

Seed Alert

#01 May 2020

Seed Alerts identify current challenges and urgent action in the Uganda seed sector, based on surveys and focus group discussions with various stakeholders

Uganda

(Photo: ISSD Uganda)

Alert 1

Mobility restrictions hamper processes of variety development and release

Alert 2

Mobility restrictions hamper the production of quality basic seed

Alert 3

Mobility restrictions hamper access to inputs, labour, and services for quality seed

Alert 4

Mobility measures restrict farmers' access to inputs and quality seed

Alert 1

Mobility restrictions hamper processes of variety development and release

What is the impact?

- COVID-19 measures reduce the mobility of researchers and others involved in variety development, selection and release, and this will affect the number of new varieties released in 2020
- Breeding materials prepared at CGIAR Centers and other sources outside Uganda have not reached the country due to transport restrictions; for example, only 25% of planned maize trials could actually be established, thus limiting the improved germplasm from which to select more productive varieties
- Breeders face challenges in reaching breeding nurseries and on-station trials, as well as collecting data on established participatory variety selection (PVS) on-farm trials
- The April meeting of the variety release committee has been cancelled
- Although the current crisis is not the moment to ask farmers to try new varieties, a continuous flow of new varieties into the sector is needed to improve crop productivity

What actions are required?

- Develop standard operation procedures (SOPs) for field operations to guide researchers, technicians, and labourers, including the provision of sanitizers and face masks
- Ensure that farmers who are hosting PVS trials are aware of government measures for preventing the spread of COVID-19, and work according to them
- Collaborate with courier services, in-country and internationally, to move breeding materials where they are required
- Support early preparations for missed seasonal breeding trials, so that experiments can be established in the 2020B season
- Engage National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) management to allow breeders to travel for more than one day to collect critical data from their off-station trials
- Engage the Ministry of Works and Transport to allocate car stickers for breeders at NARO institutes

What actions are required?

- With hotels being closed, gazette a few rooms in former government hotels to host traveling researchers and other essential experts
- Use Information Technology (IT) applications to have farmers supporting breeders in data collection on on-farm trials for issues like disease and pest infestation
- Make the necessary preparations for an online meeting of the variety release committee; this may be a starting point to change the offline variety release system into an online one

What stakeholders are involved?

- Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) through the Director of Crop Resources
- NARO secretariat, National Agricultural Research Institutes (NARIs), and Zonal Agricultural Research and Development Institutes (ZARDIs)
- Variety Release Committee
- Farmer groups hosting PVS trials
- Development partners including the Integrated Seed Sector Development Programme Uganda (ISSD Uganda)

Who takes initiative? Who drives action?

- NARI Directors engage with Director General (DG) NARO and respective Deputy Director General (DDG) NARO to prepare guidelines and COVID-19 response coping strategies
- NARO management to allow more days in the field for breeders to do their work, and present its case to the Ministry of Works and Transport to provide the additionally required stickers for breeders to continue their field activities
- ISSD Uganda with the MAAIF dedicated contact person and the Chairman of the Variety Release Committee prepare for an online meeting on the variety release process, involving all relevant stakeholders

A Government car with food rations for distribution handled by the army in Kampala suburbs (Photo: ISSD Uganda)



Closure of non-food markets has brought business to a standstill thereby affecting the economy (Photo: ISSD Uganda)



Alert 2

Mobility restrictions hamper the production of quality basic seed

What is the impact?

- Most, though not all, basic seed producers have been supplied with the necessary pre-basic (breeder) seed just before the COVID-19 lockdown
- However, the current COVID-19 measures pose challenges to the transport and distribution of the agricultural inputs needed for quality basic seed production
- Restrictions on public transport and rules on social distancing (keeping 4 meters distance) are resulting in a labour shortage
- Mobility restrictions also hamper MAAIF inspectors in assuring the quality of the basic seed currently in the field
- It is expected that basic seed quantities in the next season 2020B will not be sufficient
- This may result in seed producers using other seed classes to produce commercial seed, resulting in increased amounts of substandard seed on the market

What actions are required?

- With agricultural inputs designated as essential services, the District Local Governments (DLGs) should take affirmative action to ensure basic seed producers have access to the necessary agricultural inputs
- Seek opportunities to replace human labour with other options, such as replacing manual weeding with herbicides, and look into options for mechanisation that are currently not being used
- Create awareness among seed business entrepreneurs on the SOPs in the prevention of COVID-19 spread, and warmly welcome those providing inspection services
- Put a high priority on the inspection of early generation seed (EGS) involving the authorized District Agricultural Officers (DAOs) and MAAIF field inspectors
- Speed up the development of the digital seed tracing and tracking system (STTS), providing insight into the demand and supply of EGS

What stakeholders are involved?

