

Speed up seed policies harmonisation

Delayed harmonisation of policies for encouraging the transfer of seeds across East and Southern Africa is hampering trade and increased agricultural growth, experts say.

By Gilbert Nakweya ^{23 Jan 2019}



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The goal to harmonise seed trade resulted from having different policies across countries, thus impeding transfer technology to promote agriculture in the region. Harmonised seed policies ensure that countries with similar agricultural production characteristics can trade their seeds for mutual benefits without challenges.

According to Mable Simwanza, director of Seed Control and Certification Institute of Zambia's Ministry of Agriculture, the challenge facing seed technology transfer is that many countries are at different stages of harmonisation including launching the process at country level and parliament endorsement.

“ We have been talking about harmonisation [of seed policies] for years but we are not moving. Mable Simwanza, Zambia's Ministry of Agriculture ”

"We have been talking about harmonisation [of seed policies] for years but we are not moving," said Simwanza, during an international meeting on seed trade held in Kenya. She lauded the meeting for helping point out the bottlenecks to policy harmonisation and setting out implementation strategies.

Simwanza explained that a coordinating body to ensure successful implementation of the recommendations of the meeting should be established.

"There is an urgent need to push for harmonisation of existing policies, regulations and protocols through regional policy dialogues," added Nnenna Nwabufo, deputy director-general, East African Regional Hub of the African Development Bank.

Nwabufo said that such dialogues could help identify gaps and outline necessary interventions to enable policy harmonisation.

The African Development Bank's initiative called Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation is facilitating the harmonisation of seed transfer to transform agriculture and boost agribusiness in Africa.

Denis Kyetere, executive director of the African Agricultural Technology Foundation in Kenya, said that Africa needs new innovative technologies such as superior quality seeds to respond to climatic change and boost food security. "Getting these technologies to smallholder farmers in good time will ensure Africa has the ability and means to reap from its agricultural potential," he added.

According to Daniel Kyalo Willy, a programme officer at the African Agricultural Technology Foundation, 10 of seven countries — Burundi, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe — have completed the harmonisation process.

Countries such as Comoros, Eritrea, Madagascar, Seychelles and South Sudan have so far launched the alignment process but have not made progress, Willy added.

The meeting aimed to develop action plans for harmonised regulations that will enable rapid transfer and trade of seeds among African countries.

The action plans that were discussed include a blueprint for identifying technical and financial support necessary for research-based policy harmonisation, and work plans that will ensure national regulations are updated to meet regional requirements.

[This piece](#) was produced by [SciDev.Net's sub-Saharan Africa](#) English desk.

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