



Date	18th June 2013
Subject	Access to Seeds Index Side Event at FAO 38th Ministers' Conference in Rome
Attended by:	<p>Moderator: Mrs. Gerda Verburg, Permanent Representative of The Kingdom of The Netherlands to the Rome-based UN Agencies: FAO, WFP and IFAD</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Clayton Campanhola, Director of FAO's Plant Production and Protection Division• Mr. Clement Kofi Humado, Hon. Minister for Food and Agriculture of Ghana• Mr. Roald Lapperre, deputy Director General Agri & Food from the Ministry of Economic Affairs in the Netherlands• Mr. Ido Verhagen, project Manager Access to Seeds Index• Mr. John Atkin, COO Syngenta <p>Access to Seeds Index Team: Christiaan Biemond, Wim Leereveld, Joke Vroegop</p> <p>Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs: Gerbrand Haverkamp Dutch permanent delegation at FAO: Marleen Schoemaker, Eva van Woersem</p> <p>Visitors: 40 visitors from diverse organisations and 21 different countries</p>

On June 18th the permanent representative of The Kingdom of The Netherlands to the Rome-based UN Agencies FAO, WFP and IFAD, her Excellency Mrs. Gerda Verburg, organised a side event at the 38th FAO Ministers' Conference in Rome. The Access to Seeds Index (ATSI) team had the opportunity to present the Access to Seeds Index project to a diverse public and the deputy of the Dutch Minister of Economic Affairs, Mr. Roald Lapperre, reflected on the index initiative. Besides Mr. Lapperre there were speeches from Mr. Clayton Campanhola on behalf of the FAO, the Hon. Clement Kofi Humado, Minister for Food and Agriculture in Ghana, Mr. Ido Verhagen, projectmanager Access to Seeds Index and Mr. John Atkin, Chief Operational Officer of Syngenta.

1. Speech from Mr. Clayton Campanhola, Director of FAO's Plant Production and Protection Division

Access to high quality seed of well adapted varieties is a key element of sustainable crop production intensification. The necessary gains for increasing agricultural production depends significantly on the availability, access and use of improved varieties combined with efficient management practices by smallholder farmers.

The role and nature of the seed sector varies from country to country. In recent times, investments by the international seed industry have increased considerably both as a source of technology and for making quality seed available to farmers. Equally, there is an emergence of local seed

enterprises, particularly in developing countries. There is a need to increase their capacities and linkages through partnerships to enhance cooperation and mutual benefits.

In this respect, an initiative such as Access to Seed Index aimed at fostering social responsibility of the international seed industry is a welcome move. There are some critical differences and implications between the pharmaceutical industry and the seed sector in developing the Index. Therefore, it is both useful and essential to continue the multi stakeholder dialogue as envisaged in developing the Access to Seeds Index. This side event is a step in that direction.

2. Speech from Mr. Roald Lapperre, deputy Director General Agri & Food from the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Netherlands

Mr. Lapperre stresses that the Dutch government believes this is a very important initiative. It underscores the important role of farmers and the private sector in creating worldwide and inclusive growth in agriculture. Food and nutrition security can only be achieved through farmers. This means that we should take the perspective of farmers in all action we design and take. It is not easy but essential if we want to enable farmers to become better entrepreneurs. This holds true for governments and it should also apply to the private sector that serves and works with farmers.

Private sector development is vital to the efforts to develop local entrepreneurship. Partnerships between the private sector, research institutions, civil society and governments will be crucial to provide sustainable nourishment to a world population of over 9 billion people by 2050. In the world of seeds and propagation material there are many examples of how leading seed companies have managed to become a driving force behind higher yields, more revenue, and better nutritional results for the broader community. Mr. Lapperre mentions activities of East-West Seeds, Seed Co and Syngenta as great examples of innovation. However, more concrete and faster progress is needed.

A market-based approach with the involvement of the private sector is not without risks. Society must on the one hand be clear about its expectations from individual companies and on the other hand define what it sees as unacceptable practices. It is about our expectations of companies in serving society at large. Creating shared value for seed companies means meeting the needs of farmers all over the world. Farmers need:

- high quality seeds that deliver greater yields and more robust crops that require fewer inputs
- freedom to make choices between a range of varieties, now and in the future. To guarantee choice for a future generation of farmers we must preserve genetic diversity both in gene banks and in the field.

Providing better access to quality seeds and preserving diversity requires close cooperation between farmers and the private sector.

The expectations we have from leading seed companies cannot be formulated by politicians or governments. They must be identified by society and take into account the voice of the beneficiaries. If we formulate our expectations from companies we must also be prepared to reward the companies who deliver on these expectations. We must credit them for what they have contributed. The Access to Seeds Index will do so.

