



LARGEST SINGLE JUMP OF IMPROVED SEED VARIETIES ON REGIONAL CATALOGUE

SADC Farmers Now Have Access to 83 Improved Seed Varieties

The Southern African Development Community (SADC), under its Harmonized Seed Regulatory System, established a regional seed catalogue and database in 2014 to serve as a central repository and registry for improved, high-quality seed. Once on the SADC Seed Variety Catalogue, registered seeds can be marketed and exported to any of the 16 SADC Member States by seed producers without additional testing or red tape. With support from USAID, the application process has been dramatically streamlined, and allows for release in two SADC countries. Once approved by both countries, National Seed Authorities (NSA) can apply to the SADC Seed Centre for approval to the regional catalog. This means that seed producers no longer need to register their seed at the national level in each SADC Member State, but can instead focus on two national markets to gain access to all 16. In turn, this allows for increased trade of improved seed as a critical agricultural input, with the potential to drive economic growth for the region as well as increase food security and help manage changing climate conditions with greater resiliency.

Largest Single Jump in Registered Seed Varieties

An important component of the SADC Seed Variety Release system is the establishment and maintenance of the [SADC Seed Variety Catalogue](#), which is maintained by the [SADC Seed Centre](#) and open to the public. The catalogue contains seed varieties that meet the regional standards and are approved by the SADC Seed Committee. When registered, inspected, and packaged following the SADC standards for export, these seeds may bear the SADC seed label, ensuring a high-quality product and allowing for expedited border and customs checks, dramatically improving overall transit time.

SADC Seed Variety Catalogue



83 seed varieties registered on the SADC Seed Variety Catalogue.



Increased diversity of seeds available for export.



10 seed companies engaged in regional variety release.



4 seed companies using the SADC seed label.



The seed varieties listed on the SADC catalogue can be marketed and sold in all SADC Member States. Before a variety can be entered in the catalogue, it needs to be released in at least two SADC countries. There are now 83 seed varieties listed on the catalogue since its launch in 2014. From 2016, working on a baseline of 25 varieties, the USAID-funded Feed the Future Southern Africa Seed Trade Project (Seed Trade Project) has made a concerted effort to engage seed companies resulting in 58 additional varieties being listed on the catalogue, the largest jump of which is 28 varieties registered in the second quarter of 2020 alone. This has not only increased the diversity of high-quality seeds that can be traded within the SADC region, but will also improve food security, nutrition, and economic growth.

“Twenty-eight new seed variety additions is the single largest leap ever seen on the SADC Variety Catalog since its inception. This reflects a growing interest and momentum among seed companies who see the obvious business case for registering their improved seed varieties at the regional level versus the national level. All 28 newly registered, high-quality seed varieties including maize, cotton, sorghum, beans, Irish potatoes, wheat, soybean, and groundnuts can now be commercialized in any of the 16 SADC Member States,” explained Mr. Bruce Chulu Simbunji, SADC Seed Committee Member and Head of Seed Testing at Seed Control and Certificate Institute in Zambia

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Seed Co. Ltd.’s Successful Pilot Makes Business Case for Other Seed Producers

In September 2019, the Seed Trade Project – in partnership with [Seed Co. Ltd. Zambia](#), [USAID Mission in Zambia](#), [Government of Zambia](#), and the [Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources \(FANR\) Directorate of the SADC Secretariat](#) – commissioned the [first hybrid maize seed export](#) to have been wholly produced under the SADC Harmonized Seed Regulatory System from Zambia to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

This pilot export proved hugely successful on several fronts. First, it allowed 200 metric tons of high-quality hybrid maize seed, produced by Seed Co. Zambia, to be exported to the Democratic Republic of Congo using the SADC seed labels and certificates. Because the seed consignment carried the SADC seed labels and other documentation, it cleared customs in record time due to targeted training by the Seed Trade Project of border and customs officials and plant inspectors. As a result, the Project reduced the clearance process on the Zambian side of the border from three days to less than 20 minutes. Further, the \$100K USG investment yielded a \$270K return on investment for a total value of \$370K. Lastly, Seed Co. Ltd. Zambia exceeded production estimates under the grant by 26 metric tons, allowing the remaining hybrid maize seed to be traded on the local market.

The deeper impact of the Seed Co. Zambia pilot is how it has driven substantial interest among other seed companies to engage with the SADC HSRS process and register their improved seed varieties on the SADC Seed Variety Catalogue. Three smaller, emerging seed companies – [Lake Agriculture in Zambia](#), [Zimbabwe Super Seeds Cooperative Company \(ZSS\)](#), and [Peacock Seeds in Malawi](#) – had met challenges entering the regional seed market and approached the Seed Trade Project following the Seed Co. Zambia pilot to see if they might collaborate in a similar process. With technical guidance and grants provided by the Seed Trade Project, as well as cost shares from each company, Lake Agriculture, ZSS, and Peacock Seeds have all

fully engaged in seed productions under the HSR guidelines with anticipated exports beginning in September 2020. In addition to the three current pilots, a total of 10 seed companies have engaged in the regional variety release, and four seed companies are using the SADC seed labels.

All 16 SADC Markets Open to Registered Seed Producers

The SADC Seed Variety Release system is offering a way for seed companies, regardless of size or business model, access to the regional SADC market with one, streamlined application process, allowing them to register improved, more resilient seeds on the SADC Seed Variety Catalogue. Rather than anchoring to one or two national markets, the catalogue allows seed companies to market and export their approved seed varieties to all 16 Member States, dramatically reducing costs, red tape, and the need for further testing.

As ZSS Managing Director Nelson Munyaka explains “Zimbabwe Super Seeds is a relatively small cooperative company, and we have historically faced barriers breaking into other markets outside of Zimbabwe. Between the lack of access to market information, the mandatory pre-shipment seed inspections, inefficient clearance process, and logistical costs, it has been incredibly difficult for smaller seed producers to break into viable seed markets. By getting SADC Member States to align with the SADC HSRS, we can overcome these challenges, and we will continue to increase the number of ZSS seed varieties under the SADC certification scheme to make trade within the region more seamless.”

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About the Seed Trade Project

The Feed the Future Southern Africa Seed Trade Project is funded by the USAID Southern African Regional Office, and provides targeted technical assistance to facilitate the implementation of the SADC Harmonized Seed Regulatory System, which aims to boost seed trade across the region, integrating smaller, and more isolated national seed markets into one broader SADC market. Implemented by DAI Global, LLC, the Seed Trade Project is part of a regional policy effort to improve agricultural productivity, food security, and nutrition in the SADC region.