

# Seed Alert

**#02 June 2020**

Seed Alerts identify current challenges and outline urgent actions needed in the seed sector of Uganda, based on surveys and focus group discussions with various stakeholders

# Uganda

## Alert 1

Mobility restrictions and lockdown hamper the evaluation and release of new varieties

## Alert 2

Mobility restrictions disrupt the production and supply of quality basic seed

## Alert 3

Mobility restrictions and increased prices hinder access to agro-inputs for the local production of quality seed

## Alert 4

Mobility restrictions and social-distancing measures hamper the promotion of seed and varieties, and impede the distribution of seed at points of sale

# Alert 1

Mobility restrictions and lockdown hamper the evaluation and release of new varieties

### What is the impact?

- Government mobility restrictions to reduce the spread of COVID-19 hampered the establishment of variety trials in farmers’ fields in the past weeks; as a result, currently only a limited number of trials are in place
- Even though travel restrictions are gradually being relaxed, it is still difficult for researchers to get approval from the COVID-19 District Task Forces to visit their on-farm trials in the different parts of the country
- In addition, the current measures do not permit the holding of large gatherings or farmers’ field days for variety evaluation
- The Variety Release Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) has not yet adopted a process to support the establishment of an online variety release system, as suggested in Seed Alert#1
- All these issues will seriously affect the number of new varieties that will be released in 2020

### What actions are required?

- Generate a list of do’s and don’ts for researchers and others field workers visiting communities to ensure community members remain safe from COVID-19 in the continuation of activities
- Get approval for researchers from the Residential District Commissioner (RDC) to visit their community-based variety trials, potentially accompanied by a District Agricultural Officer (DAO) or any other authorized district staff member
- Conduct field days with only a limited number of farmers and record short documentaries, as an alternative way of soliciting farmers’ views on the varieties being assessed in the trial
- Alert the Variety Release Committee to take advantage of an ease in restrictions on movement and re-schedule the cancelled variety release meeting that was due to take place in April 2020
- Proactively follow up on the recommendations from Seed Alert#1 related to the digitalization of the variety release process

\* Research assistant monitoring on station groundnut variety trials, at the National Semi Arid Resources Research Institute in Serere

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**What stakeholders are involved?**

- Breeders of National Agricultural Research Institutes (NARIs) and Zonal Agricultural Research and Development Institutes (ZARDIs)
- MAAIF, the National Seed Certification Services (NSCS) and the Variety Release Committee
- Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) and District Production Departments
- COVID-19 District Task Forces and RDCs

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**Who takes initiative?  
Who drives action?**

- The COVID-19 District Task Forces generate a list of do's and don'ts to raise awareness of researchers and others visiting local communities during this pandemic
  - Researchers inform the CAOs and the District Production Departments of field activities planned in their districts in a timely manner, and ask them to seek the necessary approval from the RDCs
  - Researchers from NARIs conduct farmers' field days for variety evaluation in an alternative way
  - The Commissioner of the NSCS encourages the Variety Release Committee to start discussions on the potential of establishing a digital variety release system
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*Poor yield of groundnut basic seed field in Dokolo District caused by late drought due to late planting as a result of COVID-19 lockdown (Photo: NaSARRI)*

# Alert 2

## Mobility restrictions disrupt the production and supply of quality basic seed

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### What is the impact?

- COVID-19 mobility restrictions hampered pre-basic seed distribution early in the cropping season, which consequently impacted on the size of the area currently being cultivated for the production of basic seed, especially for maize, beans and groundnut
- The travel ban continues to be upheld in all the border districts, making it impossible for breeders to monitor the basic seed fields at the critical growth stages, thus casting doubts on their quality
- At the same time, community-based seed producers and local seed businesses (LSBs) involved in basic seed production are hesitant to use public transport due to the fear of being exposed to COVID-19, consequently affecting the availability of basic seed for the second season of 2020
- There is growing anxiety about the scarcity of quality basic seed for seed growers in the second season of 2020, and subsequent seasons, which may result in seed producers using substandard basic seed, thereby compromising the quality of the next generation of commercial seed in the market

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### What actions are required?

- Conduct a quick inventory of the current quantities, crops and varieties of basic seed currently being produced throughout the country, as well as the basic seed demands of producers of certified seed and quality declared seed (QDS)
- Develop an authorized structure for ordering basic seed for the next cropping season, anticipating scarcity, as well as trying to prevent the sale of fake basic seed
- Communicate with seed companies and seed producers on the quantities of basic seed available for the next cropping season, to create transparency on potential shortages, and protect them from the risk of purchasing substandard basic seed
- Develop clear messages (video, text and spoken format) on ways to protect from COVID-19 infection, for sharing through traditional and social media, and expose misinformation to alleviate the fear of traveling among seed producers

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### What stakeholders are involved?