- MAAIF, including the National Seed Certification Services (NSCS)
- DAOs
- Uganda Seed Trade Association (USTA)
- NARO/ZARDIs
- Makerere University Soybean Program
- Seed for Seeds Ltd. (S4S Ltd.)
- Local Seed Businesses (LSBs) producing basic seed
- Development partners supporting basic seed production activities, like ISSD Uganda and IFDC

Who takes initiative? Who drives action?

- MAAIF and NARO engage respective District COVID-19 Taskforces to agree and create awareness on SOPs involving movement, as well as labour
- MAAIF, through NSCS, prioritizes the inspection of EGS fields as a critical input to certified seed and quality declared seed (QDS) production for the next season
- ISSD Uganda, as temporarily mandated party in the development and implementation of the STTS, coordinates collection of planting returns and requests for inspections

Alert 3

Mobility restrictions hamper access to inputs, labour, and services for quality seed production

What is the impact?

- The government measures on COVID-19 impact the transport and distribution of the agricultural inputs needed for quality seed production, especially to outlets outside urban areas
- Seed companies and LSBs with larger seed crop acreages face shortages in labour for weeding and for fertilizer and pesticide application
- The new rule of keeping 4 meters social distance further hampers effective labour for seed production
- Field inspections are delayed due to difficulties in submitting planting returns that are required for planning inspection by MAAIF/NSCS
- This is expected to result in a shortage of quality seed in the next season, 2020B

What actions are required?

- Engage the District COVID-19 Taskforces and security forces to allow the transportation and distribution of agri-inputs to the last mile as an essential service
- Encourage agro-dealers to work with farmer seed entrepreneurs to provide inputs on credit to ease their cash flow challenges
- Create awareness and ensure adherence of seed production workers to COVID-19 safety guidelines
- Encourage government and seed company technical staff to provide virtual seed extension services to seed producers through phone calls
- Advise seed producers on the use of labour saving technologies, like integrated weed management options (herbicides)
- Engage district agricultural officers and inspectors to take proactive measures reaching out to seed producers to collect planting returns and schedule inspections
- Encourage field inspectors to prioritize inspection services, even if payment for the service is delayed
- Engage the District COVID-19 Taskforces through MAAIF to allow their Production Department vehicles be used for field inspection
- Request MAAIF to provide the required logistics to seed inspectors to do their routine audit inspections in the regions

What stakeholders are involved?

- MAAIF
- NARO/ZARDIs
- DLG (DAOs, Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) & Agricultural Officers (AOs), Resident District Commissioners (RDCs))
- Local agro-input dealers
- Seed companies
- Farmers' associations and LSBs
- Development partners, including ISSD Uganda

Who takes initiative? Who drives action?

- MAAIF coordinates with DLGs for uninterrupted transport and distribution of the agri-inputs needed for seed production
- MAAIF with seed companies and LSBs creates awareness and ensures adherence to SOPs for seed production, including virtual extension services
- ISSD Uganda works with MAAIF in linking seed entrepreneurs with DLGs and DAOs for inspection services

Alert 4

Mobility measures restrict farmers' access to inputs and quality seed

What is the impact?

- Government measures on COVID-19 have hampered the transportation and distribution of agri-inputs to both urban and rural agri-input shops, leading to limited availability to farmers
- Travel restrictions severely limit farmers in their access to agri-inputs and seeds
- Restrictions on public gatherings, including rural markets, with the exception of food markets, hampers promotional events (like seed fairs) for quality seed and other inputs
- Public transport restrictions increase the costs of agri-input deliveries, making them less affordable to farmers
- Reduced access to agri-inputs and quality seed directly affects crop productivity, which may result in food and nutritional insecurity

What actions are required?

- Engage with the District COVID-19 Taskforces to facilitate easy movement of essential agri-inputs to areas where movement authorization is not yet permitted by the authorities, but in accordance with COVID-19 SOPs
- Develop an effective coordination mechanism to facilitate availability and access to agri-inputs throughout the country
- Promote seed companies utilizing their cargo trucks to stock upcountry dealers with enough inputs to avoid shortages
- Encourage seed companies and agro-dealers close to farmers to embrace the delivery of inputs to farmers, with farmers ordering via phone and paying using mobile money
- Encourage farmers to make input purchases through local extension agents and farmers' associations, which are free to move using motorbikes
- Continue monitoring agro-dealers selling inputs to ensure quality inputs to the market and to minimize substandard inputs that may lead to losses on the farmers' side

What stakeholders are involved?

- MAAIF
- District COVID-19 Taskforces
- Seed companies, agro-dealers, and farmers' associations

Who takes initiative? Who drives action?

