



Access to Seeds Index

Annual Operational Plan and Budget 2018

Access to Seeds Foundation
Amsterdam, January 2018

About this document

This Annual Operational Plan and Budget 2018 is an updated version of the full Operational Plan 2017-2019, which covers the development of the second Access to Seeds Foundation. At the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands, the Access to Seeds Foundation publishes an updated version of its operational plan each year. The Annual Operational Plan and Budget 2018 was approved at the foundation's supervisory board meeting on December 6, 2017. To allow for discussion at this meeting, the ministry approved postponement of its submission from November 30, 2017 to January 31, 2018.

Table of contents

Table of contents	2
1. Introduction	3
2. Index cycle 2017-2019: Activity overview	4
3. Objectives	5
4. Deliverables	6
5. Planning	7
6. Budget and funding	8
Annex 1	10

1. Introduction

In 2015 the United Nations launched the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The cornerstone of this agenda is private sector engagement, as the ambitious targets that make up this agenda cannot be achieved without an active contribution by the private sector. The Goalkeepers Report, published for the first time in September 2017 by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, will track the progress of the 18 most important targets on this agenda. Included on this list is smallholder farmer productivity.

There are many technologies available that can enable smallholder farmers to increase their productivity. One of the most important technologies in agriculture is seed- but seed only has value when it ends up in the hands of farmers. This is where the seed industry can play a decisive role.

The Access to Seeds Index aims to contribute to the SDG-agenda by tracking, measuring and comparing how seed companies support smallholder farmers to increase their productivity. In doing so, it provides a benchmark for seed companies wanting to improve their operations, a resource for policy makers and an evidence base for the conversation of where and how seed companies can step up their efforts.

The first Access to Seeds Index was published in February 2016. It included an evaluation of the activities of 25 global and regional seed companies. Although there are many smallholders yet to be reached, the 2016 Index showed that reaching smallholder farmers is in fact high on the agenda for the majority of seed companies evaluated. It also highlighted the key role regional companies play in reaching smallholder farmers.

Encouraged by these findings, the second Access to Seeds Index is scheduled for publication in late 2018 – early 2019. It aims to expand the coverage of regional companies and to more than double the number of companies evaluated- from 25 to 60 companies.

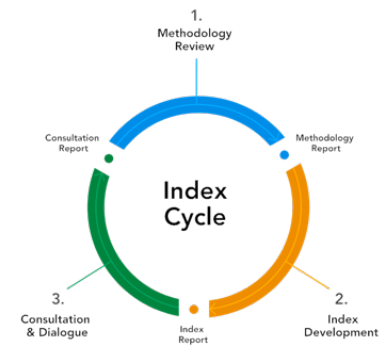
The production of each Access to Seeds Index follows a so-called “index cycle” made up of three steps. The cycle begins with refining the methodology through stakeholder consultations and expert review. The second step focuses on company outreach and data collection and leads to the development of a new index. In the third step, results are discussed with key stakeholders such as farmers, companies and policy makers. In this way, the Access to Seeds Index monitors progress over time and facilitates an ongoing learning process, while also growing as a unique reference tool for how the seed industry is supporting smallholder farmer productivity.

The Access to Seeds Index is managed by the Access to Seeds Foundation. In 2017, the foundation partnered with the World Benchmarking Alliance, which has set out to develop, fund, house and safeguard free and publicly available corporate sustainability benchmarks aligned with the SDG-contributions of specific industries.

This updated operational plan and budget provides a comprehensive overview of the activities planned which will allow for a successful launch of the second Access to Seeds Index. It is based on the complete index cycle (2017 to 2019) pertaining to the second index and is updated on a yearly basis. This operational plan and budget was discussed with, and approved by, the foundation’s Supervisory Board at its meeting on December 6, 2017. It dedicates specific attention to objectives and activities for 2018.

2. Index cycle 2017-2019: Activity overview

The production of each Access to Seeds Index follows an “index cycle”. The following overview provides insight into the main activities that make up each of the three steps of this index cycle, specifically as they relate to the second iteration of the Access to Seeds Index. Activities in 2018 will cover the second step of the index cycle (index development) as well as preparation of the third step (consultation and dialogue).



2017: Methodology review

The 2016 Index provided the baseline for future iterations. As a result of feedback gathered from seed companies and farmer roundtables in 2016, the methodology has been thoroughly reviewed.

