

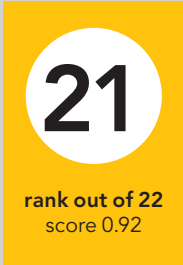


# Starke Ayres

Access to Seeds Index

**Corporate data**  
Headquarters: Johannesburg, South Africa  
Ownership type: Private  
Group revenue (2017): N/A  
[www.starkeayres.co.za](http://www.starkeayres.co.za)

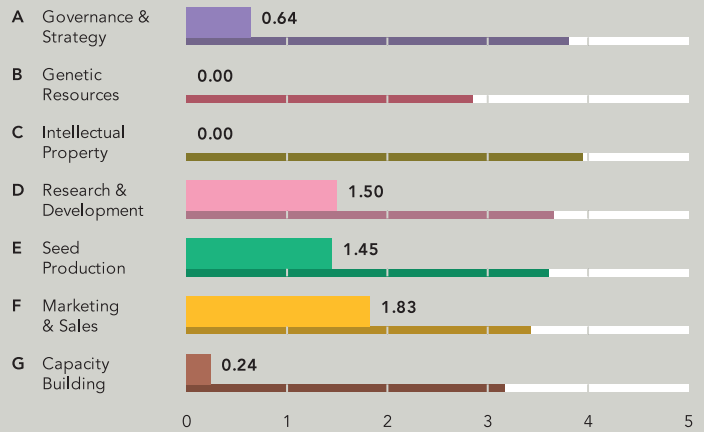
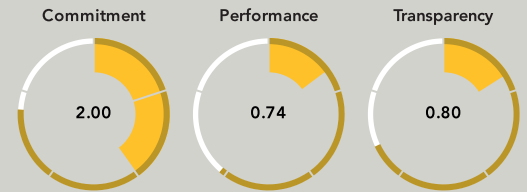
Starke Ayres supplies vegetable, lawn and flower seeds in South Africa, as well as internationally. Its origins dates back to 1870, when Charles Ayres established a nursery in Rosebank, South Africa, and in 1896 formed Starke Ayres (Pty) Ltd with Charles Starke's local seed business. Pannar Seed took over the company in 1985, and after Corteva Agriscience (DuPont Pioneer) acquired Pannar Seed, Starke Ayres became part of the Plennegy Group. The company sees supplying subsistence farmers with seed, chemical products and fertilizers as its secondary business activity behind commercial farmers. The company breeds for green beans, pumpkin, squash, tomato and pepper, supplying both hybrid seed and open-pollinated varieties. Starke Ayres employs 250 people and has sales in 55 countries across four continents.



## Eastern and Southern Africa

Ranking 21st, Starke Ayres debuts close to the bottom of the Eastern and Southern Africa Index. The company performs best in relation to core activities within the seed value chain. In Research & Development, it demonstrates the broadest breeding program for a regional company in

vegetables, and it breeds for specific traits beneficial to smallholders, including abiotic and biotic stress, and shelf life. The company's laboratory, accredited by the International Seed Testing Association (ISTA), helps it achieve an average score related to quality standards in Marketing & Sales. It also receives credit for disclosing its commitments to seed production in the region, albeit without reporting to engage smallholders. However, the company demonstrates a complete lack of disclosure related to Genetic Resources and Intellectual Property. In relation to Governance & Strategy, the company does not formalize a commitment related to smallholder farmers, and it offers no evidence that it provides extension services or agronomic training to smallholders in the countries where it is present, hence its low score in Capacity Building.



## Leading practices

Starke Ayres is the only company headquartered in the region with a breeding program for a broad range of vegetable crops, including both hybrids and open-pollinated varieties. The company breeds for several traits relevant to smallholder farmers, including biotic stress (for pumpkin), abiotic stress (sweet pepper) and shelf life (tomato).

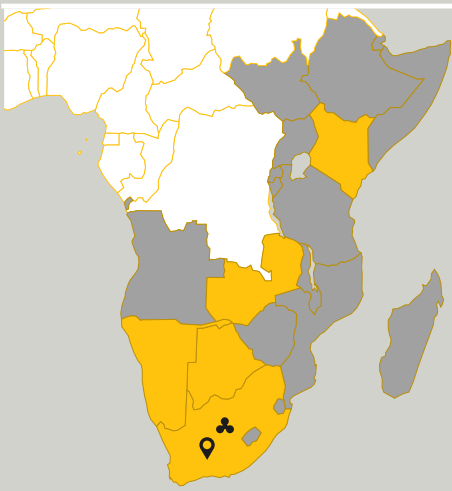
## Areas for improvement

Starke Ayres can improve its scores across all measurement areas through increased disclosure on its (sales) presence, policies and programs related to improving access to seeds for smallholder farmers.

Behind commercial farming, which is its primary business, the company reports that subsistence farmers are part of its secondary business, alongside retail and home gardeners. It is encouraged to strengthen its commitment to smallholders through a formal corporate policy, including clear targets and a tracking mechanism.

The company is encouraged to report whether its positions on intellectual property, including farm-saved seed and patents, are favorable to smallholder farmers in the region.

The company has an extension distribution network both regionally and globally but does not provide information on how it services remote areas. This is particularly relevant for smallholder farmers in index countries.



### Operations in scope

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

### Notable findings

- Founded in South Africa, Starke Ayres has strengthened its position in the regional market by establishing further offices in Namibia, Kenya and Zambia. In Kenya, Pannar Seed (part of Corteva Agriscience) functions as the company's exclusive distributor.
- The company concentrates its breeding activities at its six South African research stations, and it also has trial sites elsewhere in Africa, the United States, Argentina, Brazil, Hungary and New Zealand to be able to test under varied climatic and growing conditions.

■ The Starke Ayres Quality Assurance Laboratory became ISTA accredited in January 2014, achieving an 'A' rating for all tests it participated in. In December 2016, the laboratory was further audited by ISTA, leading to direct improvements in the company's quality management system.

### Portfolio information

Index crops in portfolio	Seed type		
	Hybrid	OPV	GM
<b>Vegetables</b>			
Cabbage	●	●	
Carrot	●	●	
Cauliflower	●		
Cucumber	●	●	
Eggplant	●	●	
Green bean		●	
Lettuce		●	
Melon	●		
Okra		●	
Onion	●	●	
Pepper (hot)	●	●	
Pepper (sweet)	●	●	
Pumpkin	●	●	
Squash	●	●	
Tomato	●	●	
Watermelon	●	●	