3. Speech from Hon. Minister of Ghana Mr. Clement Kofi Humado

Mr. Humado welcomes the ambition of the Access to Seeds Index. It is an ambitious program to raise agricultural production, and the seed industry is very important to achieve that goal. The links between the production of breeder seed, foundation seed and certified seed are weak, particular because National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) involved in production of breeder seed do not have enough capacity.

Involvement of the private sector in the seed system is essential, but requires a strong legal framework. Ghana invested a lot to improve laws and policies for seeds, in order to help the industry. This should be an incentive to private sector participation. However, it also is important that the seed industry follows the regulations to introduce new varieties in Ghana. Since the legal framework for the seed system is improved, Ghana invites investors to invest in the seed industry.

The Access to Seeds Index has great potential to fill in the gaps in the seed sector, not only in Ghana, but in the seed system of all African countries.

Mr. Humado also expresses three concerns:

1. Multinationals replacing the local seed industry. A dialogue with the Access to Seeds Index is needed to engage global institutions in breeding. Instead of replacing the current seed system players, global seed companies should establish partnerships with local companies, especially in breeding and capacity building in seed production and distribution.
2. Preservation of local varieties, co-existing with improved varieties. The African kitchen and culture has a diverse background with a crucial role for a wide range of local varieties. Many consumers prefer the taste of local varieties, and certain varieties play a crucial role in culture and ceremonies. Improved varieties should not replace these, but co-exist. On top of that, Ghana needs global knowledge to preserve these varieties. He mentioned an example in Mexico where this preservation of national biodiversity treasure has been done.
3. Challenges to increase certified seed demand. Past experiences with certified seed made many Ghanaian farmers sceptical about the quality of certified seed. Therefore, it will be a challenge to increase the demand for certified seed. A great opportunity to stimulate certified seed demand is the use of lead farmers. Large seed companies work with outgrowers to produce certified seed. These farmers have better access to inputs and output markets. These outgrowers are therefore more willing to experiment with new varieties. Success stories of outgrowers can pave the way for lead farmers in villages to adopt improved varieties, which will stimulate neighbouring farmers to adopt new varieties as well. Companies can also directly sponsor lead farmers to convince communities of the benefits of improved varieties.

4. Speech from Mr. Ido Verhagen, project manager of the Access to Seeds Index

Ido Verhagen explains the challenges of local farmers, the potential of high quality seed of improved varieties to raise yield, the concept of the index, the developing process of its methodology and the ambition to bridge the gap between the world's leading seed companies and smallholder farmers to combat hunger and poverty.

A few essential parts are:

- The Index tries to stimulate the seed industry to bridge the gap between the knowledge and means of leading seed companies and the needs for better crop cultivation by smallholder farmers

- The Access to Seeds Index draws inspiration from the Access to Medicine Index. This index has successfully encouraged the pharma industry to contribute more to the world's health needs. Their success tells us that our index can be the catalyst that helps the seed industry to bridge the gap.
- The Access to Seeds Index is being developed on the basis of three principles:
 1. The first principle is clear expectations. Right now, every business pursues its own goals, making the industry as a whole scattered and not as effective as it could be. Without clarity, there can be no focus and no satisfactory outcome. So we begin by asking: what do we expect from seed companies? What role do we see for the industry? We ask and answer such questions through a multi-stakeholder dialogue, resulting in a balanced stakeholder agenda.
 2. The second principle is objective measurement and comparison. The methodology underpinning the index should objectively measure the performance of the industry and allow us to compare that in a meaningful way to their peers.
 3. The third principle is positive reinforcement. The index does not seek to blame and shame, but to shine a light on good practices. This will encourage participating companies to learn from and emulate their peers, which creates an industry-wide race to the top. In some pharmaceutical companies, the position in the Access to Medicine Index is already part of the remuneration policy.
- The goal of the Index is not to tell companies HOW to do something, we tell them on WHICH areas we would like to see them act and leave the rest to their creativity.

5. Speech from Mr. John Atkin, COO of Syngenta

According to Mr. Atkin the Access to Seeds Index is fundamentally a very good idea, for two reasons: (1) you can't get a yield without good seeds and (2) it is an opportunity to shed a light on good practice.

He addressed two main aspects in his speech:

1. How big is the challenge?
2. What does the index do and what can it measure?

How big is the challenge:

Most parts of the world have gone through a privatisation of farming, but in different orders and paces. The agricultural development of mature seed markets like the USA, all started in the 1930s with the privatisation of the seed sector. Innovations in varietal development and seed quality have contributed to eight fold yield increases. Mr Atkin estimates that seed contributed up to 50% of this yield increase, while fertilization, pest management, irrigation and other measures are responsible for the other 50% of this yield increase. In contrast to the USA, the formal seed system in most African countries has a smaller market share compared to the informal seed system. The question is how to scale up? "As a private sector we can do that".

