

ENSP Newsletter

Ethiopia-Netherlands
SEEDPARTNERSHIP



Issue 06, December 2023

About this newsletter

The purpose of the ENSP newsletter is to provide relevant information on the latest developments and current issues in the Ethiopian seed sector and the partnership support activities.

In this issue we highlight the major activities that have taken place between Oct. and Dec. 2023.

The ENSP Internship Program Progressing Well with a Strong Track Record of Success

The Ethiopia Netherlands Seed Partnership (ENSP) internship program has yielded promising results, contributing to the development of skilled manpower in the Ethiopian seed sector. This initiative has focused on empowering fresh graduates in seed-related fields, facilitating their entry into the job market and nurturing potential young entrepreneurs.

The primary goal of the internship is to attract and engage young graduates, providing them with valuable exposure to the seed sector. By offering practical learning experiences, the program aims to equip these young professionals with the necessary skills and knowledge to pursue employment opportunities or even establish their own ventures. Moreover, the

(continue reading on page 2)

Inside this issue

- The ENSP Internship program progressing well01
- Stakeholders in Ethiopian Seed Sector Discussed Seed Production.....02
- Regional Seed Regulatory Authorities to Pilot Barcode Method04
- Haramaya University Reviews Seed Science and Technology.....05
- Ethiopian Seed Association's Stakeholder Engagement Workshop ..07



Stakeholders in Ethiopian Seed Sector Discussed Seed Production and Marketing Plan

Stakeholders in the Ethiopian seed sector recently convened to discuss the seed production and marketing plan. This important gathering brought together key players in the industry to strategize and collaborate on ways to enhance seed production and improve the marketing of seeds in Ethiopia. The forum was organized by Ministry of Agriculture, in collaboration with the Ethiopia Netherlands Seed Partnership in Adama on November 11th, 2023. The main objective of the forum was to evaluate the achievements of the previous year and discuss on a three-year seed production and marketing plan for major crops.

The three-year seed production and marketing plan for major crops, covering all seed classes, was presented for discussion. The plan aims to produce 2.31 million quintals of certified seed by the end of the third year, with 1.52 million quintals already produced in 2021. Participants agreed that the target was achievable.

The plan also includes a potato seed supply component, which is uncommon in Ethiopia's seed supply planning. The goal is to produce and supply 238,929 quintals of potato seed tubers by the end of the third year.

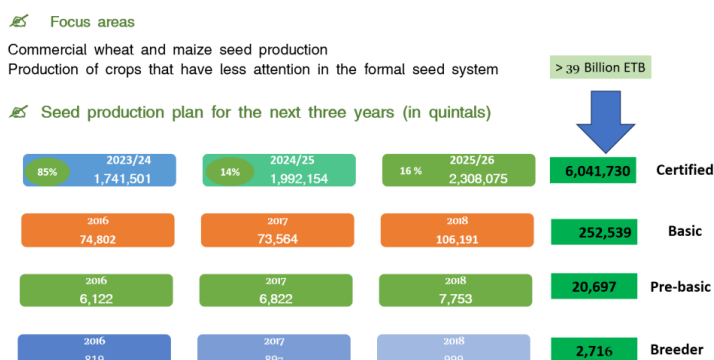
In addition to the numerical figures, the presentation also addressed the various challenges that could impede the attainment of the targets and proposed strategies to overcome these obstacles. A significant portion of the discussion revolved around enhancing coordination among the stakeholders to effectively achieve the desired outcomes.

A preliminary coordination structure was presented, which included technical committees at both federal and regional levels, as well as a steering committee at the federal level. It is crucial to note that the minister expressed his unwavering commitment to leading the steering committee. The minister emphasized that the technical committees would be

tions put forth by these teams and subsequently presented to the minister for approval. The technical committees, including those situated in various regions, will be convened in a kick-off meeting to ensure a level playing field for all parties involved.

