



Seed Co

Access to Seeds Index

Corporate data
Headquarters: Johannesburg, South Africa
Ownership type: Listed
Group revenue (2017): USD 135,000,000
www.seedcogroup.com

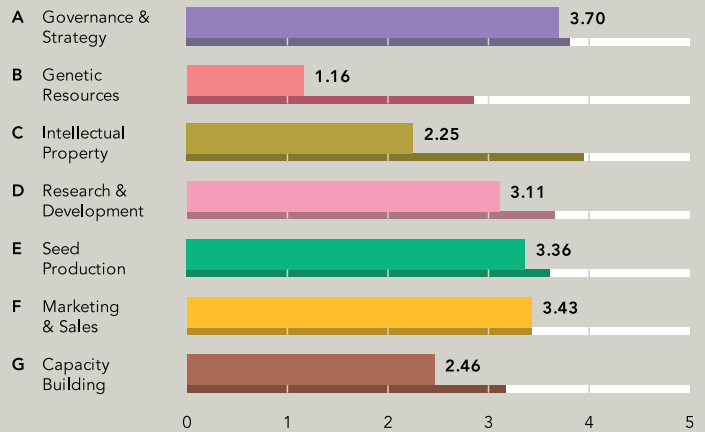
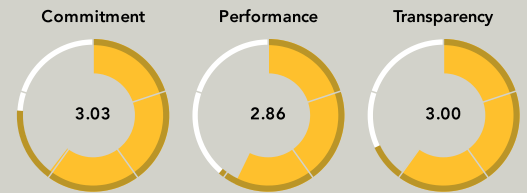
Seed Co Ltd (Seed Co) was founded in 1940 as the Seed Maize Association (SMA) of Zimbabwe. In 1983, the SMA merged with the Crop Seeds Association to form Seed Co and has since grown throughout Africa by breeding, producing and marketing hybrid field crops. Limagrain holds a 30.2% share in Seed Co. In collaboration with HM Clause, a business unit of Limagrain, Seed Co distributes vegetable seed under the brand Prime Seed. Originating in Zimbabwe, the company recently moved its international headquarters to South Africa.

2
rank out of 22
score 2.85

Eastern and Southern Africa

Seed Co ranks second in the Eastern and Southern Africa Index, a considerable improvement in both rank and score since the 2016 Index. The company's consistently strong performance across all measurement areas, with the exception of Genetic Resources, reflects the broad scope of its seed activities across the

region. The company has the most extensive production and testing network as well as the widest geographic reach in agronomic training. In Governance & Strategy, the company's best performing area, it has notable commitments, initiatives and programs, including a target to reach 40 million smallholder clients in Africa by 2025, and the broadest contribution to improving the enabling environment across the region. In Research & Development, it tests material from its own portfolio and from agricultural research institutes and other companies in 17 regional countries; the company scores similarly well in Seed Production primarily on account of its production activities across all but two countries where present. The company's strong performance in Marketing & Sales can be attributed to vast distribution networks, tailored packaging and drought/weather-based insurance schemes. A low score in Genetic Resources reflects a lack of disclosure and corporate positions related to the conservation of genetic resources and benefit sharing.



Leading practices

- Seed Co has established company offices in nearly all countries in Eastern and Southern Africa. The company has the greatest number of testing and seed production locations in the region, as well as a wide range of extension services across several countries and breeding activities in five countries, demonstrating leadership in the geographic scope of its core seed business activities.
- The company has a target to reach 40 million smallholders in sub-Saharan Africa by 2025. It also tracks its progress toward this target and shows the methods it uses to reach smallholders as clientele. The company reports that Seed Co Zimbabwe has supplied 2 million smallholders with maize over the past season and that 5 million smallholders have been reached by vegetable seed in Eastern Africa.
- The company reports on a number of activities to improve the business enabling environment at both the national and regional level. This includes spearheading programs for seed certification and variety release training in Zimbabwe, and national policy setting in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. In addition, Seed Co sends representatives to the African Seed Trade Association Special Interest

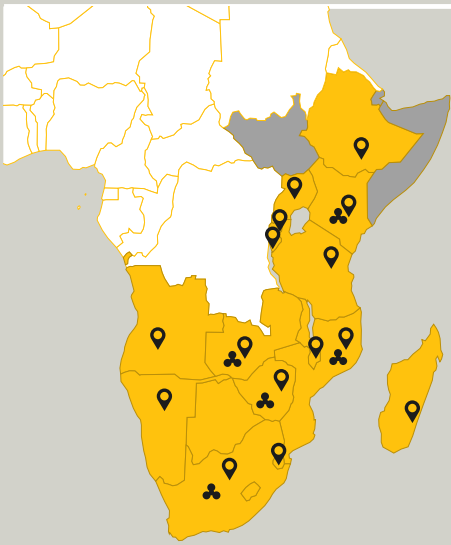
Group on Field Crops, and the company is involved in seed harmonization projects by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The company has developed a wide distribution network across the region that is tailored to reaching smallholder farmers. It uses village-based salesmen, ambassador farmers and bike field officers to reach remote areas, and it promotes the concept of buying groups to enable farmers to obtain seed at more favorable prices. The company further tailors its maize packaging with pictograms of various animals (Rabbit, Monkey, Zebra, Lion, Elephant and Giraffe) to visually demonstrate variable maturity ranges. This helps illiterate smallholder farmers recognize relevant varieties.

