



Summary of COMESA-ACTESA

Technical and Planning Workshop
on
COMESA Seed Harmonization Plan

SEMIS UoN

Addis Ababa, April 7-11, 2014

Seed Enterprises Management Institute
University of Nairobi



ACTESA



Main Goal of ACTESA : Increase farmer productivity and incomes

Mandate

Specialized arm of COMESA and Primary Agricultural instrument.

Represents 19 members states agricultural needs.

Responds to the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP)'s Pillar II, III and IV agenda

- improve rural infrastructure and trade-related capacities for market access
- increase food supply, reduce hunger, and improve responses to food emergency crises
- disseminate appropriate new technologies

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ACTESA's Strategic Position

Channel through which the alliance members receive policy directions and channel their inputs for considerations by COMESA Policy Organ meetings.

- Alliance Members: Farmer organizations, implementing partners, development partners and private sector.

Regional Hub that brings together information, knowledge, and best practices on the developing of staple food markets in Eastern and Southern Africa

- Disseminate to enable national and regional partners in order to implement programmes and activities in a consistent and sustainable manner.

Regional coordination and facilitation of activities identified by both public and private sectors for implementation at Member State level.



Rise of internal trade within COMESA



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Importance of Seed:
Maize Seed alone is COMESA's fifth most internally traded commodity in value terms.



COMESA's Member States Strategic Crops

COMESA Member State	Maize	Ground nuts	Wheat	Pearl Millet	Sorghum	Cotton	Sunflower	Rice	Beans	Cassava	Irish Potatoes	Soya beans
Burundi	✓		✓					✓		✓	✓	
Comoros	✓									✓	✓	
Djibouti			✓	✓	✓							
DR Congo		✓						✓	✓	✓		
Egypt	✓			✓	✓							
Eritrea			✓	✓							✓	
Ethiopia	✓		✓	✓				✓				
Kenya	✓		✓	✓			✓				✓	
Libya												
Madagascar	✓	✓						✓	✓		✓	
Malawi	✓	✓						✓		✓		✓
Mauritius									✓			
Rwanda									✓			
Seychelles									✓			
South Sudan					✓			✓				
Sudan	✓		✓					✓	✓			
Swaziland	✓											
Uganda	✓	✓			✓			✓	✓			
Zambia	✓	✓								✓		✓
Zimbabwe	✓	✓				✓	✓				✓	

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Primary goal of COMESA's seed harmonization

Provide farmers—especially smallholders— a sustained, affordable and reliable choice and diversity of high-quality seeds

- tested and registered in local environmental and market conditions
- optimise crop yields to provide food for farm household needs
- provide excess for sale into local and regional markets
- increase farm incomes
- build member state economies.
- will not prevent farmers producing or utilising their own indigenous seed varieties or farm saved seeds, or utilising informal seed production systems.

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Status of Regulations

- March 2008 COMESA Ministers of Agriculture March, 2008 directed COMESA Secretariat to expedite the harmonisation of seed trade regulations and standards
- Since 2008 ACTESA worked extensively with member states, seed industry and seed stakeholders to bring about the draft COMESA Seed Trade Harmonisation Regulations.
- The legal process of COMESA Seed Law Harmonisation across the 19 COMESA Member States is now completed
- COMESA Seed Trade Harmonisation Regulations are in force after approval by the COMESA Council of Ministers in Kinshasa, DR Congo on 24th February, 2014.
- **Approved regulations now require domestication at national level.**
- Member states will be supported in their obligations by ACTESA, working through the COMESA Seed Harmonization Implementation Plan (COM-SHIP)



COM-SHIP Vision

Within 5-7 years COMESA Seed Trade Harmonisation regulations will be fully implemented across all the 19 member states of COMESA

Priority actions at member state level will be focused on domestication of or harmonization with:

