



Access to Seeds
Index



Progress Report Q1 2018

January – March 2018

This report provides an overview of the activities, milestones and progress in developing the Access to Seeds Index 2018 in the period January – March 2018.

Amsterdam, 30 April 2018



Bridging the gap between the
world's leading seed companies
and the smallholder farmer

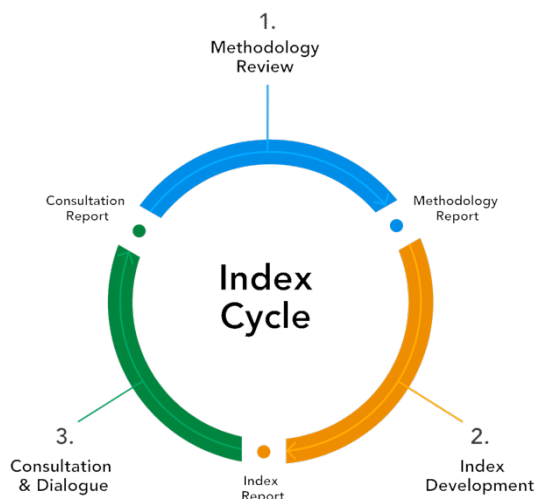
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General Project Data	
Project Name	Access to Seeds Index 2018
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1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of the activities, milestones and progress in developing the Access to Seeds Index 2018 in the period January – March 2018. In this period, the first step of the Index Cycle was finalized with the publication of the Methodology Report and the second step, Index development started.



The Index Cycle consists of three steps. As a first step, the methodology for the Access to Seeds Index is developed, after consultation with stakeholders and experts. In the second step, company performance is analyzed, resulting in an Access to Seeds Index. After publication, the third step of dialogue and consultation starts, in order to discuss the index's findings and insights.

After this final stage, the cycle starts again, using insights from the consultation phase to review the methodology.

2. About the Access to Seeds Index

The Access to Seeds Index evaluates and compares seed companies according to their efforts to improve access to quality seeds of improved varieties for smallholder farmers. The index seeks primarily to identify leadership and good practices, providing an evidence base for the discussion on where and how the seed industry can step up its efforts.

Private sector engagement is at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015. By creating a better understanding of the seed industry's performance, the index aims to contribute to the achievement of these goals.

Hunger is a daily reality for almost one billion people around the world. The global population is expected to grow by a further two billion in the coming decades, precisely in those regions that are currently considered food insecure. Improving access to seeds for farmers in those regions is key to meeting future food demands. This is where the seed industry can play a crucial role.

Based on how important stakeholders – farmers, governments, scientists, NGOs and the industry itself – view the role and responsibility of the seed industry, a methodology was developed with clearly defined criteria. After publication of each index, the methodology is reviewed and updated. Using this iterative approach, the index aims to monitor progress over time.

The Access to Seeds Index is published by the Access to Seeds Foundation, an independent, non-profit organization based in The Netherlands. The Access to Seeds Foundation is part of the Index Alliance, a group of foundations dedicated to establishing industry benchmarks measuring corporate performance towards the SDG-agenda.

3. Progress Overview Q1 2018

This section provides an overview of activities and milestones in the period January – March 2018. The main goal of this period was publication of the Methodology Report and preparation of data collection towards the second edition of the Access to Seeds Index.

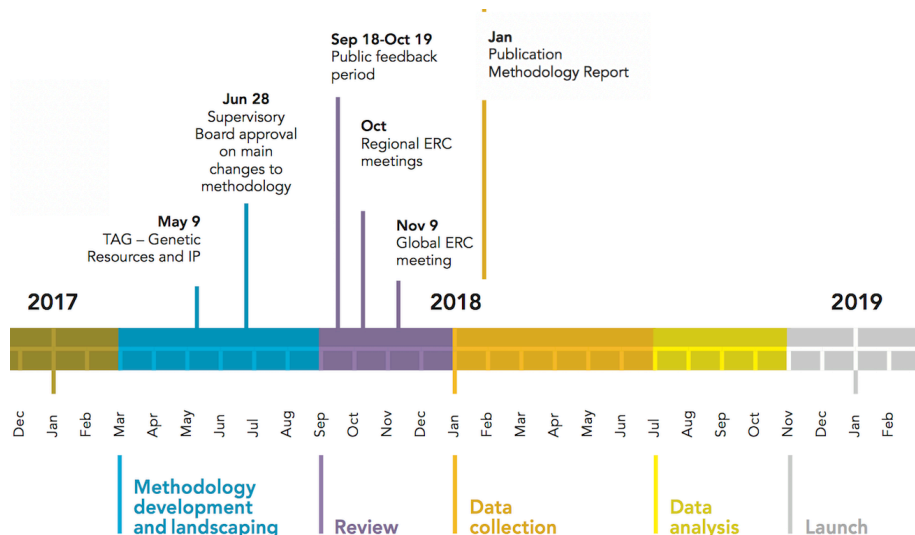


Illustration: Project timeline

1. Company outreach completed

With visits to the Indian Seed Congress in Colombo, Sri Lanka (January) and the AFSTA Seed Congress in Cairo (February) a series of company consultations were completed. All companies that have been selected for the second Access to Seeds Index have been informed about the upcoming Index and the data collection.