In conclusion, the national consultative seed forum was a significant step towards achiev-

Three years production plan



responsible for outlining specific activities and assigning roles to different actors, while also ensuring that there is no duplication or overlap in efforts to attain the planned targets. Furthermore, the technical committees are tasked with proposing improved approaches for implementation and monitoring, evaluation, and learning (ME&L). The minister emphasized that by building upon existing knowledge and embracing innovative methodologies, we can establish a robust system that effectively meets the needs of farmers.

At the conclusion of the forum, the attendees delved into the next steps in smaller groups. It was decided that the governance structure would be refined based on the sugges-

ing the goal of producing and supplying certified seeds for major crops in Ethiopia. With better coordination, commitment from stakeholders, and a functioning governance structure, it is possible to establish a strong system that responds to the demand of farmers. ENSP has expressed its unwavering commitment to supporting the efforts of the ministry in establishing a fully functional seed system.

The forum was attended by major stakeholders in the Ethiopian seed sector from both regional states and federal levels. The forum was well-received by participants who were pleased to see such an event taking place, as there had been no similar gatherings in recent years.



Regional Seed Regulatory Authorities to Pilot Barcode Method for Seed Certification

In a move to combat the proliferation of counterfeit seeds in Ethiopia, regional regulatory authorities in Amhara, Oromia, and central Ethiopia have embarked on a pilot project to implement barcode technology for seed certification. The initiative comes as a response to the growing concern over the spread of non-genuine seeds, particularly in the case of hybrid maize and vegetable seeds.

A barcode is a machine-readable optical label that contains information about the item to which it is attached. The use of barcodes is expected to be particularly beneficial in addressing the challenges associated with counterfeit seed distribution, with a specific focus on maize, which has been significantly impacted by this issue. By incorporating barcodes method into the seed certification process, regulatory bodies aim to ensure that only genuine seeds reach farmers, thereby safeguarding their economic interests and enhancing agricultural productivity.

Counterfeit seed practices have been identified as a significant threat to the integrity of the seed sector, prompting collaborative efforts between regulatory bodies, seed companies, and farmers to address this pressing concern.

In February 2023, the Ethiopian -Netherlands Seed Partnership (ENSP) collaborated with regulatory authorities from Oromia, Amhara, and other regions to conduct consultative workshops addressing the issue of counterfeit seed.

The primary objective of these workshops was to comprehensively assess the extent of the problem, its underlying causes, and potential remedies. Participants identified several forms of counterfeit seed, including the replication of tags, the use of forged chemicals, adulteration, and re-bagging. In response to these findings, the imperative for technological intervention was underscored during the workshops. This emphasis was further reinforced at the 2023 National Seed Quality Control platform in Hawasa, where counterfeit seed was recognized as a significant challenge prevailing across the regions. Consequently, ENSP took proactive measures to support initiatives aimed at combatting seed counterfeiting in Ethiopia. As a result, ENSP directed its efforts towards addressing counterfeit seed by procuring barcode technology and providing training to seed regulatory authorities in Amhara, Oromia, and Central Ethiopia. A three-day practical training session held from December 11-13, 2023 provided an opportunity for 12 seed inspectors and IT experts to gain a basic skill of operating the barcode printer, implementing sequential numbering, and effectively coding procedures.

The tag that is printed with the barcode will contain a specific lot number comprising of a combination of letters and numbers, which is assigned by the regulatory bodies for the purpose of tracking. This equipment will assist the regional regulatory authorities in generating labels with barcodes and distributing them to seed companies in a timely manner.

Consequently, the regulatory bodies will have the capability to trace the origin of the seeds when any issues are reported to them. Furthermore, this process will mitigate challenges related to the timing of tag affixing for both the regulatory body and seed producer companies, ensuring simplicity and compliance with regulations.

The introduction of barcodes in seed certification is anticipated to significantly mitigate the expansion of counterfeit seeds and enhance the ability of regulatory authorities to trace and address any issues that may arise. Moreover, the awareness and vigilance of seed users are pivotal in thwarting illegal seed trade, as the illicit behaviour within the seed market poses a significant threat to the trust and reliance of farmers on certified seeds. Therefore, the efficacy of employing barcodes for seed certification is evident and indispensable for maintaining the integrity of the seed industry.