- Landscaping studies were performed to explore the feasibility of additional regional indexes for Southern Africa, Western and Central Africa and South and Southeast Asia;
- A technical advisory meeting was organized in May 2017 to gather additional advice on the indicators that make up the measurement areas of Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources;
- After approval by the Supervisory Board, the draft methodology was made available for a public consultation period in September 2017, which resulted in 20 responses;
- Expert review committee (ERC) meetings were organized in Abidjan, Johannesburg, Hyderabad and Amsterdam for a final review of the methodology by regional and global experts;
- At its meeting on December 6, 2017, the Supervisory Board approved the revised methodology, which will be published in February 2018.

2018: Index development

The second index will include a ranking of global companies and three regional indexes: Eastern and Southern Africa, Western and Central Africa and South and Southeast Asia.

- Companies selected for the Access to Seeds Index have been informed in fall 2017 and will receive further information on the data collection process in February 2018;
- The indicators within each measurement area will be translated into a questionnaire. For a user-friendly data collection process, an online data collection platform is under development;
- Data collection for the global and South and Southeast Asia indexes will take place before the summer of 2018. Data collection for the African indexes is scheduled for fall 2018;
- Indexes will be published at separate moments from November 2018 to March 2019. This will ensure that specific target groups can be adequately addressed with the release of each index;
- In May 2019, a summary report will be published highlighting lessons learned, across all indexes, at an industry level.

2019: Consultation and dialogue

The Access to Seeds Index aims to provide insights that double as a call to action for companies and policy makers. Activities in 2019, some of which will have been prepared in preceding years, are aimed at reaching main target groups.

- In 2017, the website was restructured to make the information presented by the Access to Seeds Index easily accessible at different levels: company, industry, ranking, insights;
- Results for both the global and regional indexes will be finalized by the end of 2018, along with a corresponding communication calendar for each index. The aim is to make use of already existing global events and media channels to communicate the findings throughout 2019.
- As with the previous index, the Access to Seeds Foundation will organize regional roundtables for farmer organizations to ensure that the results of the 2018 Index are discussed with farmers;
- A key priority for 2018 and 2019 is to strengthen and develop cooperation amongst policy makers to ensure that insights provided by the Access to Seeds Index continue to be used;
- The ATS Foundation aims to organize an event with the industry, main funders and policy makers to discuss the Index and next steps, potentially at the World Seed Congress in May 2019.

3. Objectives

The overarching objective of the Access to Seeds Index is to encourage the seed industry to step up its efforts in supporting smallholder farmer productivity and achieving the SDG-targets. This was translated into four overall strategic objectives, and nine operational objectives for 2017-2019. The first four operational objectives are most relevant for the year 2018. An overview of impact and success indicators is added as an annex to this plan.

Overall strategic objectives

1. *Increase transparency* on current activities of individual seed companies to clarify and understand the role of the seed industry;
2. *Provide an evidence base* for the conversation of where and how the seed industry can play a role in supporting smallholder farmer productivity and what this requires from policy makers;
3. *Encourage seed companies* to step up their efforts to support smallholder farmer productivity, guided by a multi-stakeholder agenda and benchmarking incentivization from industry peers;
4. *Help identify private sector partners* in the seed industry by providing insights on strengths, portfolio and presence of individual seed companies.
5. *Strengthen the position of the Access to Seeds Foundation* as a credible authority providing insights on how the seed industry is supporting smallholder farmer productivity.

