

## **ISF AND CGIAR FORGE PARTNERSHIP TO IMPROVE FARMERS' ACCESS TO QUALITY SEED AND INNOVATION**

**The two global organizations sign a 5-year cooperation for activities centered on seed systems to improve agricultural productivity worldwide.**

*Nyon, Switzerland* – The International Seed Federation (ISF), the global association representing the private seed sector, and CGIAR, the world's largest agricultural research partnership, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to address low agricultural productivity resulting from poor adoption of improved varieties and limited access to quality seed in many countries. The MoU is an outcome of both organizations' commitments at the UN Food Systems Summit 2021 to contribute further to food systems transformation.

While improved high-yielding varieties are essential to improving agricultural productivity, farmers in many low- to medium-income countries are unable to access quality seed. Some of the reasons cited are the lack of efficient seed systems and limited scaling capacity.

The partnership, formalized through an MoU, aims to enhance agricultural productivity by fostering joint efforts to provide solutions to complex issues in the seed sector and overall agri-food systems and by taking together the lead in informing policy discourse, discussions, and advocacy efforts with data-driven, evidence-based insights and recommendations. These include:

1. Developing a common understanding of the seed regulatory and policy frameworks:

This involves collaborative efforts to understand seed regulatory and policy issues related to variety release in identified regions. The program also aims to harmonize and facilitate regional policies on variety release, data sharing, and seed trade, thereby fast-tracking market introduction of new varieties. Additionally, it includes technical support to address gaps in the seed sector in identified regions/markets, along with emphasis on data and knowledge sharing, and capacity building.

2. Exploring opportunities to create and maintain a common platform:

The platform would serve to reach a common understanding of variety registration, digital cataloging, and licensing models for varieties from both public and private research. It also seeks to create better awareness of international agreements such as the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), and the Cartagena and Nagoya Protocols, and their potential relevance to improving seed access. Further, it aims to enhance understanding of intellectual property (IP) rights, and to jointly designing license monitoring and stewardship mechanisms.

3. Facilitating partnerships on improving seed delivery to smallholder farmers:

With the goal to improve seed access by smallholder farmers, the MoU aims to accelerate the introduction of varieties that suit the agro-climatic conditions in focus countries. To achieve this, the partnership is committed to support the implementation of subregional harmonized seed regulatory programs in commonly identified economic regions (such as Africa's COMESA, ECOWAS, SADC, etc.). Efforts also include establishing linkages between these programs and the 'Seeds Without Borders' initiative. Additionally, the MoU explores potential linkages with regional seed associations to foster broader collaboration.

4. Designing innovative models for capacity building of local and regional seed producers and farmers, including women and disadvantaged groups in commonly identified regions:

The initiative focuses on capacity building for local and regional small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and young entrepreneurs, specifically in the areas of seed production, dissemination, and sustainable business models. It aims to identify and reinforce entry points to enhance the formal-informal seed nexus, fostering better complementarity between these sectors. Additionally, the program seeks to pinpoint and address bottlenecks affecting access to seeds, with the goal of improving seed choices for farmers and ensuring access to a diverse range of seeds.

"This partnership with CGIAR is a significant step towards addressing the challenges faced by farmers who are the primary stakeholders of the seed sector. More than ever the private and public sector should engage collectively to empower farmers in the world, and with this memorandum we would like to leverage our contributions. By combining our respective expertise and resources, we aim to make a lasting impact on global agricultural productivity and food security," said Michael Keller, Secretary General of ISF.

Chris Ojiewo, CGIAR's Strategic Partnerships and Seed Systems Lead, shared: "Our collaboration with ISF aligns with CGIAR's commitment to transforming food, land, and water systems. Together, we can develop innovative solutions and strengthen seed systems, ensuring smallholder farmers – including women and youth – have access to improved varieties and quality seed. With this, farmers can realize improved genetic gains in their fields and we can boost sustainable agricultural practices."

The collaboration between ISF and CGIAR is a big step in improving global seed systems. By pooling their knowledge, expertise and resources, the two organizations hope to create a lasting impact on the livelihoods of smallholder farmers globally, promoting sustainable and resilient agricultural practices.

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#### **About CGIAR**

CGIAR is a global research partnership for a food-secure future, dedicated to transforming food, land, and water systems in a climate crisis. Visit: [www.cgiar.org](http://www.cgiar.org). For more information contact: Adam Hunt, Head of Communication, CGIAR Genetic Innovation: [a.hunt@cgiar.org](mailto:a.hunt@cgiar.org)

#### **About ISF**

ISF is the voice of the global seed sector. Since 1924, it has represented the interests of its members who make up 96% of international seed trade today. Its global reach extends to seed associations and seed

companies around the world, and it has official observer status in key intergovernmental and international organizations. Visit [www.worldseed.org](http://www.worldseed.org). For more information contact: Francine Sayoc, Communications Manager, ISF: [f.sayoc@worldseed.org](mailto:f.sayoc@worldseed.org)