As we look ahead, it is evident that the adoption of barcode technology for seed certification marks a significant step towards ensuring the integrity of the seed supply chain in Ethiopia. By leveraging technological interventions and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, Ethiopia's seed sector is poised to effectively combat the menace of counterfeit seeds and uphold the interests of farmers and agricultural productivity.

The ENSP Internship program progressing ...

(Continued from page 1)

interns bring their expertise from various fields of study to the host organizations, fostering a dynamic exchange of knowledge and ideas.

ENSP has played a pivotal role in providing technical and economic support to talented and motivated young graduates throughout their internship period. This support is designed to advance their careers and establish connections within the labour market. The project has facilitated the identification of host seed companies and placement of interns, ensuring a structured and beneficial experience for all parties involved. Prior to their placements, interns also received training in personal development and business management, laying a strong theoretical foundation for their practical experiences.

The internship program, which has been conducted in two rounds, engaged 53 fresh graduates with educational backgrounds in plant science, horticulture, rural development, agricultural extension, agribusiness, crop production, and accounting. These interns were hosted by

international/ local private seed companies, public seed enterprises, and agricultural research centres across five regions, providing them with a comprehensive understanding of the seed value chain.

Throughout the program, interns gained hands-on experience in various aspects of seed production, processing, and marketing. This exposure allowed them to witness the intricacies of the seed value chain, from input to seed marketing, thereby broadening their understanding of the sector.

The impact of the internship is evident in the success stories that have emerged. Participants and individuals from hosting companies have attested to its positive outcomes. Interns have expressed gratitude for the eye-opening experience, recognizing the employment opportunities available within the Ethiopian seed sector. Notably, some interns in Southern Ethiopia have already seized these opportunities, exemplifying the tangible impact of the program.

One such success story is that of Gumalaal Input Supply PLC, a startup established by seven young professionals who participated in the ENSP internship program. Hosted by South Seed Enterprise for six months of on-the-job training, they identified challenges within the seed value chain in the region and promptly leveraged this insight to establish their own input supply PLC. This new venture aims to supply seeds and related agro-inputs in the area, demonstrating how the internship program has spurred entrepreneurial initiatives among its participants.

Testimonials from industry professionals further affirm the program's effectiveness. Mr. Lema Mulu, the head of the Seed Processing and Marketing Department at South Seed Enterprise, commended the high motivation and active participation displayed by the interns. He highlighted how the enterprise provided practical experience across various aspects of the seed sector, ultimately leading



Gumalaal Agri-input supply plc business center at Hawassa town



The ENSP Internship program progressing ...

(Continued from page 4)

to the establishment of licensed seed businesses. The interns identified the business opportunity in the seed sector while they are on the job training. "Accordingly, I advised them to group themselves and get a business license certification. They prepared a business plan, received the business license and secured their business centre and progressing very well" said Mr. Lema. Furthermore, Mr. Lema highlighted that in the subsequent round also, other interns have established licensed seed businesses, rented a store, and entered into a contract agreement with IDPC to supply forage seed.



Mr. Lema Mulu, the head of the Seed Processing and Marketing Department at South Seed Enterprise

Mintesenot Worku, an intern and secretary of Gumalaal Input Supply PLC, shared his experience: "After graduation I was looking for a job when I came across this internship program opportunity. It was the most significant change that happened to me. It enabled me to gain theoretical and practical experience of the seed business and

allowed me to introduce my friends along the way. With them we established the business based on the practical experience we got". He emphasized that as agricultural professionals with more than six months of on-the-job experience, they will not only sell seeds and other agro-inputs but also provide evidence-based technical advisory services to farmers.

