

Access To Seeds Index

An assessment of smallholder farmers' access to seeds says greater engagement from global seed companies would help boost yields and food security.

The Access to Seeds Index said the large multinational companies' quality and range of seeds, if available and affordable, could help boost yields.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, smallholders are responsible for the majority of the region's food production. However, only 2.5% of seeds used by the farmers come from global seed firms.

The 2016 index, published at the end of February (www.accesstoseeds.org/), assessed the main field crop and vegetable seed companies' efforts to make their products available to smallholder farmers in the most food insecure regions of the world: South and South-East Asia, Latin America, Eastern Africa and Western Africa.

"It is often thought that smallholding farmers save their seeds from season to season but that is not true," said Access to Seeds Index executive director Ido Verhagen.

"Research shows that they use a mixed bowl of seeds, including seeds they have saved themselves, seeds that they buy from the market and certified seeds from companies.

However, he explained, access to certified seeds from global companies was limited for a number of reasons.

"It is not only availability, but also affordability and sometimes capability – seeds are not always suitable for their system or their practices," he told *BBC News*.

The findings show that the "seed industry as a whole is active in all countries in the scope of the index. This was with the exception of Western Africa, where there is a clear gap."

Mr Verhagen observed: "We cannot blame the companies for not going to Western Africa because companies need a business environment and market opportunities."

The index showed that companies did not have a presence in six of the 14 countries in the region: **Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Niger and Sierra Leone.**

While the findings suggested that global companies were doing more to reach smallholders than had been assumed, Mr Verhagen hoped the big commercial players would step up their efforts.

"Also, this is a world of partnership," he added. "Seed companies cannot do it alone.

"NGOs and other institutions are looking for partners in the private sector and – based on our research – we have found that some are excelling in breeding while others are excelling in distribution."

Meanwhile, researchers have produced a timescale of how projected climate change was set to alter the face of agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Climate change is widely projected to have a significant adverse impact on food security if no adaptation measures are taken, they observed in the journal *Nature Climate Change*.

One of the adaptations the team highlighted was improved access to improved seed varieties, with "climate smart" characteristics, such as heat tolerance and drought resistance.

The Access to Seeds Index says one billion people currently go to bed hungry and two billion people suffer from malnutrition.

To compound matters, the global population is projected to increase by a further two billion people in the coming decades, primarily in the regions identified as the most food insecure.

In these regions, smallholder farmers dominate the agricultural landscape. In order to meet the growing demand for food in an uncertain future, improving access to seed is a vital component in efforts to improve global food security. (*BBC News Online 10/3*)

of State for Agriculture and Rural Development, Heineken Lokpobiri has said. More than 35 improved varieties of cassava have been developed and registered in Nigeria.

Flour mills are being encouraged to substitute at least 10% high quality cassava flour for wheat flour to be included in bread production. (*Daily Trust 29/3*)

Coffee, Angola: The director of the Angolan National Coffee Institute (INCA), João Ferreira Neto, has launched a programme to increase coffee production and exports, which aims to triple the amount of coffee exported to 30,000 tons within two years.

This programme, designed to support existing producers, includes the delivery of 250m coffee seedlings and 1.5bn palm seedlings, according to news agency *Angop*.

Coffee is currently produced in 10 of Angola's 18 provinces, namely Cabinda, Bengo, Kwanza Norte, Kwanza Sul, Uíge, Benguela, Huambo, Bie, Malanje and Huíla, in an area

of 18,000 hectares, compared to 120,000 hectares in the period before independence in 1975.

In 2015 the coffee production structure comprised about 50,000 registered producers, of which 98% represented family farms and the remaining 2% were corporate farms in the provinces of Bengo, Kwanza Sul and Uíge.

In addition to increasing production, INCA is supporting sales programmes through direct purchase of coffee by private commercial agents and through rural markets in cooperation with the authorities.

Recent studies by INCA found that in the medium term (five years), with investments channelled into coffee, Angola may be producing 50,000 tons of commercial coffee per year. This is about a quarter of the production before independence, when the country was the world's fourth largest coffee producer. (*Macauhub 14/3*)

Fruit, Angola: In 2016 Angolan group *Giasop* plans to invest US\$30m in agro-farming projects and in the recovery and expansion of fruit groves and orchards that will provide the raw material for its fruit juice production plant, said the managing director of the group.

Miji Feliciano said most of the funds would be applied to the expansion of Fazenda Boa Fruta, a farm with 46 hectares in the area of Porto Amboim, Kwanza Sul province. There the group plans to plant more mango trees, better quality orange trees, passion fruit and guava trees to supply the factory. A new irrigation system will also be installed.

The Amboim Natural factory has daily production of 20,000 litres of mango, orange, pineapple and passion fruit juice, and pulp and tomato paste.

The factory also has two milk filling lines, with a total capacity of 45,000 litres per day. The milk is also used to make yoghurt, cheese and butter. (*Macauhub 10/3*)

MINERAL

GOLD

DR Congo

Illegal exports are funding terrorist groups.

Gold moved illegally from eastern DR Congo is funding terror groups, a think tank has said.

The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) is currently carrying out research to track illicit financial flows related to resource extraction in DR Congo and how gold is smuggled through East African countries before finding its way into the global market.

Preliminary findings of the Pretoria-based think tank show al-Shabaab and Allied Democratic Forces-National Army for the Liberation of **Uganda** (ADF-NALU) have joined gold smuggling networks.

The think tank said smuggling of DR Congo's natural resources is linked to conflict in the region, warning that al-Shabaab remains sufficiently resourced to fund its activities despite efforts by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the United Nations (UN) to cut off its channels of funding.

Although ISS research is ongoing, it has already identified Bukavu, Butembo, Bunia, Ariwara and Kisangani as the main trading towns in eastern DR Congo for gold smuggling.

The gold finds its way to Kampala, Nairobi, Bujumbura and Dar es Salaam before being smuggled to other markets. Al Shabaab and ADF-NALU are involved in networks benefiting from the proceeds of gold and other natural resources exported illegally to **Dubai** and **China**. (*The East African 26/3*)