

Programme on Integrated Seed Sector Development in Ethiopia



@ a glance



The programme on Integrated Seed Sector Development in Ethiopia aims to strengthen the development of a vibrant, market-oriented and pluralistic seed sector in the country, where quality seed of superior varieties is available and affordable for a larger number of farmers, thereby contributing to food security and economic development in Ethiopia. This is the vision of the ISSD programme in Ethiopia. The programme is comprised of a number of components that are outlined in this brief, and which collectively strive to achieve the vision of ISSD in Ethiopia.

Improved access to quality seed for farmers

The government of Ethiopia prioritizes agricultural development as key to accelerating growth, overcoming poverty and enhancing food security. Increased agricultural productivity is vital for stimulating growth in other parts of the economy. Improving farmers' access to quality seed of preferred varieties is crucial for increasing agricultural productivity and production, thereby contributing to food security and economic development in the country.

Integrated seed sector development

Integrated seed sector development (ISSD) is an inclusive approach that recognizes and builds upon a diversity of seed systems. ISSD recognizes the relevance of informal and formal seed systems, as well as the complementary roles of the private and public sectors. The ISSD approach promotes entrepreneurship and market orientation, and facilitates the development and implementation of enabling and evolving policies, for establishing a dynamic seed sector. Building upon a diversity of seed systems, programmes guided by ISSD foster pluralism in the interests of food and nutritional security, economic development, entrepreneurship and the conservation of genetic resources. The guiding principles of ISSD, listed below in Box 1, help practitioners to deal with the complexities of the seed sector in the design and implementation of seed sector interventions.

Endorsement of the ISSD approach in Ethiopia

The African Union Commission has endorsed the ISSD approach in support of its African Seed and Biotechnology Programme for seed sector development in Africa. In February 2009, the Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture, together with key public, private and civil society stakeholders in the seed sector, endorsed a concept note on integrated seed sector development in Ethiopia, thereby recognizing the ISSD approach for strengthening the

Ethiopian seed sector through interventions in different seed systems.

Box 1: ISSD guiding principles

1. Foster pluralism and build programmes upon a diversity of seed systems
2. Work according to the structure of the seed value chain
3. Promote entrepreneurship and market orientation
4. Recognize the relevance of informal seed systems
5. Facilitate interactions between informal and formal seed systems
6. Recognize complementary roles of the public and private sectors
7. Support enabling and evolving policies for a dynamic sector
8. Promote evidence-based seed sector innovation

Partners in ISSD Ethiopia

The ISSD programme is implemented in Amhara, Oromia, the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region (SNNPR), and Tigray. It is coordinated by a consortium of partners, comprising Bahir Dar University, Haramaya University, Hawassa University, Mekelle University, Oromia Seed Enterprise (OSE), and the Ethiopian Seed Growers and Processors Association (ESGPA), in Ethiopia; and the Centre for Development Innovation (CDI) of Wageningen University and Research centre, in The Netherlands. National partners include organizations within federal and regional state government, including the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, the Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA), the regional state Bureaus of Agriculture, offices of the Cooperative Promotion Agency, and Research Institutes. The programme also collaborates with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). ISSD Ethiopia is supported by the Directorate General for International Cooperation of The Netherlands, through the Embassy of the Kingdom of The Netherlands in Addis Ababa.

Components of ISSD Ethiopia

ISSD Ethiopia supports the development of different seed systems, including the systems through which local seed businesses, private seed producers and national seed companies operate. Working with a wide range of stakeholders, regional state seed platforms facilitate innovation and learning for supporting seed sector coordination and governance. The programme strongly incorporates research, the sharing of experiences, and learning into its different programme components, thereby taking an evidence-based approach to intervention and capacity building. The different components of the programme are illustrated in Figure 1.

Local seed business development – consolidation

Since the inception of its first phase (2009 – 2011), the ISSD programme has been supporting 34 seed producer cooperatives in the production and marketing of quality seed of both local and improved varieties. The objective is to support and consolidate these cooperatives in their professionalism, self-reliance and entrepreneurship to become sustainable local seed businesses (LSBs). LSBs may function as out-growers to unions, and public and private seed companies, and/or market quality seed of a diverse range of crops and varieties locally. In relation to the latter case, they cater to a specific niche in the seed market that is neither attractive for large private seed companies nor adequately addressed by the public seed enterprises. Over 80% of the so-called first generation LSBs have consolidated their positions in terms of management and decision-making capacities, and are now technically well equipped to produce quality seed. Furthermore, they have reliable, efficient and cost-effective access to inputs and services. The programme continues to support these 34 LSBs in further strengthening their entrepreneurship by promoting their investment in specialized products for specific business niches, and by strengthening their capacities for value addition and marketing. These first generation LSBs serve as a reference for other seed producer cooperatives and partners interested in adopting the LSB approach.

