who is producing what' in terms of EGS has created a mismatch between what is produced and what is actually demanded. While some producers complain about shortages of EGS, EGS producers also complain about the excess amount in their respective stores.

The regional seed core groups identified this as a major problem for a number of years. Different efforts are underway to overcome the problem, but they have yet yielded tangible outcomes.

A growing trend of contract signing between EGS producers and buyers is though a positive development.

Designing a new system

Owing to these challenges, the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resource requested ISSD to facilitate the design and development of an improved system of EGS production and supply. ISSD initiated wide collaborative dialogue and supported actors to initiate a systematic planning process.

A first clear agreement was that regional states are fully responsible for EGS production and supply in their respective regions. Producers at national federal level are responsible to fill regional gaps. ISSD is maintaining discussions to ensure regions are supported to take up these responsibilities.

Based on its role and observations, ISSD have advised that the national agricultural research system (NARS), which includes the federal and regional state agricultural research institutes and selected universities, be responsible for breeder and pre-basic seed production. Further, regional agricultural research institutes are best placed to coordinate EGS supply. For basic seed production, public seed enterprises are well placed to take up the responsibility but that this task be shared with licensed private companies and seed producer cooperatives.

Adapting to new thinking

Although in its infancy the process has confirmed that changing the EGS production and supply system is a complex process. Firstly, adaptation to new roles and thinking is slow, as actors are tending to stick to the old system of planning. This is based on a belief that the current process is correct, regardless of the encountered difficulties.

Secondly, there are vested interests in maintaining the existing system. The existing system has naturally enabled some actors possess a comparative advantage. There is thus some resistance and hesitation, making the process more complex. And in such a complex setting, careful and staged facilitation is a must.

Change in the EGS system will take time, but the motivation to finally address the issue is strong, with overcoming EGS production and supply challenges now a key explicit priority on the agenda of both regional and federal governments.



EGS supply was one of the key issues when national stakeholders met in Addis Ababa to discuss seed sector governance



Shared motivation to enhance outreach and engagement – Participants of the symposium in Bishoftu, July 2018

National universities reaching out for agricultural innovation

Beyond the seed sector innovations of ISSD Ethiopia, the wider BENEFIT Partnership and other partners' activities are leading to widespread agricultural innovation across Ethiopia. The continued identification and deployment of such innovations depends on the connections between research and communities. Leaders from key universities agree and are working to strengthen these connections.

Realizing the key roles universities play in facilitating innovation and system changes, BENEFIT-ISSD Ethiopia organised a symposium to explore how to improve institutional outreach programmes and change paradigms for greater impact in Ethiopian agriculture.

Over 60 participants, including the State Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Resources (MoALR), the Director of the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR), Presidents and Vice Presidents of 15 universities drawn from four regional states (Amhara, Oromia, SNNPR and Tigray) and a Ethiopian Agricultural Research Council Secretariat (EARCS) representative joined senior members of the BENEFIT Partnership at the symposium, in Bishoftu.

The symposium sought to identify pathways to improve the effectiveness of research and community services in universities, identify and assess the real value of services that are needed and explore innovative business models to enable universities to more effectively deliver such services.

Aligning to a new strategy

Dr. Eyasu Abraha, in his opening remarks reminded attendees that the new national agricultural strategy is seen as focusing on structural change and collaboration to increase agricultural productivity. This he said aligns with his own motivations, "I am here because I believe universities play an important role in improving food security and in facilitating systematic changes to support the government reach its agricultural growth target".

Highlighting the current national challenge of export rejections due to poor quality, Dr. Eyasu urged a focus on expanded and high quality research, dissemination and interaction across the sector. Only with such exchange and engagement can national targets be achieved.

Learning from experience

Hawassa, Bahir Dar, Mekelle and Haramaya Universities are already engaged in structured engagement to carry through academic research into practical application. Through their participation in various BENEFIT Partnership programmes, the universities have gained valuable experience.

The universities highlighted key elements of their approach. Specific attention was given to the benefits of piloting innovations, potentially in single plots, which are then up-scaled, potentially to thousands plots. Being responsive to the market and adopting a demand-driven approach ensures the relevance uptake of innovations. Step-by-step institutionalisation and a focus on decentralised decision-making, all supported by continuous training and facilitative support ensures added longevity and sustainability of the innovations.

