

### **Current outbreaks of COVID-19 and the international movement of seeds**

In a statement released in March, the International Seed Federation (ISF) sought the support of governments to facilitate the international movement of seed under the COVID-19 crisis and not to impose restrictive measures to avoid disrupting the agriculture supply chain.

Many countries did take public measures and we were informed that several of them have classified the food and agriculture sector including seeds as “essential business/critical infrastructure” to allow the continued movement of goods, and to allow its employees to continue their work. More than ever our engagement and proactive work is important to ensure that seed is available for the upcoming planting season and to ensure seed production. Seed producers take many steps to protect genetic integrity and the health of the seed during the many steps during production.

The International Seed Federation takes seriously the concerns of exporting and importing countries around the world that want to be assured that seed breeders and producers are taking every necessary precaution to prioritize food safety especially during these challenging times.

There is however no evidence that people can contract COVID-19 from food, including seed or from food packaging. The World Health Organization (WHO) in its guidelines for food business has stated the following: *“It is highly unlikely that people can contract COVID-19 from food or food packaging. COVID-19 is a respiratory illness and the primary transmission route is through person-to-person contact and through direct contact with respiratory droplets generated when an infected person coughs or sneezes. There is no evidence to date of viruses that cause respiratory illnesses being transmitted via food or food packaging. Coronaviruses cannot multiply in food; they need an animal or human host to multiply.”*

Today there is no country that could fully supply farmers with seed of their choice solely from their own production. Seed companies produce and trial seed in different countries all over the world to mitigate the risk of crop failures due to adverse weather conditions. Therefore, closing borders or even slowing down the transboundary movement of seeds could create a significant problem in the seed and food supply chain.

ISF asks governments to continue facilitating the international movement of seed and not to impose restrictive measures. Unjustified measures do result in the disruption of the international seed trade. Seed companies have and will continue to take all necessary measures to guarantee the health and safety of workers who are involved in the shipment of seed.

The seed sector seeks the support of public authorities in ensuring seed movement during this time of crisis. We remain committed to our vision of a world where the best quality seed is accessible to all, supporting food security and sustainable agriculture.

Michael Keller  
Secretary General