



Innovation, quality seed, and seed choice for farmers: *Continuing the dialogue in South Africa*

We live in a world where agriculture faces mounting pressures everyday as a result of climate change and an ever growing population. Countries are continually finding solutions to raise farmers' productivity and income, and in the long term, ensure food security.

The seed sector is one of the many actors offering solutions – and indeed it is a fundamental one. Seed is the first and most critical input to ensure a good harvest. No farmer in the world, even with the best equipment and inputs, can gain

a good harvest out of poor quality seed.

“Within the next 30 years, the world must produce 60 percent more food, even as climate change threatens any progress. That is only possible if the world's smallholder farmers have access to varieties of their choice. Quality seeds of improved varieties can enable them to enjoy the benefits and advances that have already for decades significantly increased yields in developed countries,” said Michael Keller, Secretary General of the International Seed Federation.

A strong seed system supports a country's drive towards food and nutrition security. The World Food Program mapped out countries on the prevalence of hunger and malnutrition in the population (2015). The countries that have high levels of undernourishment are often countries that have weak seed systems.

Before quality seeds reach the hands of farmers, significant investment in time and research is made by seed companies to develop innovative varieties. These seeds sometimes travel across borders, as

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it is the case for a typical corn or vegetable crop, from development, multiplication, processing, conditioning, packing to consumption.

Whether this process effectively takes place or not in a given country is decided by the kind of regulatory framework that exists there. It is therefore critical for a country that wishes to provide its farmers quality seeds, to adopt



Michael Keller (ISF - Secretary General)

the right regulatory environment: a clear framework supported by functioning institutions and efficient procedures. This covers a vast range of areas including the management of their genetic resources, the possibility to use of the latest plant breeding methods, phytosanitary measures, seed applied technologies, and others.

Shared roots, greater heights

Next year, the biggest yearly gathering of the global seed industry will take place in Cape Town, with over 1,500 delegates expected to attend. The ISF World Seed Congress brings together the principal architects and decision makers of the global seed industry and at-

tracts seed professionals from all over the world for trading and discussions on technical and business issues in the form of meetings, panel discussions, and side events.

It will be co-organized by the International Seed Federation (ISF) and the host country South African National Seed Organization (SAN-SOR).

The theme of the ISF World Seed Congress in 2020 is “Shared roots, Greater heights”. As David Malan, chairman of the National Organizing Committee, said, “In the memory of Nelson Mandela, we will host next year's Congress in the Ubuntu spirit. Ubuntu is a Nguni word representing the African concept of ‘I am what I am because of what we all are’. In preparing this Congress, we want to embrace the spirit of Ubuntu and we want that all of us embrace that togetherness as a seed sector. As a group we can achieve goals that an individual cannot.”

To find out how you can take part in the ISF World Seed Congress 2020, follow ISF on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn or visit: congress.worldseed.org/2020/