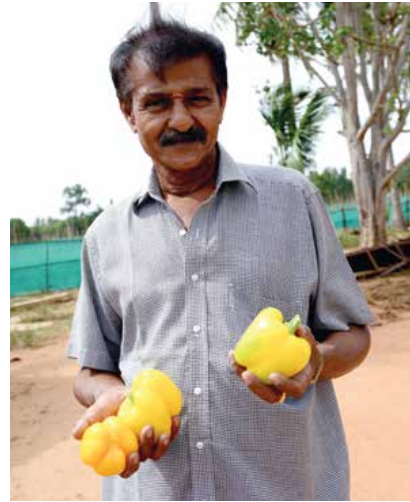


East-West and DuPont-Pioneer Top Global Seed Index



Photos by John Clewley

Vegetable seed producer East-West Seed topped a global seed survey conducted by Access to Seeds, an independent, non-profit agency funded by the Dutch ministries of economic and foreign affairs and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The index is the first of its kind, and attempts to further the debate on the role of seed companies in food security. In the Access to Seeds Index report for 2016, the rationale was described as, "The Access to Seeds Index measures and compares the efforts of the world's leading seed companies to enhance the productivity of smallholder farmers. By matching the expectations of stakeholders in and around the seed industry with company performance, it helps clarify the role that the seed industry can play and brings transparency to the contribution of individual companies."

The broad aim of the index is to improve smallholder farmers' access to modern, more productive seed varieties. The report also

noted that leading seed companies should do more to reach smallholder farmers, especially in Africa, where the global seed industry is not as active as it is in South America, South and Southeast Asia, and East Africa. The index is based on widely available public information and a questionnaire that was sent to seed companies, with about half of the seed companies completing it.

The index measures companies in several areas, such as strategy and tangible targets on reaching smallholder farmers, engaging with 'stakeholders', and dealing with intellectual property rights. Additionally, the index also considers R&D and breeding, marketing and market access, and capacity building.

East-West Seed topped two of the three indices: the Global Index of Vegetable Companies (see chart top right) and another regional index that ranked seed companies in East Africa. The third index released was the Global Index of Field Crop Companies, topped

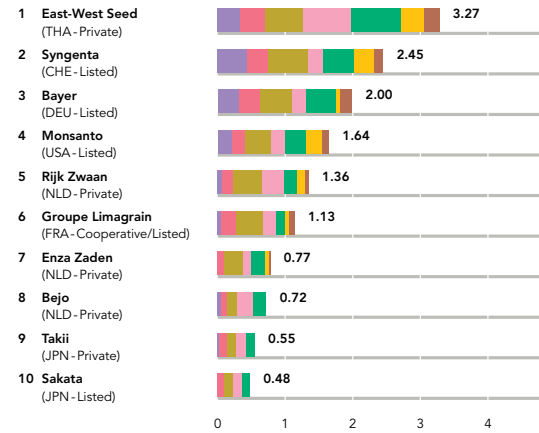
by DuPont Pioneer, and followed by Syngenta and Bayer.

The executive director of the Access to Seeds Index Foundation told European media that those companies that were ranked highest in the vegetable seed index tended to view smallholder farmers as a good business opportunity, while those ranked further down the index regarded serving them as part of corporate responsibility or promotion.

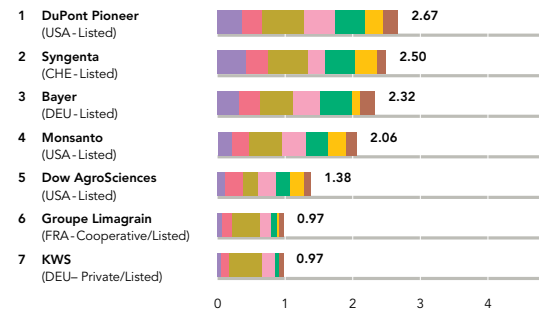
He noted that East-West Seed had deliberately relocated from Holland to Southeast Asia (initially the Philippines but now based in Thailand) with the intention of targeting and supplying smallholder farmers.

DuPont Pioneer, which ranked first on the Global Index of Field Crop Seed Companies, gained its ranking due to the fact that its strong breeding programme was based on which smallholder farmers were active. 🌱

More information: accesstoseeds.org



Global Index of Vegetable Seed Companies



Global Index of Field Crop Seed Companies



Data courtesy of accesstoseeds.org

China's Roadmap for Genetically Modified Crops

On 13 April, the Chinese Ministry of Agriculture gave a press conference to brief the media about China's 'roadmap for genetically modified crops', which was to give priority to non-edible cash crops. GMO expert Wu Kongming said that China had decided on a 'prudent' approach to introducing GMO crops, which meant that next in the pipeline would be indirectly edible crops, then edible crops. "China's safety evaluation system on genetically modified crops is the world's strictest in terms of technical standards and procedures."

Mr. Wu said that at the moment China only plants insect-resistant

cotton and antiviral papaya for commercial purposes, although the country does import genetically modified soybean, corn, rapeseed, cotton and sugar beet. He added that in terms of GMO crops, the focus would be on cash and industrial crops for the period 2016-2020.

At the same press conference, the MOA announced that the authorities would focus on key agricultural seasons to prevent unauthorized seeds from entering China's markets. The move follows a report by Greenpeace in January that claimed that farmers in the Northwest of China were growing

genetically modified corn. China only permits GM papaya and cotton for commercial cultivation.

In a related development, the Pakistani authorities, including the National Biosafety Committee (NBC) recently reviewed pending applications of multiple biotech crops for research and commercialisation. For corn, the NBC approved commercialisation of insect resistant and herbicide tolerant traits, and for cotton, the NBC approved commercialisation of an insect resistant trait. 🌱

Source: MOA, China Daily