

WHAT ARE THE DUS CRITERIA?

DUS stands for **distinct, uniform and stable**. For a seed variety to be listed in the National Variety List it must meet the DUS criteria (or standards).

- ❶ **Distinct** means that a variety must be *different* from all other varieties.
- ❷ **Uniform** means that the variety must produce crops that look *the same* – the same height and colour – season after season.
- ❸ **Stable** means that the variety will *not change* when it is planted season after season.

However, smallholder farmers plant seed that is *not* distinct, uniform or stable. They require varieties that are diverse enough to adapt to local conditions and local markets. Therefore, the varieties they produce *cannot* meet the DUS criteria.

THE IMPACTS OF DUS CRITERIA ON SMALLHOLDER FARMERS

The DUS criteria will develop varieties of seed that are suitable for a monoculture (cultivation of a single crop in a given area) and require expensive agro-chemicals. This is not helpful for the majority of farmers in Africa, who are smallholders, who need to plant diverse crops and cannot afford expensive fertilisers.

The DUS criteria aim to supply industrial-scale commercial farming systems with seeds of a particular type, and in such quantities that they will weaken the varieties developed over generations by smallholder farmers.

It is estimated that at least 75% of the earth's plant diversity has been lost because farmers all over the world have abandoned their local varieties for uniform (i.e. DUS) varieties.

