

# Community of practice

*Emerging insights and perspectives for advancing the transformation of Africa's seed sector*

ISSD AFRICA BRIEFS:

BRIEF 1: Terminology  
BRIEF 2: Initiative  
BRIEFS 3-7: Five ambitions  
BRIEF 8: Enabling environment

BRIEF  
2

## Initiative

This document complements the Third Communiqué on Integrated Seed Sector Development in Africa (ISSD Africa). It introduces ISSD Africa, the ISSD Africa Conference, and their association with the African Seed and Biotechnology Programme of the African Union Commission. It is the second in a series of eight briefs.

**Brief 1 – Terminology**, defines the foundational concepts used in the communiqué and accompanying briefs.

**Briefs 3-7** capture **five ambitions** for seed sector transformation in Africa that are presented concisely in the communiqué. **Brief 8 – Enabling environment**, shares insights into the cross-cutting theme of stewarding transformation.

### ISSD Africa Community of Practice

The ISSD concept offers an approach with eight guiding principles for the transformation of the seed sector (see ISSD Africa Brief 1 – Terminology). ISSD Africa is an international Community of Practice (CoP), working to alleviate the problem of farmers' limited access to quality seed by addressing complex challenges of continental importance. Its vision is a vibrant, pluralistic, and market-oriented seed sector in Africa. The CoP unites diverse organizations that are inspired in their work by ISSD's guiding principles: they promote pluralism in the seed sector; recognize the value of formal, intermediary, and informal seed systems; take an evidence-driven approach; and pursue multiple desired food system and seed sector outcomes.

The third phase of ISSD Africa (2019-2023) unites the CoP in action research and knowledge exchange across eight topics, namely (lead organization in brackets):

- Developing the seed sector in fragile states (Mercy Corps)
- Effective seed insecurity response (Mercy Corps)
- Agrobiodiversity, seed, and climate change (the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT)
- Enabling seed policies (IFPRI/CGIAR Research Program on Policies, Institutions and Markets)
- Enhancing seed quality assurance (CIP/CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas)
- Business models for early generation seed (ICRISAT)
- Creating demand for quality seed (Wageningen University & Research)
- Gender dynamics in seed systems (IFPRI/CGIAR Collaborative Platform for Gender Research)

The current phase of ISSD Africa concludes in February 2023.

**ISSD Africa encourages your further reading of its communiqués, briefs, and other knowledge products, and participation in the Community of Practice.**

For more information, visit [www.ISSDAfrica.org](http://www.ISSDAfrica.org)

### ISSD Africa Conference, Kigali, Rwanda, 17-19 October 2022

The conference entitled 'Emerging insights and perspectives advancing the transformation of Africa's seed sector' was organized as the synthesis event of the current phase of ISSD Africa. Conference participants represented a wide range of seed sector stakeholders in different functions, as follows:

- The conference was co-organized by IFPRI Rwanda and the Coordination Unit of ISSD Africa – Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, part of Wageningen University & Research (WCDI), and the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT).
- ISSD Africa consortium partners, mentioned above, participated.
- Representatives of regional and international initiatives were invited to host sessions, including the following organizations: AGRA; CGIAR Genetic Innovation; CGIAR Nature-Positive Solutions; New Markets Lab; Oxfam Novib; and the World Benchmarking Alliance.
- Representatives of the Government of the Republic of Rwanda hosted the conference, and several Rwandan stakeholders also participated.
- The African Union Commission (AUC), African Seed and Biotechnology Programme (ASBP) and its Partnership Platform Secretariat at the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), together with its Steering Group, and other regional and continental organizations were represented.
- Seed sector professionals working in government, industry, science, and civil society, from 18 African Union (AU) member states (Benin, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) participated; these stakeholders were in most cases associated with major seed sector programmes. Seed sector professionals from elsewhere in the globe joined them.
- The main funding partners of ISSD Africa participated, including the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and CGIAR.

The conference was structured to achieve the following outcomes:

- Innovations in policy and practice from ISSD Africa and activities of partners hosting the sessions were harvested, shared, and discussed; their application in various countries and regions were explored, and specific insights emerging from the topics were discussed.
- Innovations and emerging insights from ISSD Africa and activities of session-hosting partners were contextualized, and scaling modalities and barriers were explored.

- Current perspectives improved and new perspectives informed, based on emerging insights into guiding African seed sector transformation.
- Connection, understanding, and collaboration among diverse African and global seed sector stakeholders was facilitated.

Contributing to the achievement of these outcomes, a conference synthesis committee was established comprising experts from diverse backgrounds, disciplines, and organizations. During the conference, the synthesis committee played a key role in shaping perspectives from the insights obtained in the various sessions. The members of the synthesis committee participated in their individual and professional capacity. Their views are their own and not necessarily shared by their organizations.

Synthesis committee members included staff from the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT (Uganda); Community Technology Development Organization (Zimbabwe); IITA (Nigeria); ISSD Uganda (Uganda); Mercy Corps (Ethiopia); Seedsystem.org (USA); Stichting Wageningen Research Ethiopia (Ethiopia); Syngenta Foundation (Kenya); and WUR (the Netherlands). The synthesis committee was co-chaired and supported by representatives of WUR and FARA.

### ISSD Africa, AUC, and ASBP

The concept of ISSD was embraced by the AUC in the first ISSD communiqué (May 2011) as part of the efforts to implement the African Seed and Biotechnology Programme (ASBP), which was endorsed by AU heads of state and governments in 2007 during their Eighth Ordinary Session. The AUC acknowledges that different seed systems co-exist, and that a pluralistic approach is needed to optimally serve the objectives of food security, economic development, entrepreneurship, and biodiversity. The second ISSD communiqué, published in October 2013, promotes entrepreneurship and market-orientation as key to seed sector sustainability, however, to be developed in such a way that it responds to the demands of different seed systems.

In 2020, the ASBP Partnership Platform was established with the purpose to promote linkage, improve decision-making and policy formulation, support evidence-based advocacy, and enhance knowledge-sharing in the context of implementing the ASBP to advance agricultural transformation in Africa. The Partnership Platform is assisted by a secretariat hosted by FARA, which provides administrative and logistical support to the platform, including its Steering Group and Working Groups. ISSD Africa is a knowledge partner to the platform, with representatives participating in both its Steering Group and Working Groups. The third ISSD communiqué aims to inspire, guide, and advance the activities of the platform.

## Colophon

### Authors and contributors

This brief is part of a series that includes the Third Communiqué on Integrated Seed Sector Development in Africa. These briefs capture insights and perspectives from the ISSD Africa Conference. They were developed by several authors with support from contributors; for further details please visit [www.ISSDafrica.org](http://www.ISSDafrica.org)

**Editors:** Gareth D. Borman, Marja H. Thijssen  
& Walter S. de Boef

Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation  
Wageningen University & Research, Wageningen

**Design:** RCO <https://rco.design>

**Copy editing:** Elizabeth O'Keeffe

### ISSD Africa is funded by:

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

### Citation and access

ISSD Africa. 2023. Brief 2: Community of practice.  
Emerging insights and perspectives for advancing the  
transformation of Africa's seed sector.

[www.ISSDafrica.org](http://www.ISSDafrica.org)

This document can be downloaded for free at

[www.ISSDafrica.org](http://www.ISSDafrica.org)