

THIS SEASON 2020B, PLANT QUALITY SEEDS FOR HIGHER YIELDS

By Andrew Masinde



The Second season (2020B season) has started in most parts of Uganda. However, most smallholder farmers across the country have started or are planning to use seed from informal sources such as local markets, previous harvest and neighbors which will result in low yields. This is largely attributed to a lack of awareness on quality seed and its benefits. Also, it is estimated that less than 15% of Ugandan farmers use quality seed. This stems from inadequate access to quality seed of farmer preferred varieties, the high price of seed, unsupportive policies and inadequate knowledge of available varieties.

To address these challenges, the Integrated Seed Sector Development (ISSD) plus Uganda project whose aim is to support the development of a vibrant, pluralistic and market-oriented seed sector, provides smallholder farmers with access to affordable quality seed of superior varieties. ISSD is implemented by Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI) in partnership with NARO and is funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Uganda.

Through her Uptake Component, ISSD Plus endeavours to create awareness on quality seed and its benefits through various communication channels such as media, seed fairs, roadshows and exhibitions among others.

We also promote quality seed use through publicity and demonstration campaigns and proximity marketing efforts. This is expected to contribute to mindset change and behaviour of smallholder farmers towards quality seed.

Why quality seed

According to FAO Quality seed use has become more crucial than ever before for providing enough food security for the rising number of people in the world, which is expected to exceed nine billion by the year 2050.

Charles Ssemwogerere, the ISSD Local Seed Business (LSB) Coordinator, says planting quality seed is a crucial determining factor for higher yield and the quality of crop production.

He explains that good quality seed is superior to local or farmer saved seed in genetic and physiological purity and is free from seed-borne diseases and disorders.

“Good quality seed has high return per unit area as the genetic potentiality of the crop can be fully exploited. It is also less likely to be affected by diseases and pests,” he says.

Ssemwogerere adds that for field crops, increased productivity provides increased income and improved food security through existing and growing markets.

Despite having many seed companies providing quality seed, there is still a gap in meeting the demand for quality seed across the country. The quality seed on market is majorly identified using labels that related to the seed classes.



“For Uganda, we have certified seed that is produced by licensed seed companies and the quality is verified and tested by MAAIF, it has a blue label.

We also have Quality Declared Seed (QDS) that is produced by registered and trained local seed business groups for use within farming communities where it is being produced and the quality is verified by MAAIF, it has a green label,” he said.

To fill part of the gap in the seed sector, Local Seed Businesses (LSBs) supported by ISSD Uganda are producing and marketing Quality Declared Seeds.

To ensure that seed production by LSBs meets quality standards in the field, during processing, storage and marketing quality of seed produced

by LSBs, there is periodic inspection and verification done by LSB internal seed quality control committees supported by ISSD and MAAIF. Farmers can access quality seed from licensed agro-input dealers or Local Seed business groups across the different regions in Uganda including Ankole, Kigezi, Rwenzori, Northern, Eastern and West Nile.

