



Access to Seeds  
Index



# Progress Report Q4 2019

**Oct – Dec 2019**

This report provides an overview of the activities, milestones and progress in developing the Access to Seeds Index 2019 in the period October – December 2019.

Amsterdam, 16 February 2019



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

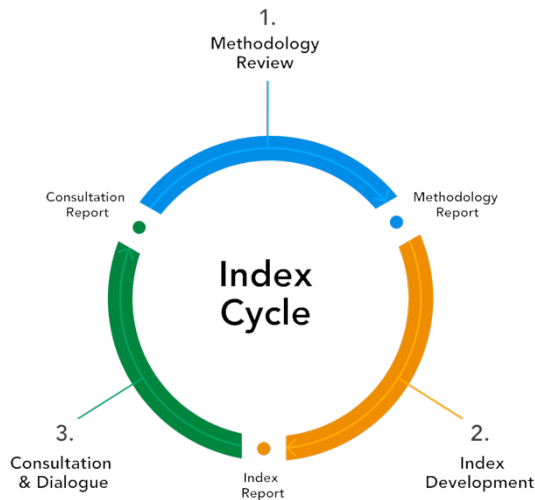
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<b>General Project Data</b>	
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# 1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of the activities, milestones and progress in developing the Access to Seeds Index 2019 in the period October - December 2019. This period focused primarily on the farmer roundtables that took place in November 2019.



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 Q4 2019

This section provides an overview of activities and milestones in the period October - December 2019. The main goal of this period was organizing the final set of two farmer roundtables, after the first roundtable in Dakar (April) and an additional farmer consultation in Aurangabad (September).

#### 1. Side event during CFS in Rome.

On 15 October, the Access to Seeds Index, World Benchmarking Alliance, WFP and IFAD jointly held a side event at the 46th Food and Agriculture (FAO) Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in Rome. The event brought together speakers from both the public and private sectors to discuss their respective contributions to food system transformation, with a specific focus on improved nutrition.

#### 2. Access to Seeds Index presented at World Food Prize Conference.

Ido Verhagen participated in a breakout session of the 2019 Borlaug Dialogue and shared the stage with World Food Prize laureate Simon Groot to explain the drivers behind and findings of the Access to Seeds Index, that identified East-West Seed as leader in the seed industry in improving access to seeds for smallholder farmers. Access to Seeds Foundation chair Ann Tutwiler participated in a panel discussion organized by FAO North America during the 2019 Borlaug Dialogue on building more robust seed systems that can deliver the seeds to smallholder farmers.

#### 3. Farmer Roundtable, Kathmandu (7, 8 November).

Alongside the SUN Global Gathering in Kathmandu, the Access to Seeds Index organized a farmer roundtable in collaboration with the SUN Business Network, NACCFL, Agriterra and the World Benchmarking Alliance. It highlighted the relevance of access to quality seeds of improved varieties for the food system transformation agenda. For the first time business were invited to the roundtables to encourage the dialogue on how farmers and companies can collaborate.

#### 4. Farmer Roundtable, Nairobi (27, 28 November).

The third roundtable took place in Nairobi. In total 60 farmers from nearly 20 countries participated in the 2019 farmer roundtables organized by the Access to Seeds Index and its partners. A report was published in January 2020. Also during this roundtable, companies were invited during the second day to have a dialogue with the farmer and to explore partnerships.

#### 5. Third cycle of the Access to Seeds Index announced at APSA 2019.

The annual meeting of the Asia Pacific Seed Association (APSA) held at Kuala Lumpur from 25 to 29 November 2019 witnessed a turn-out of more than 1,500 delegates. Aarti Misal, Research Analyst at World Benchmarking Alliance was present at the event to discuss with seed companies the plans for the upcoming third edition of the Access to Seeds Index. Based on informal messages from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the Netherlands that it was willing to fund a third cycle of the Access to Seeds Index, under the condition that funding would be provided to the World Benchmarking Alliance, the Access to Seeds Foundation decided to use this conference to end the discussion in the seed industry – regretted by many, applauded by some – that the Access to Seeds Index would not continue to exist beyond 2020.

#### 6. Consultation report published

The consultation report of the Farmer Roundtables was published on 29 January 2020. To underline the integration of the Access to Seeds Index in the World Benchmarking Alliance,

the report was published by the World Benchmarking Alliance – albeit prepared by the team of the Access to Seeds Index – and focused on primarily on food system transformation, and the role of access to seeds in that agenda.

#### 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 Q2 2019 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
<b>Activities and Milestones Q4 2018</b>					
Side event during CFS in Rome.					
Access to Seeds Index presented at World Food Prize Conference.					
Farmer Roundtable, Kathmandu (7, 8 November).					
Farmer Roundtable, Nairobi (27, 28 November).					
Third cycle of the Access to Seeds Index announced at APSA 2019.					
Consultation report published					

## 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.

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	Finalized April 2019
Regional Roundtables	30 November 2019	Three organized (Dakar, April; Kathmandu and Nairobi, November) One additional (Aurangabad, September)
Consultation Report	31 December 2019	Completed 29 January 2020

## 6. Variation from the Original Plan

In this period, all activities were conducted according to plan. The organization of a side event at CFS was additional but as it contributed to the objectives of the project and only required a small travel budget, the activities were approved by the executive board after consulting the chair of the Supervisory Board. The consultation report was published after the deadline as the report was written by the team of the Access to Seeds Index but published by the World Benchmarking Alliance, to underline the integration. Publication end of January fitted the publication calendar of WBA better as other publications were already scheduled in December and beginning of January.