Rediet Shiferaw, a fresh graduate from Hawassa University and member of the Gumalaal- Input Supply PLC, also expressed her gratitude for the internship program: "One of the most significant changes that happened in my life is my participation in the ENSP internship program which helped me get theoretical training and practical experiences. Leading me to have two job opportunities simultaneously, at ENZA seed company and start a seed business with my friends."



Mintesenot Worku, an intern and secretary of Gumalaal Input Supply PLC



Rediet Shiferaw, a fresh graduate from Hawassa University and member of the Gumalaal- Input Supply PLC

So far from the interns who completed their on-the-job training (a total of 17 in first round), nine got permanent employment opportunities, apart from the seven interns who established Gumalaal Input Supply PLC. The program is an ongoing initiative and expected to enable younger professional to be attracted to the seed sector. In doing so, the project will contribute in the creating of employment opportunities for young professionals and enhance the availability of skilled man power in the Ethiopian seed sector.

The success stories emerging from this program serve as a testament to its effectiveness in nurturing talent and fostering entrepreneurship within the Ethiopian seed sector. As the program continues to yield promising results, it is evident that investing in the development of skilled manpower is instrumental in propelling the Ethiopian seed sector towards greater heights of success and sustainability.



Haramaya University Reviews Seed Science and Technology Curriculum

Haramaya University, one of Ethiopia's leading educational institutions, recently conducted a comprehensive review of its Seed Science and Technology (SST) curriculum. With the aim of aligning the program with the current needs of the Ethiopian seed sector, a stakeholder's workshop was organized in Dire Dawa city. The workshop brought together experts, faculty members, and industry professionals to discuss and provide valuable insights for curriculum enhancement. The curriculum review committee at Haramaya University diligently worked on evaluating and modifying the existing SST curriculum. They highlighted the various modifications, mergers, additions, and omissions made based on a tracer study and internal review conducted by the university. The committee's primary focus was to ensure

that the revised curriculum adequately prepares students for the evolving demands of the seed industry.

Haramaya University is committed to contributing to the development of the country through providing competent and equipped graduates. This was emphasized by Dr. Yeheyes, the delegate for Haramaya University president, during the opening of a workshop aimed at revising the university's curriculum. As science and technology continue to evolve at a rapid pace, it is essential for educational institutions to periodically revise their curriculums to match the current status of these fields. "Haramaya University recognizes this need and has been revising its curriculums accordingly. The support from ENSP to revise the Science and Technology (SST) curriculum is highly appreciated by the university. The SST

curriculum has been in place for fifteen years since its launch, and it is time for it to be updated to reflect the latest developments in the Ethiopian seed sector" said Dr. Yeheyes.

During the stakeholders' workshop, the curriculum review committee presented their findings and the final product - a revised curriculum. The committee highlighted the courses that had been modified, merged, added, or omitted based on their extensive research. These modifications were made with the aim of meeting the demands of the evolving seed sector in Ethiopia.

External evaluators, renowned for their expertise in the field, were invited to provide their valuable feedback on the revised SST curriculum. They commended the efforts of the committee in addressing the

(continue reading on page 7)



Ethiopian Seed Association's Stakeholder Engagement Workshop Addresses Key Challenges in the Seed Sector

The Ethiopian Seed Association (ESA) has been at the forefront of fostering collaboration and dialogue among its members to tackle the various challenges faced by the seed sector in Ethiopia. Through consultation platforms and stakeholder engagement workshops, the association aims to foster collaboration, create awareness about new policies, and discuss the progress of the association. In its latest initiative, the association organized a stakeholder engagement workshop in Addis Ababa, in partnership with the Ethiopia Netherlands Seed Partnership. This workshop served as a platform to raise awareness about the new seed policy, address input pro-

vision challenges, and provide an opportunity for members to discuss the progress of the association.

The workshop commenced with a presentation by Mr. Fisseha from the Ethiopian Agriculture Authority, who provided insights into the new seed policy. The presentation focused on important updates and changes that would impact stakeholders, particularly private seed companies. Topics such as variety testing, DUS & NPT testing, and the phasing out of old varieties were discussed in detail. Participants had the opportunity to seek clarifications and provide feedback, which Mr. Fisseha addressed effectively.