- National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) and its breeders
- NARO Holding Limited (NHL) and other basic seed producers
- Uganda Seed Trade Association (USTA), seed companies and LSBs
- NSCS
- MAAIF and the COVID-19 District Task Forces

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### Who takes initiative? Who drives action?

- NARO breeders and NSCS conduct a basic seed inventory
  - NARO, in collaboration with the MAAIF, informs seed companies and LSBs on the quantities of basic seed available for the different crops and varieties
  - MAAIF works with the COVID-19 District Task Forces to develop clear messages on how to avoid COVID-19 infection
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# Alert 3

## Mobility restrictions and increased prices hinder access to agro-inputs for the local production of quality seed

### What is the impact?

- During this COVID-19 crisis, seed producers have been affected in other income-generating activities, such as operating boda bodas, selling crops at local markets, and selling beverages; as a consequence, they currently lack cash for investing in the purchase of agro-inputs that are required for quality seed production
- Low demand and poor sales further increase the price of these inputs, which had already inflated owing to higher transport costs
- The complete lockdown at border districts resulting from the rise in number of cases of COVID-19, further hinders access to inputs for seed production in these areas, especially for those living far away from agro-input shops

### What actions are required?

- Make local seed producers aware of agro-input credit schemes to access the required agricultural inputs
- Lobby the government to make affordable credit facilities available for agro-input dealers through the newly established COVID-19 fund to allow them to keep inputs at affordable prices for local seed producers
- Intensify inspection of agro-dealers by the MAAIF and DAOs to ensure that the agricultural inputs accessed by seed producers, as well as farmers, are of high quality
- Broker relationships between local seed producers and agro-dealers for advancing agro-inputs, guaranteeing the agro-dealer will be paid back after seed sales

### What stakeholders are involved?

- Local seed producers, seed companies, NHL and USTA
- Agro-dealers and the Uganda National Agro-Input Dealers Association (UNADA)
- Uganda Development Bank (UDB) and other credit providers
- MAAIF, NSCS and District Local Governments (DLGs)
- Development partners including, for example, IFDC, AGRA and ISSD Uganda

### Who takes initiative? Who drives action?

- USTA and UNADA, in collaboration with the MAAIF and UDB, hold discussions with the State Minister for Agriculture on the framework for allowing agro-dealers to access the COVID-19 fund
- Development partners support local seed producers in creating an arrangement for access to inputs, including access to agro-input credit schemes



Boda bodas are still not allowed to carry passengers but only cargo, thus making it hard for seed producers to move from remote areas with no taxis to access inputs (Photo: ISSD Uganda)



Agro-input shops are open, however, prices have increased and their products are less affordable to local seed producers and farmers (Photo: ISSD Uganda)

# Alert 4

Mobility restrictions and social-distancing measures hamper the promotion of seed and varieties, and impede the distribution of seed at points of sale

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## What is the impact?

- Media programmes focus necessarily on the health-related issues of the COVID-19 crisis, paying less attention to the promotion of new varieties and quality seed; this impacts on farmers' awareness of varieties and quality seed
- Variety demonstrations are currently at the right stage for promotion; however, it is difficult to obtain approval from the COVID-19 District Task Forces for activities that involve the congregation of more than ten people, including the organization of farmers' field days
- Transport continues to be limited, and its costs have doubled; as a result, distribution of inputs has become slow and expensive for those who do not have their own means of transport
- Increased transaction costs due to COVID-19 are compensated through an increase in seed prices, thus affecting farmers' access to quality seed

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## What actions are required?

- Embrace alternative variety and quality seed promotion activities that involve fewer numbers of farmers, to allow social distancing and ensure the use of standard operating procedures (SOPs)
- Organize promotion activities, such as the events currently implemented by some NARIs, involving breeders and only few farmers; cover the events through media, and air them at a later stage to a wider audience via radio or TV
- Train and involve agro-dealers in information sharing on new varieties and the advantages of using quality seed, as they are the stakeholders interacting with farmers at the points of seed sales
- Encourage the use of media to promote varieties and quality seed, using video content, spoken messages and printed media, through TV, radio, social media and printed materials such as promotional leaflets, brochures, flyers etc., including translated materials
- Lobby for COVID-19 District Task Forces to integrate key messages on quality seed and variety promotion, especially for nutrient-dense crops that can boost immunity during the pandemic
- Encourage farmers' organizations to consolidate seed demand for bulk purchase with support from the district extension system as this will facilitate the reliable distribution of seed at the point of sale

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## What stakeholders are involved?

- Seed companies and USTA
- Agro-dealers and UNADA
- COVID-19 District Task Forces and District Production Departments
- Farmers' organizations
- Media, including TV and radio
- NARO and NARIs

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## Who takes initiative? Who drives action?

