



## **ECAPAPA POLICY BRIEF SERIES**

### **Seed Phytosanitary Regulations – Policy Brief No. 1**

#### **Background**

The harmonization of seed policies and regulations in the ASARECA<sup>1</sup> member countries is the first step toward creating a seed market that is large enough to attract investment by local and international investors who will provide the quantity, quality and variety of improved seed to meet the region's growing demands.

Since September 1999, ASARECA<sup>2</sup> with support from USAID has supported a pilot project through ECAPAPA<sup>3</sup> in the East African Community (EAC) countries of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda on five specific areas, namely

- phytosanitary regulations
- seed certification
- plant variety protection
- laws and regulations governing the seed trade
- variety evaluation, release and registration.

Each of these areas is the subject of a policy brief.

#### **The State of Phytosanitary Regulations in 1999**

The project found phytosanitary regulations in the EAC to be widely differing. For example, Kenya and Uganda were using regulations dating back to 1972<sup>4</sup> as the basis for issuing import permits. The list of quarantine pests preventing cross-border trade was lengthy at 33 pests for 10 selected seeds. Each country had its own list of mid to high risk quarantine pests, there were no common mandates and powers of phytosanitary inspectors at joint border entry points, pest information was involuntary and erratic, while the minimum facilities at high risk entry points were greatly varied. In addition, only Kenya was signatory to the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). Because of these regulations, the formal seed trade in a region whose countries have similar growing conditions, pests, and diseases was far below its potential.

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<sup>1</sup> Burundi, Congo D.R, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda.

<sup>2</sup> ASARECA is the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa based at Entebbe in Uganda.

<sup>3</sup> ECAPAPA is the Eastern and Central Africa Programme for Agriculture Policy Analysis and a Programme of ASARECA.

<sup>4</sup> The 7<sup>th</sup> non-legal draft of the East African Technical Committee's Plant Protection Order of 1972.

## Activities of the ASARECA/ECAPAPA Pilot Project

The pilot project adopted a long consultative and participatory process beginning with the appointment of national resource persons between August and September 1999 to review the laws, regulations and standards in each country. This was followed by national consultative workshops with close to 500 stakeholders in October and November 1999. These were followed by national workshops that presented proposals for regional harmonization to top-level public and private sector seed industry players in February to March 2000. The process culminated in the first regional workshop in April 2000 in Entebbe on harmonization proposals for phytosanitary regulations, seed certification and variety evaluation and registration; followed by the second one in June 2000 in Arusha on proposals for import-export procedures and coordination for implementing and monitoring regional agreements.

## Results of the Project

The results of these workshops were agreements that can be categorized as a) *legal* and b) *procedural*. The *legal agreements* are those requiring changes in national legislation in consultation with the committee on agriculture and Food Security at the EAC. In the case of phytosanitary regulations, no legal changes were anticipated. The *procedural agreements* do not require any change in legislation and can therefore be implemented immediately by Ministries of Agriculture through the relevant national authorities. Nearly all of the changes required under phytosanitary regulations fell under this category. The results so far include Kenya and Uganda accepting to use the revised FAO pest risk analysis procedures used in Tanzania as the basis for issuing import permits, publishing a common list of mid to high risk quarantine pests in East Africa, using a common database (CABI) to reduce quarantine pests from 33 to 3 for the seed of the 10 selected crops, a minimum pest information system covering the region, the use of literature<sup>5</sup> and farmer training to raise public awareness of phytosanitary measures along the border, and the establishment of minimum facilities<sup>6</sup> at high-risk entry points<sup>7</sup>. Tanzania and Uganda also agreed to pursue membership in the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).

## Next Steps

The most important outcome of this project on phytosanitary regulations has been to reduce quarantine pests in the EAC countries through scientific reasoning from 33 to 3 on the 10 most important crop seeds. A seed regional working group, now in place, will among others, continuously access and validate existing restrictions.. On the issuance of import permits, the three countries have agreed to periodically update the common list of restricted and unrestricted pests. On the mandates and powers of phytosanitary inspectors, the three countries have agreed to gradually place staff with similar qualifications<sup>8</sup> and authority on their common borders. Tanzania and Uganda will continue to follow the IPPC guidelines as they wait to accede to the convention. Finally, the experience of the EAC countries will be used to extend the pilot phase of this project<sup>9</sup> to the other ASARECA member countries. There are plans to initiate the same consultative process in Burundi, D.R. Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Rwanda, and Sudan.

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<sup>5</sup> Literature here means pamphlets, leaflets, posters along the borders to sensitize customs and immigration officers.

<sup>6</sup> Microscopes, visual inspection kits, refrigerators and labs.

<sup>7</sup> International airports, sea ports, lake ports, main border crossings, post office and courier services in the EAC.

<sup>8</sup> Team leader with master's degree and other members with BSc or diplomas at low risk entry points.

<sup>9</sup> Further information can be obtained from ECAPAPA Coordinating Unit, P.O. Box 765, Entebbe, Uganda. Tel 256 41 321751/2, 321780; Fax 256 41 321777 or email: [ecapapa@imul.com](mailto:ecapapa@imul.com)