Operational Objectives 2017-2019

1. *Add two new regional indexes (2017: exploration; 2018: development)*
The landscaping studies in 2017 resulted in the decision to develop two new regional indexes, for Western and Central Africa and South and Southeast Asia, and to expand the geographic scope of the existing index for Eastern Africa towards Southern Africa.
2. *Refine the methodology (2017: reviewing; 2018: publication)*
Guided by feedback following the first Access to Seeds Index, the methodology has been reviewed. The aim was to reduce the number of indicators for performance measurement while expanding the data collected on presence and portfolio of individual companies.
3. *Optimize the data collection process (2017: preparation; 2018: execution)*
To reduce the burden for companies, a user-friendly online platform for data submission will be developed. Also, in cooperation with the WBA, research capacity will be established in-house.
4. *Publish second Access to Seeds Index (2018: data collection; 2018/2019: publication)*
The second Access to Seeds Index will include one global ranking and three regional indexes, published consecutively throughout November 2018-March 2019, to ensure that with each publication relevant media and target groups can be reached.
5. *Disseminate results and reach key target groups (2019)*
Following a communication calendar, all deliverables of this index cycle, including the landscaping studies, will be published. Relevant stakeholders will be reached via a media campaign, stakeholder visits and presentations at conferences and other events.
6. *Strengthen governance of the Access to Seeds Foundation (2017)*
New expert review committees are composed for the regions of the new regional indexes, establishing links with relevant organizations in each region. Partnering with the World Benchmarking Alliance (WBA) will ensure that synergies can be leveraged.
7. *Reach cost-efficiencies (2017)*
Various strategies will be implemented to achieve cost efficiencies. This is further elaborated in the financial paragraph.
8. *Ensuring financial continuity (2017-2019)*
The regional approach of the Access to Seeds Index provides opportunities to broaden the funding base of the Access to Seeds Foundation.
9. *Evaluate the Access to Seeds Index and develop outlook for next steps (2019)*
After publication of the second Access to Seeds Index, the outcomes will be evaluated and an outlook for the 2020-2022 index cycle will be developed.

4. Deliverables

The main deliverable of the second index cycle is the publication of the second Access to Seeds Index. However, each step in the index cycle results in multiple products that contribute to clarifying the role and responsibility of seed companies in supporting smallholder farmer productivity. In 2018, four landscaping studies, a spotlight study on farmer cooperatives, the methodology and the first of the regional indexes (South and Southeast Asia) will be published.

1. Four landscaping studies: Global and regional seed industry

To explore the feasibility of new regional indexes, and to identify the seed companies to be included in each ranking, landscaping studies were performed by regional consultants and validated by regional experts. This work was conducted in 2017 and the studies will be published in 2018 as a 'warm up' for the publication of the second Access to Seeds Index.

- a. Landscaping study global seed industry
- b. Landscaping study regional seed industry South and Southeast Asia
- c. Landscaping study regional seed industry Western and Central Africa
- d. Landscaping study regional seed industry Eastern and Southern Africa

2. Landscaping study: Farmer cooperatives in Western and Central Africa

In response to feedback from the Access to Seeds Foundation's Expert Review Committee for Western and Central Africa, an additional study will be performed on the role of farmer cooperatives in the delivery of quality seeds to smallholder farmers. According to the ERC, an Access to Seeds Index for this region only carries weight if it includes the role of cooperatives. The proposal to perform this additional study was approved by the Supervisory Board in December 2017. This underlines that the Access to Seeds Foundation values the advisory role of its executive review committees. Additional funds for this study have been provided by Agence Française de Développement (AFD) via AgriCord.

3. Methodology Report for the Access to Seeds Index 2018

The methodology for the second index will be published in February 2018. Rather than a printed report, this methodology will be published online. Not only is an online version more cost effective and environmentally friendly, it also ensures that the methodology has greater reach and that it is received by all companies on time.

4. Access to Seeds Index 2018

The second Access to Seeds Index will include one global index and three regional indexes, published consecutively throughout November 2018-March 2019. The full results will be published online and summary reports will also be available in print. Based on the available data, an additional spotlight index on vegetable seed companies may also be produced. The feasibility and added value of this index will be determined in March 2019.

- a. Regional Access to Seeds Index for South and Southeast Asia
- b. Regional Access to Seeds Index for Eastern and Southern Africa
- c. Regional Access to Seeds Index for Western and Central Africa
- d. Global Access to Seeds Index
- e. *Potentially:* Spotlight Access to Seeds Index Vegetable Seed Companies.

5. Report: Responses to the Access to Seeds Index 2018

As a product of the third step of the index cycle – consultation and dialogue – a consultation report will be produced. This will include the results of the farmer roundtables and potentially the results of other events. Exact content of the report will be determined in the fall of 2019. This report will also include the evaluation and vision towards 2020, as explained in the operational objectives.

5. Planning

The planning overview below shows that data collection dominates the agenda for 2018. Publication of various activities prepared in 2017 also takes place in 2018 (methodology and landscaping studies).

