INNOVATIONS IN THE SEED SECTOR - THE EXPERIENCE OF SEED TRADE ASSOCIATION OF KENYA (STAK)

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Introduction

- Seed Trade Association of Kenya (STAK) was formed in 1982 to represent the interests of the formal seed trade.
- Seed is one of the most critical inputs in agricultural production and has the greatest potential of increasing on-farm productivity and enhancing the country's food security—ONE OF THE PILLARS OF THE BIG FOUR.
• The current national certified seed production is estimated at 40,000 metric tons
• About 80% of the seeds are still supplied by the informal sector while 20% by formal seed (where STAK representation is in)
• A shortage of quality seeds exists for crops such as potato, wheat and some pulses and certain varieties suited for arid and semi arid lands (ASALS)
• The importation of seed has steadily increased, particularly horticultural crops which cannot be produced locally
• The unpredictable weather and climate change issues has made planning a serious business and developmental challenge
• Appropriate use of fertilizers at the right time and in recommended quantities with certified seed results in optimum yields
Major Challenges in the Seed Industry

• Insufficient certified seed material. Apart from seed for the major crops like maize and wheat, the country still experiences shortage of seeds such as legumes and vegetables.

• Low adoption of improved seed and complementary technologies; it is estimated that apart from maize and vegetables, the informal seed sector accounts for about 80% of the seed industry.
• Inconsistent legal and regulatory framework – need to review seed policy (Gazettment of two seed regulations in 2017)
• Inadequate seed varieties for marginal areas
• Prevalence of adulterated seed in the market
• High cost of seed (some related to CESS)
• Insufficient technical skills and infrastructure for new technologies
• Low funding for seed research
• Inability for farmers to access fertilizers in a timely manner
• Climate change
• Disease incidences like Maize Lethal Narcosis (MLN) and Fall Army Worms
• Administrative challenges and bottlenecks with regard to Royalty payments and ordering of Early Generation Seeds (EGS) (especially maize)
• Lack of clear policies on Government subsidy programmes
• Wrong classification of pepper, coriander, watermelon as spices and not seed thus attracting tax
• Tax on seed consequently making seed expensive to farmers
Innovations in the Seed Sector

• Development of Climate Smart and resilient crop varieties (CIMMYT, AATF, ICRISAT etc.) with seed companies promoting these varieties
• Information sharing platforms such as Seed Sector Platform and Mbegu Choice www.stak.or.ke
• Kenya is among the Four COMESA countries that have harmonized their seed regulations
• There has been widening of space through Self Regulation i.e. Training of Seed Analysts and Inspectors (26 Inspectors and 3 Analysts)
• Seed companies working together with those in the fertilizer sector to ensure timely and appropriate fertilizer distribution
• Awareness creation on fertilizer use through field demos
• Use of Labels as one of the ways to manage fake seed
Sample of activated label (1393)