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Seed Certification - Take Control of Your Harvest with Technology

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Despite its vast agricultural potential, Africa is increasingly dependent on food imports from the rest of the world to satisfy its consumption needs. Food output has not kept pace with population growth, and more than 80 percent of production gains since 1980 have come from the expansion of cropped areas rather than from greater productivity of areas already cultivated (Rakotoarisoa et al., 2012; ADB, 2011). Africa currently spends around US\$ 30 billion to US\$ 50 billion on food imports annually and without an increase in per capita continental food supply, experts predict this amount will rise to US\$ 150 billion by 2030.

Increasing Africa's food supply therefore requires action on many fronts including the development of improved regional trade systems. Often the nearest source of inputs or demand for food staples is across a border, yet as recent World Bank studies show, problems with fragmented regional markets and lack of predictable trade policies deter much-needed private investments – including small investments by poor farmers in raising productivity to large investments in input supply, seed certification, seed multiplication, and food marketing.



Among all, **seed certification** is a legally sanctioned system for quality control of seed multiplication and production. seed certification is to maintain and make available to the public, through certification, high-quality seeds and propagating materials of notified kind and varieties so grown and distributed as to ensure genetic identity and genetic purity. Certified seed is the starting point to a successful crop as well as an important risk management tool. Let us know its importance.

- **Clean seed:** Certified seed is grown under stringent production requirements and has minimal weed seeds or other matter.
- **Varietal purity:** Certified seed uses systems to maximize genetic purity Off-types, other crop seeds, and weeds are guaranteed to be minimized
- **Guaranteed quality assurance:** Third-party inspections in the field and at the processing plant ensure that all quality assurance requirements have been met.
- **Access to new opportunities:** Using certified seed can open the door to new opportunities and greater sales by providing proof of varietal identity.
- **New genetics:** Improved traits like better yield, pest resistance, drought tolerance, herbicide tolerance, and much more are delivered to farmers in certified seed.

- **Substance behind your word:** The blue tag is proof that you used certified seed to maintain the value traits of the crop. It's your assurance to grain buyers and others that what you are delivering is what you say it is.
- **A better deal on crop insurance:** Certified seed use can, in some cases, allow you to get a better deal on crop insurance premiums. Insurers know that certified seed means a crop with reduced risk.
- **Maximum use of other inputs:** You want the best genetics and purest fields to ensure you are making the most of your input dollars. Certified seed means you're not wasting time and other inputs on a crop that won't make a grade.
- **Access to premium markets:** Proper inputs make for a good crop, but seed is the only input that can get you more than higher yields. Use of certified seed can be your ticket to premium markets like tofu soybeans or high stability canola and more.
- **Traceability:** Food safety and traceability are important considerations in agriculture. You can only be sure of your product if you know its origins.

Certified seed is the key to that knowledge: production of this seed is carefully controlled under a quality assurance system right from the very beginning. Using certified seed will allow you to capitalize on a whole history of traceability measures.

An automated **Seed Certification and Plant Variety Protection system** implemented by **Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS)**, Government of Kenya is a unified database management application that centrally manages and co-ordinates seed export and import process through end-to-end automation. Here, CSM played a vital role in the automation process by being an IT partner. The accessibility of the system is seasonal with 2000 & more users accessing it per day during the season and 500-700 users on a normal day. The system unifies the operations undertaken in various KEPHIS Offices that broadly serve seed merchants, seed growers, seed sellers, private inspection entities, and plant breeders and their agents. The system facilitates the stakeholders to have smooth transactions and greater accessibility to adequate information and brings ease in the process of seed certification while ensuring there is complete transparency in the farm-to-fork value chain.



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