- Seed Certification Regulations

- Variety Release Regulations

- Quarantine and Phytosanitary Regulations

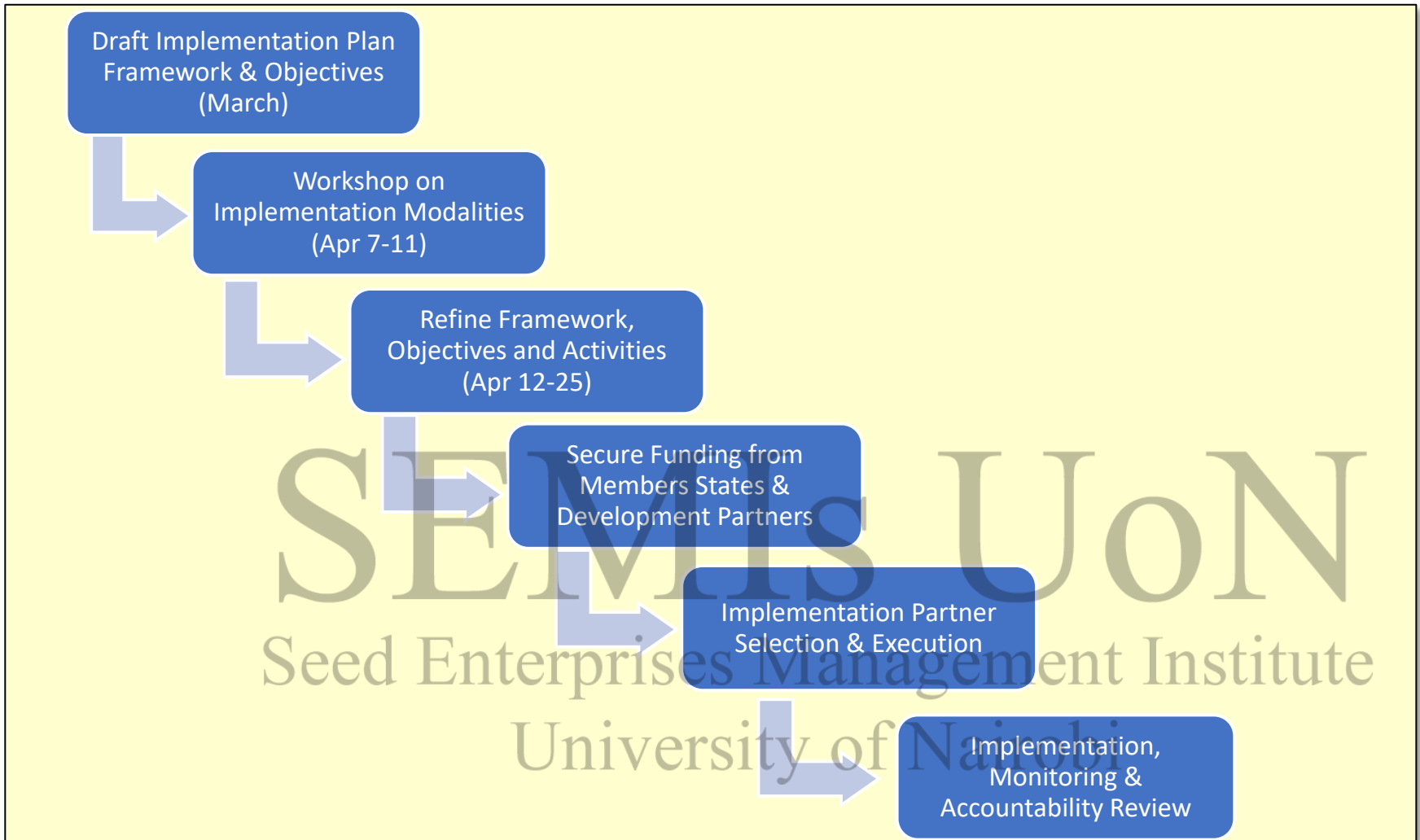
At regional level priority actions will focus on seed catalog, data and information flow, review and support.

For effective implementation at member state level, and to support national and regional food security goals these priorities need to be supported by activities to support member state seed companies and farmers.

COM-SHIP activities will also take into account gender mainstreaming and environmental issues, including the implications of climate change.