In completing these services though, common challenges are encountered. These include a low level of mutual engagement with other actors, poor technological and financial external support as well as a host of internal barriers on inventive mechanisms and financial procedures.

The future of outreach

Attendees agreed that to move forward, universities need to optimise their resource use for better outreach. To do this, innovation is needed in institutional arrangements, which currently limit responsiveness to societal issues. But with a common acceptance that Universities have the task to challenge the status-quo of current systems and change paradigms, it is clear that motivation is present.

A national meeting on higher-level educational institutes' research and extension linkages at the end of July 2018 will see a draft report of the symposium presented.

The symposium report can be found on our website:

www.issdethiopia.org

Seed quality control – under the microscope

Poor quality seed is a key contributor to reduced productivity and thus food and livelihood insecurity. Smallholder farmers are particularly challenged by seed quality issues. Across the sector technical and capacity challenges persist.

ISSD Ethiopia and partners have kick started multiple innovations to address seed quality.

Seed quality control mechanisms and organisations are emerging and having an impact, but some core challenges remain.

Here, we take a look at two such organisations, as well as the recommendations of research that ISSD Ethiopia commissioned to formulate and action agenda.



Establishing the Agricultural Inputs Quality Control and Quarantine Authority in SNNPR

In SNNPR, maintaining seed quality has been a key contentious issue among seed sector stakeholders. Over the past years, multiple approaches and interventions have been attempted to alleviate this challenge.

In 2012, ISSD Ethiopia, in collaboration with regional partners initiated the establishment of a regional independent seed quality control and certification system.

Mandated to deliver growth

After a proving period, the regional government accepted this innovation and in 2013 the SNNPR Agricultural Inputs Quality Control and Quarantine Authority was officially established. Since then, the authority has been working to deliver services to strengthen the region's seed quality.

According to regional regulations, the Authority is accountable to the SNNPR Bureau of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

The Authority is mandated to deliver standardized quality assurance and quarantine systems leading to improved agricultural production and productivity, thus ensuring accelerated and sustainable agricultural growth in the region.

The Authority is funded from government allocation, specific grants, and the collection of service fees.

Well-equipped for service delivery

Currently, the Authority has three seed laboratories, fourteen seed inspectors, seven technicians and eight vehicles.

These resources enable the Authority complete scientific analysis and quality assurance as well as on-the-ground field inspections.

The authority provides multiple services including:

- > registration and licensing of seed producers (both public and private) operating in the region,
- > seed field inspection,
- > seed sampling and testing,
- > seed certification and labeling and,
- > offering training for seed producers to help implementation of internal quality control

Due to the delivery of these services, the Authority is a valuable asset in improving regional seed quality and a key partner of ISSD Ethiopia in transforming the SNNPR seed sector

Autonomy strengthens the effectiveness of seed quality assurance in Amhara

Poor enforcement of regulations was until recently a key contributor of poor seed quality. To contribute to improving quality seed production and supply, ISSD Ethiopia facilitated the emergence of an autonomous seed and agricultural input quality and quarantine authority.

The authority was established in 2013 and now has four regional branch offices with a new seed laboratory currently under construction. After a long period of building up resources, the Authority is currently well staffed and equipped to effectively implement seed quality assurance in the region.

Focus on capacity

ISSD Ethiopia has facilitated and supported tailor-made technical trainings of seed quality inspectors and laboratory technicians. Such capacity development has helped the Authority to develop and disseminate guidelines on seed quality across the region.

Further, awareness-raising on seed laws and regulations by the Authority have helped to strengthen internal quality mechanisms, as well as develop a shared understanding of the mutual benefits of seed regulations and directives.

The Authority also trains regional seed producers on seed law and regulations in order to ensure the production of quality seed, while creating and enforcing accountability and responsibility in relation to seed quality problems.

Recently, the seed quality control abilities of the Authority have been extended, with enhanced field inspection, laboratory testing and outgrow testing.