2. Methodology Report for the 2019 Access to Seeds Index published

Mid-March, the Methodology Report for the 2019 Access to Seeds Index was published. For this purpose an online long read including a two-minute introduction animation have been developed that together provide a comprehensive overview of the background and the methodology of the Access to Seeds Index.

3. Access to Seeds Index included in USAID seed system support program

In February 2018, USAID announced a new program through its Bureau for Food Security: Seed Systems Support Activity. The Activity seeks to improve functioning of national seed sector in Feed the Future countries and in countries with resilience and emergency seed security programs. For this program, coordination with various existing indexes, such as the WorldBank's EBA, TASAI and the Access to Seeds Index, is seen as critical in achieving these results. Being mentioned in this program can be seen as a result of ongoing investments in relations with USAID's seeds team over the past years.

4. Leading seed magazine names Index 'influential in lasting way'

In its February edition, the magazine European Seed wrote that the Access to Seeds Index 'has influenced the global seed industry in a lasting way'. According to the magazine, 'the index created more awareness on access to seeds in developing countries and on the role seed companies can play in improving smallholder farmer productivity.'

5. Cooperative study started up

In January 2018, a landscaping study commenced to review the role of seed producing cooperatives in Western and Central Africa. The Expert Review Committee for the region

advice such a study to be undertaken in addition to the landscaping report focusing on seed companies. According to the ERC, the formal seed sector in the region should be seen as a continuum of cooperatives and companies, all playing a specific role in improving access to quality seeds for smallholder farmers. The report will be published in July 2018.

6. Design research process finalized

The publication of the Methodology Report marks the start of the data collection process for the 2019 Access to Seeds Index. A research process has been designed, which focuses on data collection in two batches: Asian and global companies before the summer and African companies after the summer. In cooperation with the World Benchmarking Alliance an online data collection platform has been developed, which can also be used by other indexes partnering in the Alliance. All companies have been informed about the setup of the research process in March 2018.

7. Regional landscaping studies finalized

To inform the selection of regional seed companies for the regional indexes, three landscaping studies have been performed. The first drafts have been discussed with regional ERCs in Q4 2017. After this validation steps, finalization of the reports took place in Q1 2018. The reports will be published in the next quarter. They provide an overview of leading seed companies in all countries that are part of the geographic scope of the Access to Seeds Index.

8. Search of new funders stepped up

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) notified the Access to Seeds Foundation in February 2018 on its decision not to continue funding for the Access to Seeds Index, despite meeting all conditions that were set for continuation. This has been discussed with the Supervisory Board and the other main funder, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. BMGF wants to move away from funding smaller individual indexes as it has been doing in the past. Potentially the creation of the World Benchmarking Alliance creates new opportunities for a future partnership. As a result of this decision, the search for other potential funders have been intensified. Continuation of all activities in 2018 is secured.

4. Contribution of Activities to Objectives and Deliverables

A detailed overview of the Theory of Change, overall objectives and deliverables of the Access to Seeds Index was provided in an earlier quarterly report (Q2 2017). The overview below indicates how the activities and milestones of Q1 2018 contribute to the overall objectives of the Access to Seeds Index.

Overall Objectives

1. Increase transparency on current strategies and activities of seed companies to improve access to seeds for smallholders and their contribution to the SDG-agenda.
2. Provide an evidence base for the conversation within and with the seed industry on how it can step up their efforts.
3. Encourage companies to increase transparency and performance of their efforts to improve access to seeds for smallholder farmers.
4. Provide insights on performance of individual companies to enable other stakeholders to cooperate or build partnerships with seed companies.
5. Strengthen the position of the Access to Seeds Foundation through a global alliance with other index initiatives and relation with established global organizations.

	Overall objectives				
	Increase Transparency	Enable Dialogue	Encourage Companies	Enable Partnerships	Strengthen Foundation
Activities and Milestones Q4 2017					
Company outreach completed					
Methodology Report for the 2019 Access to Seeds Index published					
Index included in USAID seed system support program					
Leading seed magazine names Index 'influential in lasting way'					
Cooperative study started up					
Design research process finalized					
Regional landscaping studies finalized					
Search of new funders stepped up					

5. Progress Overview

This project works towards four deliverables following the Index Cycle of (1) methodology review (2) index development (3) conversation and dialogue. The four deliverables are created following the steps below. The project is currently on schedule.

The four deliverables are

1. Global Index of globally operating seed companies
2. Regional Index of leading seed companies in Eastern and Southern Africa
3. Regional Index of leading seed companies in Western and Central Africa
4. Regional Index of leading seed companies in South and Southeast Asia

Activity	Due date	Progress
Identify regional partners	31 March 2017	Completed
Landscaping studies finalized	30 Sept 2017	Completed
Public consultation methodology	30 October 2017	Completed
Expert Review Committee meetings	30 November 2017	Completed
Methodology finalized	31 January 2018	Completed
Design Research Process ready	31 March 2018	Completed
Methodology Report published	31 March 2018	Completed
Index Alliance created	31 May 2018	Finalized end of 2017
Publication Index Reports	31 March 2019	
Regional Roundtables	30 November 2019	
Consultation Report	31 December 2019	

6. Variation from the Original Plan

In this period, all activities were conducted according to plan. No changes were made.