In Zimbabwe, the company trained about 6,000 government extension workers on best farming and business practices for smallholder farmers, helping to achieve a higher hybrid maize adoption rate.

Areas for improvement

- Building on its leading performance in Governance & Strategy, the company is encouraged to formalize and publicize its internal strategy which links its business activities to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In doing so, the company can lead industry alignment towards achieving the SDGs.
- Seed Co is encouraged, through its broad regional and growing global presence, to engage in policy development and activities for improving genetic conservation and join other globally active companies in contributing to international arrangements around access and benefit-sharing.
- While the company has seed production locations in most of the countries where it is active, it is encouraged to clarify how it enforces social and labor standards within its seed supply chain and how quality management in all its seed production activities are maintained.



Operations in scope

- Countries in scope
- Company presence
- 📍 Production locations
- 🌿 Breeding station/R&D

Notable findings

- Seed Co is expanding its seed business activities beyond the region, exploring new markets in Western and Central Africa as well as India and Pakistan in Asia.
- The company has a nascent, internal sustainability strategy linking its breeding, capacity building and sales activities to several specific SDGs, including SDGs 2 (Zero Hunger), 5 (Gender Equality), 13 (Climate Action) and 15 (Life on Land).
- The company partners with one of its main shareholders Limagrain for product development and also collaborative research, including on maize lethal necrosis, a regionally significant disease.
- The company engages smallholder farmers in its seed production activities in Kenya, where these farmers are given a financial advance for purchasing seed and other agricultural inputs.
- The company holds ISO 9001 certification for 100% of its seed production activities in Zimbabwe and Zambia.
- The company offers credit schemes in Malawi and Zambia to reduce upfront purchasing costs for smallholder customers.
- In partnership with Agriculture and Climate Risk Enterprise Ltd, the company offers weather insurance in Kenya, and it is in the process of launching weather insurance in Ghana. In addition, it is trialing a drought insurance package for smallholders in Tanzania (known as 'Linda Mbegu') to protect farmers against changing and volatile weather patterns.
- In Zambia, 25% of seasonal field days are targeted specifically at women smallholder farmers, where participants gain knowledge of agricultural and business practices.
- The company supports next-generation farmers by offering activities that include online promotions, scholarships for young farmers to attend agricultural colleges, digital agronomic training, and programs that work closely with youth groups and young farmer clubs.
- The company works across the region to link smallholder farmers to output markets. In Kenya, Seed Co has a memorandum of understanding to guarantee the company's products are available in smallholder markets with East African Breweries for sorghum and Promasidor for soybean. In Zambia, the company works with Schweppes for vegetables and various off-takers for wheat and maize, while in Tanzania and the Great Lakes region it provides inputs for the Farm to Market Alliance.

Portfolio information

Angola (AGO), Botswana (BWA), Burundi (BDI), Eswatini (SWZ), Ethiopia (ETH), Kenya (KEN), Lesotho (LSO), Madagascar (MDG), Malawi (MWI), Mozambique (MOZ), Namibia (NAM), Rwanda (RWA), Somalia (SOM), South Africa (ZAF), South Sudan (SSD), Tanzania (TZA), Uganda (UGA), Zambia (ZMB), Zimbabwe (ZWE)

Index crops in portfolio

	Sales															Seed type			Source				
	AGO	BWA	BDI	ETH	KEN	LSO	MDG	MWI	MOZ	NAM	RWA	ZAF	SWZ	TZA	UGA	ZMB	ZWE	Hybrid	OPV	GM	Own breeding program	Public research institute	Licensed from other company
Field crops																							
Beans, dry		●						●											●	●	●		●
Cowpea		●																		●		●	
Groundnut		●						●													●		
Maize	●	●		●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●
Pigeon pea																							
Potato																							
Rice, paddy																							
Sorghum		●			●													●	●		●		
Soybean					●			●				●				●	●		●		●		
Sunflower																							
Wheat																●	●		●		●		
Vegetables																							
Cabbage		●			●			●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●
Carrot		●			●			●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●
Cauliflower		●			●			●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●
Cucumber		●			●			●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●
Eggplant		●			●			●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●
Gourd																							
Green bean								●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●
Green pea				●				●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●
Lettuce		●			●			●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●
Melon		●			●			●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●
Okra		●			●			●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●
Onion		●			●			●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●
Pepper (hot)		●		●	●			●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●
Pepper (sweet)		●			●			●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●
Pumpkin		●			●			●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●
Squash		●			●			●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●
Tomato		●			●			●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●
Watermelon		●			●			●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●