Local seed business development – scaling up

The second phase of ISSD Ethiopia (2012 – 2015) envisages a scaling up of the LSB approach with strategic partners, in such a manner that they generate a significant share of the seed of food and semi-commercial crops that are available in the country. Currently, the programme is working with more than 40 different partners, including universities; research institutes; *woreda* offices of the Bureau of Agriculture; regional seed enterprises; private seed companies and NGOs. Assisted by training and coaching services of ISSD Ethiopia staff in their region, partners are supporting more than 230 seed producer cooperatives, in both high and low potential agro-ecologies, in producing and marketing

seed of more than 20 different crops and 45 different varieties. This significantly contributes towards providing farmers with increased access to quality seed of crops neglected by the formal system (e.g. seed potato, groundnut), and increasing their choices in terms of varieties suited to their specific agro-ecologies and preferences.

Private small- and medium-scale seed producers

Private small- and medium-scale seed producers now typically operate as out-growers to regional seed enterprises. ISSD Ethiopia promotes and supports these seed producers, providing training and coaching with the aim of strengthening their capacities in seed production as well as business management, and ensuring they become more competitive and less dependent as out-growers. The ISSD programme helps private seed producers to find specific market niches that provide viable business opportunities for seed production and marketing, like seed of forage crops, some vegetables and spices (black cumin). In addition, the programme facilitates collaboration with large companies and research institutes, through different forums and exposure visits, and supports these small- to medium-scale private investors in acquiring certificates of competence that provide the legal recognition required to produce and market seed. These enterprises have been able to improve their infrastructure and seed production facilities, through access to small competitive investment grants.

National seed companies and associations

Ethiopia has an emerging sector of private seed companies. Similar to the small- and medium-scale seed producers, the ISSD programme also tries to enhance the capacities of these companies, supporting them in the development of seed business skills; strengthening their business thinking; improving their infrastructure through small competitive investment grants; and supporting business-to-business linkages. Aligned with this agenda is the strengthening of the ESGPA. The programme recognizes an important opportunity and potential for ESGPA to take an active role in private seed sector development in Ethiopia.

Partnerships with international companies

The programme also aims to facilitate linkages between national and international companies that have an interest in seed, and private investment in the Ethiopian seed sector in general. In October 2012, a delegation of Ethiopian officials and entrepreneurs, including CEOs of the larger private seed companies in Ethiopia, visited The Netherlands on a trade mission, to meet with a number of Dutch seed companies, as well as the Dutch General Inspection Service for Agricultural Seed and Seed Potatoes (NAK) and the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs. The programme recently engaged in a joint venture in seed value addition with Incotec B.V., a

seed technology company with an international focus, based in The Netherlands. Commencing this year, ISSD, together with Incotec, will introduce and experiment with seed coating and treatment technologies in the Ethiopian seed sector. ISSD

Ethiopia is also collaborating on a new initiative with Heineken in the sourcing of quality seed of improved varieties for the production of malting barley. Heineken recently started investing in Ethiopia as a market for its premium beer products.