	2018												2019											
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Preparation data collection																								
Design methodology																								
Finalize questionnaire																								
Develop online platform																								
Build research team																								
Data collection batch 1																								
Inform companies																								
Present methodology																								
Data collection period																								
Analysis, scoring and reporting																								
Report design																								
Launch Asia Index																								
Data collection batch 2																								
Inform companies																								
Data collection period																								
Analysis, scoring, reporting																								
Report design																								
Launch Africa Indexes																								
Access to Seeds Index Report 2018/19 (incl. Global Index, vegetable spotlight)																								
Analysis vegetable companies																								
Report writing																								
Design																								
Launch																								
Landscaping studies																								
Finalize texts																								
Design																								
Launch																								
Study cooperatives W-Africa																								
Landscaping																								
Validation																								
Reporting																								
Design																								
Launch																								
Consultation & Dialogue																								
APSA Congress																								
AFSTA Congress																								
World Seed Congress																								
Farmer Roundtables																								
Company consultations																								
Consultation reporting																								

6. Budget and funding

The full budget for the period 2017-2019 is € 3.121.682. This is half of the budget originally presented in 2016. Many cost-efficiencies (explained below) have been implemented in 2017 which resulted in a significantly lower overall budget. Cost-efficiencies were implemented in response to substantially lower subsidies awarded by funders. Leveraging of synergies has also been made possible through the cooperation in the World Benchmarking Alliance.

Statement of Income and Expenses 2017-2019	Budget 2017	Budget 2018	Budget 2019	Budget total (EUR)
Income	Total	Total	Total	Total
Grants and subsidies	819.809	1.203.372	1.098.491	3.121.672
Financial income	-	-	-	-
Exchange difference	10	-	-	10
Total income	819.819	1.203.372	1.098.491	3.121.682
Expenses	Total	Total	Total	Total
Salaries and wages	330.934	658.441	632.252	1.621.627
Social security and pension contributions	67.745	111.888	106.650	286.284
Other personnel expenses	32.706	42.536	32.505	107.746
Depreciation of plant, property and equipment	4.771	4.771	4.771	14.313
Travel expenses	46.594	50.000	20.833	117.427
Financial expenses	913	1.000	1.000	2.913
Housing expenses	35.589	37.872	31.812	105.274
Consultancy expenses	293.422	292.006	263.809	849.237
Supplies and similar expenses	7.146	4.858	4.858	16.862
Total expenses	819.819	1.203.372	1.098.491	3.121.682
Net Result	-	-	-	-
Grants and subsidies	Total	Total	Total	Total
Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs	488.672	611.328	400.000	1.500.000
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (Bridge financing)	331.137	143.201	-	474.339
Third party funding	-	448.843	698.491	1.147.334
Total	819.809	1.203.372	1.098.491	3.121.672
Grants and subsidies unsecured funds	Total	Total	Total	Total
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (Index development)	-	340.060	510.090	850.150
Agricord	-	108.783	188.401	297.184
Total	-	448.843	698.491	1.147.334

Cost-efficiencies

The most significant reduction of costs compared to the budget presented in 2016 can be seen in the consultancy budget: from €3.279.534 (2016) to €849.237 (current budget). The travel budget has also been reduced. The main changes are explained below.

1. Consultancy budget: Research agency

In the original plan, the data collection would be performed by an external agency. These agencies work with a fixed price per company evaluated. With the doubling of the number of companies, costs would double in comparison to the costs for the 2016 Access to Seeds Index. The strategic choice to perform the data collection in-house, which is possible within the framework of the World Benchmarking Alliance, results in significantly lower costs for data collection. The Access to Seeds Index plans to temporarily hire research capacity from the research pool of WBA for the period of data collection. After finalization of the analytic

work for the Access to Seeds Index, the researcher returns to the WBA research pool to start working on research for other indexes.

2. Consultancy budget: Regional partners

The Access to Seeds Foundation works with regional partners for landscaping studies and regional outreach to seed companies. Rather than working with a consultancy agency in 2017, the Access to Seeds Foundation worked with individual consultants who have a network of focal points in all countries. This resulted in significantly lower costs for the regional activities compared to budgets allocated for the 2016 Index.

3. Consultancy budget: Platform development

The development of an online data platform has been set up in cooperation with the World Benchmarking Alliance. Development costs can and will be shared with other indexes that fall within the WBA.

