



# Seed Update



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## Seed Situation in the SADC Region

The region has experienced floods in Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Swaziland has been affected by drought while Madagascar and Mauritius have been affected

by cyclone. Due to these factors seed production for the current season is expected to be lower than the previous season.

### Botswana

#### Seed Production of the previous Season (2006/07)

Draught was experienced in the previous season with only a few quantities of certified sorghum seed produced. Only 90 tons of OPV sorghum and 15 tons of cowpeas were produced, against the planned tons of 1,327 for sorghum and 200 of cowpeas. The planned tons for maize were 1,699 and there was no harvest. The national demand for the current season was met by carryover seed, since only a few quantities of seed was used in the previous season.

date. Dry spells were experienced during the same period which affected crops. Some areas received too much rain which made farmers not to plant on time or those who planted did not get enough time to weed. As a result there is high infestation of weeds.

Most farmers who planted towards end of November to beginning of December experienced problems of floods therefore part of their fields were washed off. There is an outbreak of pest and disease which will be expected to lower yields and the quality of seed. Generally in terms of seed production there might be green drought.

#### Seed Production for the Current Season

Rains stated very early for the current planting season. A total of 544 mm has been recorded to

In general the area planted to hybrid seed is very low, therefore hybrid seed is produced in very small quantities. Most of varieties produced are OP.

#### Quality Control and Seed Certification

Seed Multiplication Unit includes a small certification section, which certifies the seed produced by the contracted farmers for the government. The Seed

Multiplication Unit administers the seed certification act of 1976. As a step towards domestication of the agreed harmonized seed regulations in the SADC region, the Seed Certification Act is under review. It is envisaged that the new act and regulations will take into account the agreed harmonized systems. The seed testing laboratory which is a member of ISTA is developing the quality management system with intentions of getting accredited to ISTA in the near future.

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## Democratic Republic of Congo

The current planting season started well and enough rain has been received in the country. The Government of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) through the Ministry of Agriculture has distributed crop and vegetable seeds to farmers for planting. Belgium Government through two projects,

provide assistance in seed production and one of the projects is located in research, at INERA, national research institute and another one is located in Ministry of Agriculture. The first project produces pre-basic seed and the second one organizes basic seed multiplication.

## Lesotho

### 1.0 Introduction

The country experienced a serious drought that resulted in very poor yields for 2006/07 season. This situation led to food shortage in the country where a declaration of food crisis was made. When 2007/08 season started the majority of farmers did not have enough resources to purchase seed while on the other hand resource poor farmers did not have enough saved seed. As a result of this situation, interventions were made by Government and different organizations to provide seed to farmers.

### 2.0 Subsidies

The Government put in place a subsidy on all agricultural inputs and services. Seeds, fertilizers and machinery services were subsidized at 30% of the cost price. Input traders/dealers were engaged to sell inputs at 70% of the cost, to the farming communities and to claim the 30% from Government.

Other organizations such as FAO adopted seed fairs where the voucher system was used to avail seed to resource poor farmers, who were the main target. In this case farmers were getting a 100% subsidy on inputs and machinery services. As a result of this a lot of small scale farmers were able to engage in crop production. Although a lot of farmers received seed, a worrying factor in most incidences was the quality of seed received, since some of the dealers exploited the situation and sold poor quality seed.

Besides the Government and the FAO, a number of NGOs were also involved in input subsidies to avail seed to the affected farmers. These mitigations resulted in much area being put under cultivation in the current season.

### 3.0 Seed Production

#### 3.1 Seed Security Project

This project is funded by FAO that is aimed at strengthening community based seed production. The project mainly focuses on production of good quality seed of improved/adapted varieties, of main

food crops namely: beans, OPV maize and sorghum in accordance with the Quality Declared Seed System. Besides focusing on production, the project also equips farmers to process, package and market their seed. The project is for a period of 24 months with effect from July 2006.

#### 3.2 Seed Potato Multiplication

This is an ongoing community based seed production programme that has been running for years. The programme emanates from the fact that seed potato production has relatively favourable growing conditions in the country. For all these years farmers have been buying seed potato (generation 2) from breeders in South Africa and then multiply it for further production of ware/table potato. Multiplication of seed is concentrated in the highland areas of the country where conditions are a bit cool and safe enough against a number of pests and diseases. Then the season following multiplication, seed is sold to farmers in the lowland districts who produce ware potato.

The main challenge with this process, though potato may have comparative advantage in the country, is that of sustainability since farmers rely on production stock from South Africa. As a result during the time when supply is not enough from South Africa, local farmers do not go into production. The challenge therefore, is for the country is to produce material so that the programme could be successful and sustainable.

Despite all the problems involved, during the past season, a lot of farmers went into production as they also benefited from the subsidy.

#### 3.3 NGOs

A number of NGOs are also involved in seed production initiatives through community based seed production systems. The main focus is on beans, OPV maize and sorghum. These efforts have over the years played a major role in maintaining some of the landraces in the country.

#### 4.0 Seed Policy Legislation

One of the objectives of the seed security project mentioned above was to finalise the National Seed Policy through a process of consultation with the seed sector stakeholders. The seed policy that has

been in draft form since the year 2002 has been finalized and will duly be submitted to relevant authorities for approval. In addition to finalizing the seed policy, National Seed Laws and Regulations have been partly drafted.