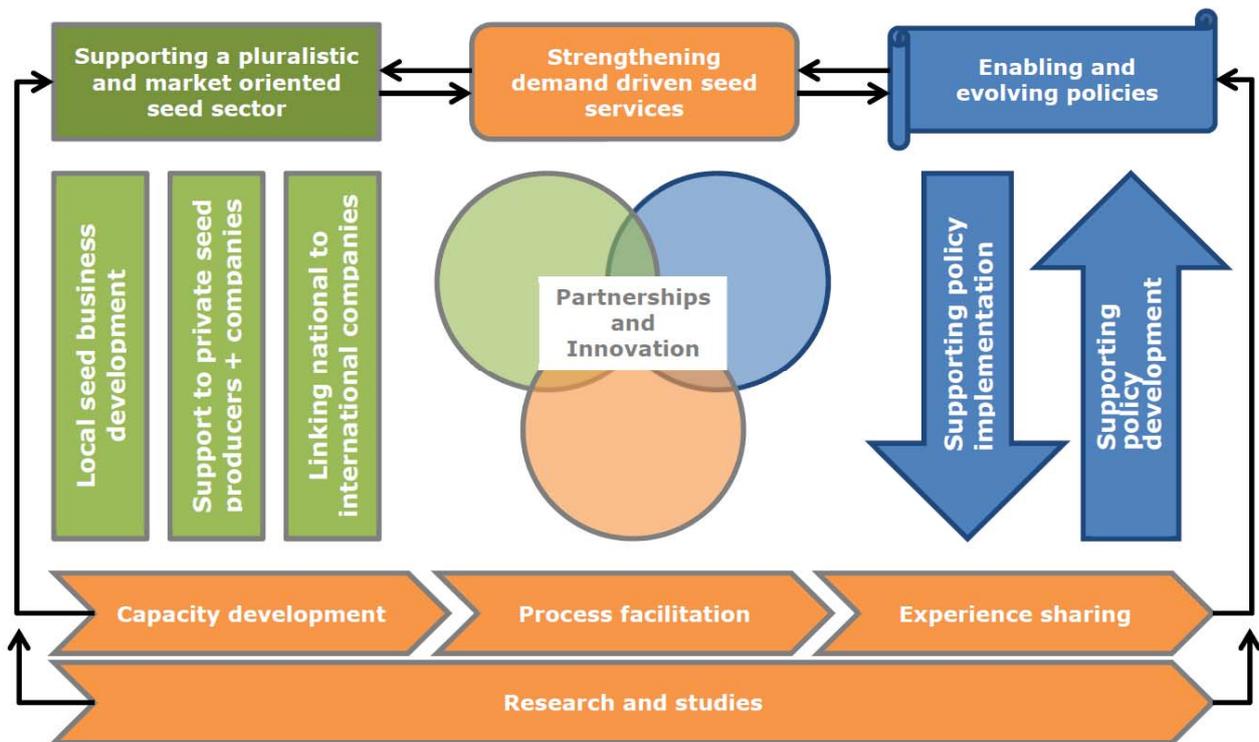


Figure 1: ISSD Ethiopia programme components

Partnerships and innovation

The ISSD Ethiopia programme aims to identify, prioritize and solve development challenges in the seed sector; and strengthen seed sector coordination and governance. The programme seeks to collaborate with those individuals, organizations and institutions that are trying to address these challenges, which tend to be complex, systemic and consequently difficult for a single organization to solve on its own, thereby justifying the need for strong partnership, integration and alignment.

As a working modality of the partnerships and innovation approach, regional partnership platforms have been established in Amhara, Oromia, SNNPR and Tigray. In seed platform meetings, challenges are prioritized and strategies are discussed for experimenting with possible innovations to address those challenges. Innovative solutions to a number of challenges have been successfully piloted, scaled and, to varying degrees, institutionalized. Such examples include the approval of seed regulatory agencies in Amhara, Oromia and SNNPR by the respective regional state councils; support for piloting direct seed marketing activities on a wide scale; and the establishment of specialized seed units within

regional agricultural research institutes for coordinating early generation seed production.

Enabling and evolving policies

In Ethiopia, to be congruent with the vision of the ISSD concept note, seed policies need to endorse an integrated approach to development, fostering a pluralistic seed sector. Policy-makers should be able to adapt to changing circumstances, diverse environments and societal demands. Through discussions and workshops with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), policy-makers now better recognize the value of ISSD interventions. Collaboration with ATA and their seed team facilitated an understanding of the ISSD approach, which is reflected in the draft national seed strategy. Both the MoA and ATA realize the value of experience on the ground in seed sector issues in the region, and as such ISSD Ethiopia is becoming a focal point for policy-makers to collect opinions on strategies to address seed value chain challenges. The ISSD programme has thus far provided expert advice and foreign (African) examples of seed laws, which have been used to amend the Ethiopian Seed Proclamation, and the Plant Breeders' Rights Proclamation (still ongoing).

Seed-related services

One of the principles of ISSD is to promote evidence-based interventions. To this end, the ISSD Ethiopia programme supports research at different levels and on different topics and disciplines, including: socio-economics; agronomy and plant sciences; seed law, policies and regulations; innovation systems; and agribusiness development. In addition, the programme supports capacity development of its staff and selected associated partners. Currently, the programme funds the research of four Ethiopian PhD candidates at Wageningen University in The Netherlands, on topics very relevant to the ISSD approach and the Ethiopian seed sector. To date, more than 67 MSc grants have been awarded, and about 34 development agents are engaged in BSc training with support from the programme. Furthermore, the programme has been very active in strengthening the capacities of a cadre of seed sector development professionals in technical, organizational, and commercial aspects of integrated seed sector development, and the seed systems and seed value chains operating in Ethiopia. To this extent, a number of tailor-made training sessions have thus far been facilitated.

The ISSD programme aims to foster a continuous sharing of experiences and lessons learned, both within the programme and beyond, using a diverse range of documentation materials and tools, and a variety of communication channels. The programme has enhanced awareness on ISSD within the agricultural sector in Ethiopia, by developing a strategy that focuses on knowledge sharing and communication, which includes the organization of different types of events for the exchange of experiences, and the development and dissemination of various types of publications.

The overarching vision of the ISSD programme in Ethiopia is to support the development of a vibrant, market-oriented and pluralistic seed sector, through which farmers can access quality seed of superior varieties, thereby contributing to food security and economic development in Ethiopia.

For further information please visit

<http://www.issdethiopia.org>

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