4. Consultancy budget: Print and design

In the period 2017-2019, the Access to Seeds Foundation will publish most deliverables online rather than in physical reports. This will save costs on printing and postage.

5. Travel budget

For the 2016 Index, setting up of a regional index was uncharted territory. Therefore, management of regional partners was best handled through regular visits to their offices in Nairobi. The management of regional partners in the period 2017-2019 will be done via teleconferencing. In addition, only one Supervisory Board meeting is being held in Amsterdam each year, all additional board meetings are now organized through teleconferencing.

Funding

The Access to Seeds Foundation currently receives financial donations from three funders: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and AgriCord.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands has awarded €1.500.000 for the full index cycle in March 2017.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation awarded bridge financing in November 2016 for the first step of the index cycle: methodology development (\$500.000 or €474.339). BMGF has taken continuation of funding for the full index cycle into consideration, under the condition that a global alliance for industry benchmarking would be created. With the launch of the World Benchmarking Alliance this condition has been met. Based on indications from our program officer at BMGF, the Access to Seeds Foundation is confident that the remaining €1.000.000 (€850.150) will be awarded in the first half of 2018.

AgriCord has taken funding for activities in the third step of the index cycle into consideration, most notably for the farmer roundtables. Following their mandate, AgriCord can only fund activities that incorporate farmer cooperatives. For 2018, AgriCord has awarded €24.000 for the farmer cooperative study in West and Central Africa.

Annex 1

Overview of impact and success indicators for the Access to Seeds Index

Results since publication of 2016 Access to Seeds Index (February, 2016)

The Access to Seeds Index is used as a resource	
Media exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 200 mentions in print and online media worldwide
Scientific citations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 citations in peer reviewed articles since publication
Reach external media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 23.000 website visitors in 2017 (16.000 unique visitors) 1247 newsletter subscriptions 770 twitter followers 1668 Facebook followers
Presentation at international events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IFPRI Policy Seminar, Washington DC, April 2016 Agriterra Dutch Seed Debate, The Hague, April 2016 FAO Ministerial Conference, Rome, June 2016 African Union Seed Sector Conference, Abidjan, October 2016 UN Biodiversity Conference, Cancun, December 2016 World Bank Food For All Talk, Washington DC, April 2017 UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Dev., New York, July 2017 Future of Farming Dialog, Monheim, September 2017 World Food Prize /Borlaug Dialog, Des Moines, October 2017
Access to Seeds Foundation has a strong and sustainable governance	
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Supervisory Board members with background in farming, industry, scientific, policy background Foundation is part of the World Benchmarking Alliance
Relevant organizations participate in governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ERCs with members from: AGRA, FAO, COMESA, CG-institutes, trade associations, farmer cooperatives and associations, industry, universities, CORAF/WECARD, AfricaSeeds, Oxfam
The Access to Seeds Index is appreciated by the industry	
Participation in data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 70 percent of companies provided data
Companies communicate positively about index	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence found from Dupont Pioneer; Syngenta; East-West Seed; East African Seed Co; Victoria Seeds; Bayer
Companies invite Access to Seeds Index to discuss findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invitations from APSA; SeedCo; Dupont Pioneer; Syngenta; Bayer, East-West Seed
Index findings inform / have impact on policy makers	
New policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> USAID used index findings for new Gender and Social Inclusion Action Plan
Informing policy makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COMESA uses index findings for harmonization project World Bank started discussion on role of vegetable seed companies in nutrition African Union/AfricaSeeds uses index for seed sector performance project Thai government invited Access to Seeds for discussion on role of Thai seed industry for smallholder farmer productivity Agence Française de Développement requested that index evaluates role of farmer cooperatives in West Africa in providing access to seeds
Partnerships under development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CORAF/WECARD FAO Regional Office Asia USAID Regional Offices Accra, Nairobi, Lusaka, Bangkok
Index has impact on industry behavior	
Increased attention for smallholder farmer productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ISF organized discussion on this topic for first time at World Seed Congress 2017 APSA organized discussion on this topic at the Asia Seed Congress 2016
New public-private partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two NGOs reported that the index helped building partnerships with seed companies
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One company reported that the index helped attracting finance for new projects
Increased transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two companies have improved public disclosure following 2016 Index recommendations
New business strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two companies reported new strategies stepping up efforts to reach smallholder farmers