COM-SHIP Development Steps





ACTESA's Regional Level Responsibilities

- Keep COMESA seed regulations current, and advance modifications where required through COMESA approval channels.
- Monitor the implementation, effective management and enforcement, and improve on regulations.
- Arbitration on Disputes between member states.
- Develop, curate and update the Regional Seed Catalogue to provide accurate and timely information.
- Support accurate and timely gathering of seed data and statistics, working closely with AFSTA, Member state seed authorities, and national seed trade to keep production and trade statistics and data current
- Represent COMESA member states seed interests to other trading blocks, international organisations and development partners.
- Create an enabling environment to advance seed trade in the region and strengthen relations between COMESA member states with Regional and National seed Associations.
- Representation of COMESA member state seed interests in Regional and Global Trade Talks and agreements e.g. TRIPS
- Strengthen ties and troubleshoot challenges with ISTA, UPOV, and OECD
- Management and Implementation of a COMESA label, working closely with AFSTA.



Member State Responsibilities

Support domestication of regulations at country level

Identify constraints, gaps, infrastructure and capacity building needs

Harmonize existing laws and regulations with COMESA

Provide resources to effectively manage these legislative and regulatory instruments

- Human and Infrastructure Capacity
- National seed catalog, seed data, trade data.
- Market support

Consistent application and improvement of regulations

Coordination with Seed Trade and Seed Stakeholders

Provide support to farmers through extension agencies and farmer groups

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COM-SHIP Strategic Objectives

SO. 1 Prepare for, and support phased domestication.

- A. Seed Certification System and Policy Reforms Activities*
- B. Variety Release System Activities*
- C. Quarantine and Phytosanitary Activities*

At request of member states -

Assess member state PVP status and gaps, and develop a road-map toward harmonization of Plant Variety Protection systems in COMESA Countries.

SO.2 Strengthen Awareness of COMESA Seed Trade Harmonisation Regulations

SO. 3 Monitor and Improve Regulations

SO. 4. Seed Industry and Farmer Support

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Measures and Accountability

Progress on the implementation by member states on the COMESA Seed Regulations will be reviewed annually taking into account

- Progress and Domestication of Key Regulatory Components
- Infrastructure and Human Capacity
- Number of Crop choices available to farmers in each country
- Number of Seed Varieties per crop to farmers available in each country
- Average age of registered varieties
- Breeder and Foundation Seed Trade Volumes
- Local seed production volumes
- Number of local and regional seed enterprises - producers, distributors, dealers.
- Import / Export Volumes from outside COMESA
- Import / Export Volumes from within COMESA
- Reduction in transaction cost and time
- Data and Statistical information flows across the region.
- Seed Market Growth in Volume and Value.

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Civil Society Concerns

- Consideration of other international agreements – ITPGRFA, TRIPS, CBD etc.
- The need to recognize informal seed systems and traditional knowledge
- GMO regulations should be decided at member state level
- While we agree PBR are important, systems should be what COMESA member states themselves decide, not necessarily following UPOV or ARRIPPO. (Concerns have been raised with ARRIPPO)
- One size does not fit all: Ecological, agronomic, cultural and market diversity across and within member states.
- Seed is not the only driver of good agricultural practice.
- Protect land races and indigenous knowledge
- Allow time for member states to have buy-in on the process, there is no rush.
- Seed should not be in the hands of just a few interest groups.



Challenges to implementation

- Implementation should be conducted in a transparent, and consistently applied manner to facilitate trade between member states.
 - This will require extensive cooperation between member states, with the secretariat, with stakeholders and beneficiaries, and alignment of development partners to rally around a common goal in support of COMESA and its member states.
- Within the 19 member states, there is vast differences between the status of formal seed systems, as well as differences in the development of local seed industries.
- Ultimately farmer interests, national food productivity, and economic growth must be kept foremost.
 - There will be a natural instinct to try to protect local seed interests and the *status quo* through political pressure and artificial trade barriers.
- Member states should balance national seed industry interests, against the need to improve national farm productivity, national food security and industry competitiveness to allow farmers better options.
- Throughout the region, and across both public and private sectors, human resource capacity remains a challenge.
- Financial resource commitments need to be secured from both member states, in line with CAADP commitments, and development partners. This funding needs to be sustained over an extended period, and allow both national and regional level support.
- The informal seed sector is an important part of current seed supply within the region. Scaling up informal seed systems is being addressed through other development partner initiatives.
- Regulations are only one component of improving seed systems effectiveness in Africa.
- The implementation plan not intended to solve all the problems facing agricultural productivity, even the entire seed system challenges.

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Conclusion

Quote of the week

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together”

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