He emphasized the need for stakeholders to familiarize themselves with the new policy and make use of the forthcoming directives.

The second session, led by Ayalneh, the ESA Secretariat manager, presented brief overview of the existing challenges related to input provision, with a specific focus on Early Generation Seeds (EGS) and fertilizer supply. Dr. Karta from the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) then shared insights into the measures taken by EIAR to tackle these challenges. He discussed ongoing initiatives, such as the development

(continue reading on page 8)

Haramaya University Reviews Seed Science and Technology...

(continued from page 6)

industry's requirements and acknowledged the relevance of the revised curriculum. While appreciating the overall changes, the evaluators also suggested certain improvements, including renaming specific courses and incorporating additional modules to meet the current demands of skilled manpower in the Ethiopian seed sector. Furthermore, the evaluators stressed the importance of including ICT and online platforms as an alternative to deliver courses.

The workshop participants actively engaged in discussions surrounding the revised curriculum and carefully considered the

suggestions put forth by the external evaluators. One notable observation was the slight bias towards plant science courses in the revised curriculum. Participants stressed the importance of balancing this bias by emphasizing courses related to seed regulatory frameworks and seed business. They highlighted that these areas often face a shortage of skilled professionals, and a more comprehensive focus on them would better serve the industry's needs.

The Ethiopian seed sector faces numerous challenges that require innovative solutions. Haramaya University recognized the

need to equip its graduates with the knowledge and expertise to tackle these issues head-on. To ensure that the revised curriculum adequately addresses these challenges, a comprehensive evaluation process was undertaken by the curriculum review committee. Additionally, valuable input from external evaluators and industry participants was sought, further enriching the curriculum's content. Once approved by the university senate, this revised curriculum is expected to effectively bridge the academia-industry gaps and empower students with the skills needed to thrive in the seed sector.



Ethiopian Seed Association's Stakeholder Engagement Workshop ...

(continued from page 7)

of an online system for EGS application and the potential for collaboration between private companies and EIAR in EGS production. Dr. Karta also highlighted the importance of transparent information sharing regarding landholding and out growers, as it impacts collaboration opportunities. Regarding fertilizer shortages, Dr. Mohammed, Project Manager of the Ethiopia Netherlands Seed Partnership (ENSP), assured participants that an ample supply of 23 million quintals of fertilizers had been purchased for the current year.

In the afternoon, the workshop shifted focus to internal discussions among members of the association. Ayalneh provided an overview of the association's activities in 2023 and highlighted partnerships with various development organizations. He also acknowledged the challenges

faced by the association. Following this, Mr. Melaku facilitated a discussion on several topics, including members' reflections on 2023 activities, improving membership fees, addressing inactive members, and approving policy documents. Members expressed satisfaction with the association's accomplishments in 2023 and agreed to implement a fee adjustment based on operational considerations. However, further consultation was required with public enterprises before determining a specific figure. Multinational companies expressed their intention to assess membership fees in other East African companies to arrive at an appropriate amount.

The workshop concluded with closing remarks from Mr. Melaku Admasu, the chairman of the board, expressing gratitude to all participants for their active involvement. The chairman highlighted the value of information

sharing, learning from one another, and strengthening the association through collaborative efforts. The workshop provided a platform for stakeholders to address prevailing challenges in the seed sector and laid the foundation for future collaborations and initiatives.

As Ethiopia continues to prioritize agricultural development and food security, initiatives like this stakeholder engagement workshop are crucial for fostering collaboration, sharing knowledge, and addressing challenges in the seed sector. The Ethiopian Seed Association's commitment to creating awareness, promoting dialogue, and driving progress is commendable. With continued efforts and partnerships, Ethiopia's seed sector can thrive, supporting farmers and contributing to the country's overall agricultural growth.

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