- MAAIF coordinates with District COVID-19 Taskforces on uninterrupted transport and distribution of agri-inputs, as well as on monitoring the quality of agri-inputs
- Agri-input providers reach out to farmers, facilitating access to the agri-inputs they need

Bean field inspection for QDS by sub-county field inspectors (Photo: ISSD Uganda)



Field inspectors taking care of the necessary SOPs before they go into the field (Photo: ISSD Uganda)



Dashboard

Outcomes of May Survey Uganda -
identification of FDG topics or Alerts

- Severe negative impact
- Negative impact
- Slight negative impact
- No impact; business as usual

Seed sector operations and services

Seed Alert May

Breeding on-station	■ Alert 1
Multilocational variety trials	■ Alert 1
Farmer variety trials	■ Alert 1
Variety release committee and release process	■ Alert 1
Production of early generation seed	■ Alert 2
Supply of early generation seed	■ Alert 2
Field inspection for seed quality assurance	■ Alert 2, Alert 3
Laboratory testing for seed quality assurance	■
Access to agro-inputs for seed production	■ Alert 2, Alert 3
Access to labour for seed production	■ Alert 2, Alert 3
Field operations for seed production	■ Alert 3
Post-harvest practices for seed marketing	■
Seed import	■
Seed distribution	■ Alert 4
Seed & variety promotion	■ Alert 4
COVID-19 measures on mobility	■ Alert 4
Mobility of seed companies to point of sales/agro-dealers	■ Alert 4
Mobility of farmers to point of sales/agro-dealers	■ Alert 4
Mobility farmers to informal markets	■
Accessibility informal seed sources	■
Presence of substandard seed in markets	■
Sales of quality seed	■
Government funding of services	■
Government investment in marketing and distribution	■
Seed sector information sharing and coordination	■
Affordability of quality seed to farmers	■ Alert 4
Farmer cash availability	■ Alert 4
Farmer willingness to pay for quality seed	■
Quantity and quality of seed sown	■
Quantity and quality of produce harvested	■
Food and income security	■

Rapid Assessment & Seed Alert

To avoid a food and hunger crisis following the current COVID-19 health crisis, urgent action is needed to address key agricultural challenges, including bottlenecks identified in the seed sector. The Rapid Assessment is conducted at country level through a survey and focus group discussions. On at least a monthly basis, reiterations of a Rapid Assessment identify alerts and actions, and Seed Alerts are published. [More details on the methodology and steps can be accessed through this link. \(https://bit.ly/sectoralertMETH\)](https://bit.ly/sectoralertMETH)

Purpose

The purpose of the Seed Alert is to assess the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the functioning of the seed sector. The project operates in Ethiopia, Myanmar, Nigeria and Uganda, where Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCIDI) collaborates with partners in seed programmes. [More details on the Rapid Assessments Project for the Seed Sector can be accessed through this link. \(https://bit.ly/seedalertINTRO\)](https://bit.ly/seedalertINTRO)

Alerts in other sectors

In May and June 2020, likewise Alerts are foreseen to cover the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the functioning of the horticultural and sesame sectors. The use of the tool is explored in other specific commodities such as dairy and potato. Working with a similar model of Rapid Assessment in various sectors and countries over a time series allows for interpretation and synthesis of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on food systems at national, regional and global levels, while also gaining insights into immediate and practical actions addressing emerging challenges. It furthermore provides insights into the use of the sector model as diagnostic tool supporting strategic development, planning, identification and monitoring interventions that aim to enhance the functioning and resilience of specific sectors and food systems.

Seed Alerts are published for multiple countries as part of WCIDI Sector Transformation publications. Please cite as: "Seed Alert Uganda, number 1. Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries, and Uganda Seed Trade Association, May 2020" (date 15 May 2020)

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Institutional reference

The Seed Alert Uganda is the result of a collaborative project that brings together experts working in the Integrated Seed Sector Development in Uganda programme (ISSD Uganda), as implemented by WCIDI in close collaboration with MAAIF, USTA, and various other organizations in Uganda.

Contributing organizations

The Seed Alert Uganda involved in surveys and focus group discussions representatives of the following organizations:

- Ministry of Agriculture, Animal, and Fisheries (MAAIF)
- National Seed Certification Services (NSCS)
- District Local Governments (DLGs) of Isingiro, Gulu, Kyenjojo, and Pader
- Farmer representatives of Dokolo, Kapchorwa, Mbarara, Ntungamo, and Apac Districts
- Aye Medo Ngeca Local Seed Business
- Kakindo Local Seed Business
- Kyazanga Local Seed Business
- Aang Pur Agro-dealer
- Bukoola Chemical Industries Ltd.
- Omulimisa Agro-shop
- Tororo District Farmers Shop
- Pearl Seeds Ltd.
- Equator Seeds Ltd.
- NASECO Seeds Ltd.
- Uganda Seed Trade Association (USTA)
- National Crops Resources Research Institute (NaCRRI)
- National Semi-Arid Resources Research Institute (NaSARRI)
- NARO Holdings Limited (NHL)

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