The seed business is complex, as illustrated by the following examples:

1. Seed production for 2015 has to start 2-3 years in advance to multiply enough seed, while demand is difficult to predict

2. There is a great diversity in agro-ecological conditions, farmer preferences, and planting time, all resulting in different varieties that have to be suitable for the specific conditions and needs of farmers in specific regions.

Concerning the index methodology Mr. Atkin states that there is a risk of putting too much focus on seeds as such, whereas only 50% of the yield comes from seeds, the other 50% from agronomic measures. Therefore the Access to Seeds Index methodology should also give credits to extension services. Besides that, the index has to take a few things into account:

- Legal frameworks differ between countries, which has implications for varietal protection for seed companies.
- All indicators of the methodology need to be measurable.
- Take into account the importance of Public Private Partnerships (PPP), illustrated by examples in Mexico and India

Additionally Mr Atkin refers to the Kilimo Salama project, a partnership between the Syngenta foundation, the Kenyan insurance company UAP and Swiss Re Corporate Solutions. This initiative offers insurance for Kenyan farmers to cover weather risks, so that they are more comfortable to invest in seed and other inputs for the production of maize, beans, sorghum and wheat. Weather stations across the country register rainfall, whereby the insurance will pay out in cases of extreme rainfall or drought. Over 53.000 farmers were insured in 2012, and farmers are more willing to invest in inputs for their farm: an increase of 20% in farmer investments is realised.

6. Questions and plenary Discussion

The speeches were followed by a plenary discussion of about 45 minutes. The questions from the audience addressed diverse themes that had been mentioned by several speakers as well:

- the preservation of local diversities of crops
- the position of national and regional seed companies
- the importance of partnerships, both between local and industrial companies, between farmers' associations and the industry and also between civil society and the industry

Questions and panel reactions:

1. A journalist of APS news asks Mr. Atkin about the importance of partnerships with the civil society in countries, for example in India.

Mr Atkin welcomes the involvement of civil society in the dialogue. He mentions that there are already many good examples of partnerships between civil society and the industry, but acknowledge that the industry can do more to involve civil society.

2. Why small companies are not included in Access to Seeds Index?

Ido Verhagen acknowledges the importance of smaller companies in the seed sector, but explains why the Access to Seeds Index focusses now on large seed companies.

3. Questions and remarks from a farmer association from Ghana:

1. The speaker mentioned his visit to Kenyan technology conference, and was amazed by the seed developments.
2. The seed industry should partner with farmer associations and research institutes.
3. Imported seed is expensive.
4. What does the panel think of these issues?

Remarks from Ghanaian minister: demand for seed has to come from within the country, regulations need to be in place, in order to engage the private sector in the seed business. The Access to Seeds Index creates a platform for dialogue, not only on policy level, but also for all stakeholders about all elements of the seed system. Engage leading seed companies, and link them to local companies for partnerships/ collaboration. In response to high seed price he says: lead farmers can afford high seed price, and test new varieties. Improved maize varieties can raise yields from 1.25 tons/ha for local varieties to 4.8 tons for improved varieties, as shown by maize project in Ghana. Increased yields easily compensate for higher seed prices. It is the initial investment of high quality seed (=more expensive) that is the problem.

John Atkin in response to the comments of the Ghanaian Minister of Agriculture: lead farmers play an essential role in the adoption of varieties, resulting in a growing market for certified seed. He agreed about the importance preservation of local varieties. The Mexico case is a great example of that, where geographic mapping was used to determine in which areas preservation of varieties was most essential. Improved seeds was only sold in other areas. Industry is ready to provide credit, for example in addition to seed.

He emphasises the importance of more resilient varieties: pest and disease resistance, drought tolerant, etc.: different varieties needed for different agro-ecological conditions. Breeding new varieties is a constant trade-off between all sorts of desirable traits. We need to give farmers a choice, but the final choice is up to them! And once again: do not forget the importance of extension services.

Clayton Campanhola emphasises that private-public partnerships are very important, but that additionally we have to involve smallholder farmers. That is one of the main issues to address. How to involve and preserve the cultures of local communities.

Ido Verhagen mentions that especially this point was voiced at the Synthesis Conference of the ISSD in Kumasi, Ghana, in April this year: we do have to learn a lot, but we do want to keep our own varieties.

4. Beatrice Kingori from Kenya makes a few statements:

- Companies also have to focus on orphan crops.
- There are adoption problems with imported seed.
- Movement of seed across borders is not free, since not all countries in ECOWAS adjusted the seed laws. We need harmonized seed laws implemented in all countries, as was agreed upon in ECOWAS.

5. Tracy Gerstle from CropLife has the following remarks:

- Seed is part of solutions, but also other inputs needed.
- Respect differences between countries.
- She advises to look into the initiative of a broader business index that sheds a light on a variety of needs for food security.

Ido Verhagen: seeds are an essential part of the equation of food security, but not the only one. We will come across issues that need to be addressed by other actors.