#### Mauritius

The country has been affected by a cyclone during the current planting season. The season is progressing well despite inadequate rainfall in December 2007 and January 2008. The level of water in different reservoirs of Mauritius is improving with more rainfall was received in February and March 2008. The Ministry of Agro-Industry supplies 40% of the national requirement of vegetable seeds at subsidized price and is encouraging vegetable

growers to embark in the business of seed production for certain selected crops namely squash, cucumber and onion.

The Seed Bill and Plant Breeder's Rights Bill are currently being finalized by all stakeholders in the agricultural sector before being sent to the State Law Office

#### Mozambique

The season started well in Mozambique. The country has experienced floods this year; as a result some planted areas have been lost in central and northern regions of the country. More than 150,000 hectares

of cultivated land were affected by floods during the first two months of 2008. Despite floods better yield in seed of maize crop is expected than last year.

#### Namibia

Namibia is a very dry country with usually erratic rainfall. However, it has been wet and continues to rain this year. The rainfall started late November but it usually starts in October and this led to farmers not planting on time. The planting season is quite challenging, with fields full of water and makes it impossible for the farmers to plant their fields. The soil saturation has made it difficult for the seeds to germinate, forcing the farmers to buy more seeds. Until now most of the farmers have not finished ploughing their fields as it is raining non-stop since the beginning of February countrywide. The growth of plants is affected by water logging and insufficient soil nutrients due to leaching. Most of the crops planted are pearl millet, sorghum as well as maize and they look yellow, stunt and weak in many parts of the country, but legumes, in particular cowpea is better than cereals. Apart from soil and climatic conditions which have affected crops, there is also

an outbreak of an armyworm which is destroying the planted crops and grass. The pearl millet, sorghum and cowpea seeds are still available locally during this season while others are usually imported from South Africa. It is expected that there may be a shortage of seed for the next planting season as poor harvest is forecast.

The government of Namibia has subsidized seeds, fertilizers and ploughing services for subsistent farmers and these have been supplied by Northern Namibian Farmers Seed Growers Cooperative (NNFSGC), Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry and Tractor Service Companies respectively.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry has drafted the Seed Policy and Plant Breeder Rights and the documents have been sent to Ministry of Justice for legal opinion.

#### South Africa

The current planting season started well though in some parts too much rain has been experienced and too little in other parts. However, there has been no reduction in the hectareage planted to seed production, normal production is expected. Whether

there will be increase or decrease in seed production for the current season will depend on performance of rains and other weather phenomena as the season progresses.

### Swaziland

The country has experienced another drought situation this season due to lack of or poor rainfall distribution in most parts of the country. This will result in many households experiencing severe food shortages. Most parts of the country including the Highveld which is usually characterized by high rainfall and moderate temperatures were affected by heavy heat and dry spells at the most critical period during the growth of especially the maize crop. The excessively high temperatures and lack of rainfall occurred at the most critical periods during flowering and seed setting in almost all the maize producing areas of the country. Only few experienced good weather conditions and the yield is expected to be very low even though the rainfall was a bit better than in the 2006/07 season. In the major maize growing areas in the wet Middleveld and Highveld the maize dried prematurely as a result of the rain disappearing long before the maize crop has attained physiological maturity. The average yield is expected to be a tonne or less throughout the country as opposed to the national average 2 tonnes per hectare.

Maize seed of Open pollinated maize Variety ZM 521 was planted by a group of farmers under the Community-based seed production system with assistance from the CIMMYT – NSIMA project. 4.8

hectares of the crop was planted and is presently being harvested.

A total of 371 small-scale seed producers grew a variety of quality declared seed of Jugo beans, sesame, cowpeas, groundnuts on a total land area of about 154.9 hectares production under the community-based seed system which is being promoted by the Swaziland Government as a means of attaining improved food security and increase crop productivity of the various food crops important for food security in the country. The land area per farmer ranged between 0.2 to 2.5 hectares. Most of the legumes produced under the system end up being sold during the Input Trade-fairs as Quality Declared Seed and some used as own seed for food production.

The country is not anticipating any seed shortages in the coming season mainly because most of the seed required to meet seed demand are imported from within the region. The only problem would be access to the resource by the majority of farmers as most were affected by drought and therefore the limited financial resource would be channelled towards buying food for most households instead of being utilized for farming purposes.

### Zimbabwe

The country has experienced floods this year due to more rainfall received. There was significant reduction in hectareage registered for maize and soyabean seed crops; however there was an

increase in cotton seed crop this season. Due excessive rains received at the beginning of the season, yield reduction is expected for most of the seed crops.

### Memorandum of Understanding on Implementation of SADC Harmonised Seed Regulatory System on the Cards

SADC Secretariat is convening a meeting of SADC Ministers responsible for Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources in Harare, Zimbabwe on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2008. The meeting will be preceded by a meeting for Senior Officials to be held 6 - 8 May 2008. Among other items on the agenda the Ministers will consider and sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on implementation of SADC Harmonised Seed Regulatory System. The purpose of this MOU is to provide Member States with a legal framework to coordinate their actions in the implementation of the SADC harmonized seed regulations.

The objectives of this MOU are to:

1. facilitate the availability of high quality seeds to farmers within the SADC region;
2. make it easier and cheaper for new and existing varieties to gain access to SADC markets;
3. stimulate the availability of more varieties of seed and encourage more investment in the seed sector;
4. encourage faster and safer movement of seeds and reduce costs related to seed trade; and
5. establish a sustainable funding mechanism for supporting the SADC harmonised seed system.