- NARO breeders, in collaboration with the media, organize variety promotion events considering all the necessary SOPs
- The District Production Departments engages with the COVID-19 District Task Forces to emphasize the importance of raising awareness on the use of quality seed for improved food and nutrition security
- UNADA and USTA work with seed companies to encourage farmers' associations to consolidate their seed demands to ease distribution

# Dashboard

Outcomes of June Survey Uganda -  
identification of FDG topics or Alerts

- Severe negative impact
- Negative impact
- Slight negative impact
- No impact; business as usual

Seed sector operations and services	Seed Alert May	Seed Alert June
Breeding on-station and national performance trials	■ Alert 1	■
Variety trials in farmers' fields	■ Alert 1	■ Alert 1
Variety release and registration process	■ Alert 1	■ Alert 1
Production of early generation seed	■ Alert 2	■ Alert 2
Supply of early generation seed	■ Alert 2	■ Alert 2
Field inspection for seed certification	■ Alert 2, 3	■
Laboratory testing and issuance of seed certification labels	■	■
Access to finance for seed production		■
Access to agro-inputs for seed production	■ Alert 2, 3	■ Alert 3
Access to labour for seed production	■ Alert 2, 3	■
Field operations for seed production	■ Alert 3	
Post-harvest practices for seed marketing	■	
Seed transport and storage		■
Seed import	■	
Seed and variety promotion	■ Alert 4	■ Alert 4
COVID-19 measures on mobility	■ Alert 4	
Seed distribution and stocking at points of sale	■ Alert 4	■ Alert 4
Access to markets/points of sale for seed producers and agro-dealers	■ Alert 4	■
Access to markets/points of sale for farmers	■ Alert 4	■
Presence of sub-standard seed in the market	■	■
Price of quality seed in the market	■ Alert 4	■
Farmers' cash availability	■ Alert 4	
Farmers' willingness to pay for quality seed	■	■
Sales of quality seed	■	■
Farmers' access to seed from informal markets	■	■
Farmers' access to seed from informal sources	■	■
Government funding of seed-related services	■	■
Government investment in seed marketing and distribution	■	■
Seed sector information sharing and coordination	■	■
Government COVID-19 responsive seed regulation		■
Quantity and quality of seed sown	■	
Quantity and quality of produce harvested	■	
Quantity and quality of seed for the next cropping season		■
Food, nutrition and income security	■	■

## Rapid Assessment & Seed Alert

To avoid a food and hunger crisis following the current COVID-19 pandemic, urgent action is needed to address key agricultural challenges, including those identified in the seed sector. The rapid assessment conducted for the current Seed Alert was carried out in the third week of June. The survey included 21 respondents covering 6 stakeholder groups, while the focus group discussions engaged 18 participants from 13 different organizations. More details on the methodology and steps can be accessed through this [link](#).

### Purpose

The aim of the Seed Alert is to assess the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the functioning of the seed sector. The Rapid Assessment project operates in Ethiopia, Myanmar, Nigeria and Uganda, where Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCIDI) is working on seed programmes in collaboration with partners. More details can be accessed through this [link](#).

### Alerts in other sectors

In June and July 2020, similar Alerts are being published to cover the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the functioning of the sesame, fertilizer and horticultural sectors. Working with a similar model in various sectors and countries within a specific timeframe facilitates an interpretation and synthesis of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on food systems at national, regional and global levels, while also providing insights into immediate and practical actions needed to address emerging challenges.

It furthermore offers insights into the use of the sector model as a diagnostic tool for supporting strategic development, planning, and monitoring interventions that aim to enhance the functioning, resilience and inclusiveness of specific agricultural sectors and food systems.

### Institutional reference

The 'Seed alert: Uganda' is the result of a collaborative project that brings together experts working in the Integrated Seed Sector Development Programme in Uganda (ISSD Uganda), as implemented by WCIDI in close collaboration with MAAIF, USTA, and various other organizations in Uganda.

### Contributing organizations

The 'Seed Alert: Uganda' involved representatives of the following organizations in the survey and focus group discussions: Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF); National Seed Certification Services (NSCS); District Local Governments (DLGs) of Lweneo, Isingiro, Kyenjojo, Dokolo, Gulu and Pader; Farmer representatives of Kapchorwa, Ntugamo, Kitgum and Nwoya Districts; Aye Medo Ngeca local seed business (LSB); Kakindo LSB; Kyazanga LSB; Aang Pur Agro-dealer; Omulimisa Agro-shop; Tororo District Farmers' Shop; Uganda Seed Trade Association (USTA); National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO); National Crops Resources Research Institute (NaCRRI); National Semi-Arid Resources Research Institute (NaSARRI); NARO Holdings Limited (NHL).

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The 'Seed Alert' is published within a series of 'Rapid Assessments' and 'Alerts' in multiple countries, and is a WCIDI Sector Transformation publication.

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