These new services ensure higher-quality seed is distributed to farmers. The Authority now also supports and assesses seed marketing to ensure only quality seed is being sold.

Efficient and effective

The Authority is seen as highly effective. There is a widely noted improvement in seed quality and quality control.

Many stakeholders put this success down to the autonomy and thus efficient activities of the Authority.

Such autonomy enables quicker responses, more efficient internal and logistical processes and prevents potential interference and bureaucracy.

The result, in short, is that higher quality seed gets to farmers more effectively.

An action agenda to improve seed quality control

ISSD commissioned the Royal Tropical Institute of the Netherlands (KIT) to complete research on seed quality control across Ethiopia. The results point the way forward to improved national seed quality.

The objectives of the study were to identify strengths and weaknesses of the seed quality control system, identify experiences with innovative ways to improve the performance of the certification system and formulate recommendations for improvement of the seed quality control system, building on on-going initiatives

After the research was conducted, a high-level workshop took place to share the recommendations.

Recommendations:

- > Improve the operational capacity of the existing and newly established laboratories / branch offices
- > Establish a regional agency overseeing the quality control in each region.
- > Assure full independence of the inspection services from the economic interest of the public seed enterprises
- > Make financial resources available for vehicles, staff allowances and other operational needs
- > Implement and assure payment for services. Ensure that such payment is invested in service provision

On EGS:

- > Introduce traceability and follow-up in the breeder seed production through mixed research-regulator teams
- > Follow-up and testing to be done at regional level
- > Communication of results to the right channels is important, as there are no direct economic incentives
- > Consider developing performance incentives for the breeders to produce good breeder seed
- > Consider incentives for the production of quality pre-basic seed

On field inspections:

- > Develop a system with accredited inspectors, particularly for outgrower systems of the major grains

- > For local production by seed cooperatives without a COC, mainstream the QDS system further

On laboratory testing:

- > Revisit the laboratory standards to include the fraction of undersized, malformed, physically off type and broken seed as criteria
- > Assess genetic purity through grow-out tests, as standard part of the quality control protocol, with associated sanctions
- > Consider if laboratory testing is required and feasible for major seed borne diseases, or whether field observations suffice

On labelling/tagging:

- > Tagging after laboratory testing is an understandable desire by the quality control bodies. Between the field and the store seed or grain can be added, which is happening. Identify ways to stop this.
- > Re-opening packaging after cleaning is not practical, so labelling on the outside of the bags. A pragmatic solution needs to be found in discussion between seed companies and regulatory bodies
- > Investigating how this such issues solved in other countries could be worthwhile

On storage and retail inspection:

- > Needs to be widened to random sampling among all seed stores and retail points
- > Currently only in DSM not in the seed distribution system. This is a large mandate, and too big for the current capacity of the laboratories.
- > Develop a pragmatic protocol of regular spot checks and responding to reported difficulties by seed clients

ISSD Ethiopia is committed to improving seed quality and seed quality control. For more information, contact us via our website: www.issdethiopia.org

New laboratories are a key tool in all regions in efforts to strengthen seed quality





PSNP focuses support on increasing access to safety net and disaster risk management systems, complimentary livelihood services and nutrition-related support and advisory services

Realising livelihood security in PSNP woredas

Enhanced human, organisational and institutional capacities to adapt, validate and scale best fit practices to improve the resilience of chronically food insecure households in PSNP woredas. That is the primary goal of a new programme within the BENEFIT Partnership.

'Realising Sustainable Agricultural Livelihood Security in Ethiopia' (**REALISE**) is the name of a new programme that has just been launched.

The programme will work in alignment with the Government of Ethiopia's ongoing efforts in the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), which targets food and livelihood insecurity in particularly vulnerable woredas.

The programme will cooperate with and capitalise on the achievements of existing BENEFIT programmes, in particular ISSD and CASCAPE. Four main outcomes have been targeted by the new programme:

- > Developed best fit practices that meet expressed needs and have the potential to contribute to increased productivity and resilience are available for scaling in selected PSNP Woredas. Here, the experience of CASCAPE will inform REALISE's activities.
- > Increased availability, timely delivery and use of quality seed of new, improved, and/or farmer preferred varieties through diverse channels. The knowledge and experiences of ISSD have a large role to play in delivering this outcome.
- > Enhanced human, organizational and institutional capacities for matching, adapting, validating and scaling best fit practices.

