West Africa Assesses the State of Implementation of Regional Seed Regulation

Seed actors from 17 countries will meet in Abuja, Nigeria, from Wednesday 16 to Friday 18 October 2019 to assess progress made in the implementation of the harmonized regional seed regulation.

The primary objective of the regulations is to create an environment conducive to the growth of the seed industry. Today, except three countries, almost all ECOWAS member countries, in addition to Chad and Mauritania, have formally adopted the harmonized regional regulation.

«Harmonized laws and regulations provide the right conditions for promoting seed production and quality control. They provide the basis for healthy competition between seed companies, promote the free movement of seeds across borders and provide farmers with access to high-quality seeds,» says Dr. Abdou Tenkouano, Executive Director of CORAF.

The fifth statutory meeting of the West Africa Regional Seed and Seedling Committee (WARSSC) is organized by CORAF and funded by UEMOA Commission and USAID through the Partnership for Agricultural Research, Education and Development (PAIRED) Program. The objective of WARSSC is to facilitate the implementation of the harmonized regional seed regulation, which aims, among other things, to create favorable conditions for the emergence of a strong seed industry capable of ensuring a regular supply, at the right time, of sufficient quantities of quality seeds in the 17 countries of the sub-regional space.

About 60 participants are expected to attend this meeting in Abuja, which will be chaired by the Minister of Agriculture of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The fourth statutory meeting of WARSSC was held in Dakar, Senegal in July 2018. At the Abuja gathering, stakeholders will assess progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the Dakar meeting and review the status of implementation at the national level of the harmonized regional seed regulations by Member States. It will also be an opportunity to have the draft of the regional list of plant quarantine pests and the draft of the 2018 Regional Catalogue of Plant Species and Varieties validated.

«A strong and dynamic seed industry is the key to real agricultural transformation. In West Africa, farmers are increasingly turning to improved variety seeds to increase their productivity, something that deserves to be encouraged and also to facilitate farmers' access to better quality seeds,» said Dr. Yacouba Diallo, Agri-input Specialist at CORAF.

The dynamism of the seed industry and the development of cross-border seed trade depend on the application of harmonized regional regulations. Over the past 7 years, CORAF has supported member states in reorganizing their national seed systems to comply with the harmonized ECOWAS regulations.
Although there is a consensus that significant progress has been made in strengthening the regional seed industry, many obstacles remain to be overcome, including the duration of the registration of new seed varieties, the effective transfer of certain prerogatives to the private sector, certain obstacles to cross-border trade in seeds, and the circulation of seeds of dubious quality.

Various consultations of the three intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), namely the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), in 2014 and 2017, resulted in the formulation and adoption of a seed regulation harmonizing the rules governing the quality control, certification and marketing of plant seeds and seedlings in the ECOWAS-UEMOA-CILSS region.

In 2008, ECOWAS adopted the harmonized regional seed regulations. A year later, UEMOA adopted a similar mechanism. In 2018, the two regional organizations joined CILSS to renew an earlier agreement entrusting CORAF (West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development) with the responsibility of managing the implementation of the harmonized regional regulations on seeds and seedlings in West Africa and to serve as the permanent secretariat of the WARSSC.

**Read more:**

- Early Signs of Boon for Businesses as Seed Laws are Harmonized
- West Africa Assesses Progress in Implementation of Seed Regulation
- Implementation of Harmonized Seed Regulation in West Africa: What Way Forward?
- ‘Private Sector Growth Real Measure of Seed Regulation Success’
- “CORAF’s Support Crucial to Our Company’s Success”

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**About CORAF**

As a key technical partner of ECOWAS and other regional economic commissions, ECOWAS appointed CORAF in 2013 to facilitate and coordinate the implementation of harmonized regional regulations for seeds and seedlings in Member States.

In an agreement of March 27, 2013, ECOWAS entrusted CORAF with the coordination of the implementation of the National Seed Committees as well as the management of the Executive Secretariat of the West African Regional Committee on Seeds and Seedlings for a transitional period of five years.

Subsequently, on 4 June 2018, another cooperation agreement between ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS entrusted CORAF with the responsibility of managing the application of harmonized regional regulations in the field of seeds and plants. The agreement also mandated CORAF to coordinate the joint executive secretariat of WARSSC on behalf of the three regional organizations.