> A conducive environment exists for the institutionalisation of evidence based system innovations.

Achieving transformation through partnerships

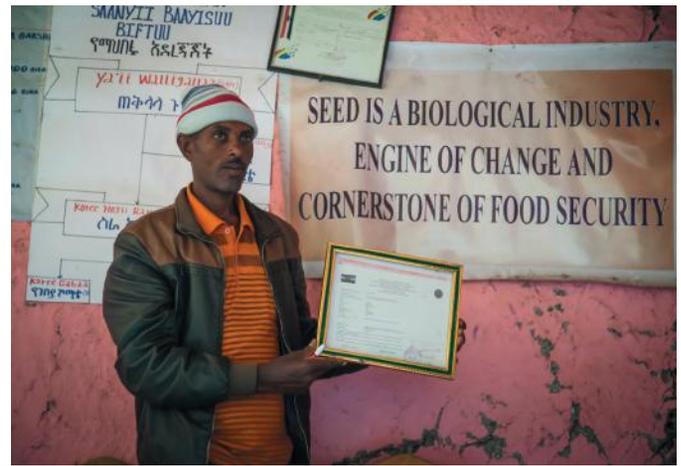
As in other BENEFIT programmes, REALISE will be implemented by multi-disciplinary teams hosted by Ethiopian Universities in four regions of Ethiopia. These partners are Hawassa University, Haramaya University, Addis Ababa University, Bahir Dar University, Woldia University and Mekelle University. The first three universities will partner with Arba Minch, Oda Bultum and Arsi respectively to make sure that more remote woredas can be included in the programme. Other major partners in REALISE are the Regional Agricultural Research Institutes, Ministry of Agriculture, and PSNP offices at woreda, zone and regional level.

In total, the programme will work in 60 PSNP woredas. Most of these woredas are in relatively moderate to higher potential areas for agriculture. This will allow better linking with the technologies of the CASCAPE programme, which have been developed in 65 high potential areas that fall under the government's Agricultural Growth Programme (AGP).

Mobilising for action

Currently the recruitment process for the REALISE programme is in full swing, with teams being formed at partner universities. A baseline study will be performed in the later parts of 2018, parallel to participatory rural appraisal and scoping exercises. These are key initial steps which will result in ensuring that the programme design is demand driven and that activities and outputs meet the needs of communities in these complex woredas.

REALISE will initially last for three years. This will enable a proof-of-concept for the REALISE approach in PSNP woredas. A second, longer-term initiative is already envisaged to run alongside a renewal of the PSNP programme.



Significant changes in food and income security

Knowledge Sharing and Communication experts from ISSD Ethiopia are joining other experts from the BENEFIT Partnership to discover the impacts of agricultural innovation across the country.

The stories of change that are being discovered are confirming the value of the work that the BENEFIT Partnership and its partners are completing. What we are learning about communities' stories, inspires further action and innovation.

In the coming months you can hear, watch and learn about these stories on www.benefitethiopia.org





BENEFIT-ISSD Ethiopia

The Integrated Seed Sector Development project in Ethiopia (ISSD Ethiopia) is implemented under the umbrella of the Bilateral Ethiopian Netherlands Effort for Food, Income and Trade Partnership (BENEFIT Partnership).

Our goal is to improve female and male smallholder farmer access to and use of quality seed of new, improved, and/or farmer preferred varieties to sustainably increase agricultural productivity.



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Bilateral Ethiopian Netherlands Effort for Food Income & Trade

Contributing to improved food, markets and trade for rural households in Ethiopia

Programmes united in the BENEFIT Partnership work hard to help achieve increased quantity and quality of sustainable agricultural production, improved markets and trade and strengthened enabling institutional environment for the agricultural sector for rural people in Ethiopia.



Read our regular news updates online:

- www.benefitethiopia.org
- www.cascape.info
- www.entag.org/
- www.issdethiopia.org/
- www.sbnethiopia.org/