

## Multiple Pathways for Promoting Commercial and Sustainable Production and Delivery of Early Generation Seed of Food Crops in Sub-Saharan Africa

Convening co-organized by  
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and United States Agency for International Development

London, 23 March 2015

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### Introduction

With the aim to increase agricultural productivity among smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa, structural investments are made in crop improvement of food crops. Only if smallholder farmers have access to quality seed and planting materials of the improved varieties, they can take advantage of this increased productivity. However several systemic problems exist that hamper the production and marketing of quality seed and planting materials of improved varieties. Increasingly, these problems are addressed in ways that appropriately respond to the diversity of seed systems in which seed is produced, disseminated and marketed. The production and delivery of early generation (breeder and foundation) seed continues to be one of the major bottlenecks hampering the functioning of seed value chains of major food crops. Commercial models exist for promoting the production and delivery of early generation seed (EGS) of improved hybrid maize varieties, they are however far from sustainable and reach appropriate scales in Sub-Saharan Africa. Different models are required to reach scale and sustainability for the production and delivery of EGS of improved varieties of crops such as rice, various legumes, sorghum and millets, and especially for root and tuber crops. One key reason for persistence of this bottleneck is that policies do not always support efficient models for scaling EGS production and delivery, building on the diversity of seed systems. Seed policies and associated regulations relevant to the EGS production and delivery are either too general, treating breeder and/or foundation seed as a public good with heavy state involvement, or too specific, applying distinctive policies for specific crops and ignoring the requirements posed by the variations in seed systems. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) are exploring ways to encourage the development and promotion of appropriate models for the production and delivery of EGS of improved varieties for a diversity food crops in Sub-Saharan Africa.

### Collaboration of USAID and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Much like the other challenges agricultural development in Sub-Saharan Africa currently faces, it is important for both national governments and their development partners to address key topics in the seed sector. The Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation provides an agenda to address those challenges. USAID, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and partners are engaged in many investments in crop improvement and the seed sector. At the African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF), 2014, they organized together with the Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), a seminar addressing key challenges in the seed sector. Priority interventions focused on increasing the EGS production and delivery were identified:

- Contracting larger seed companies to produce foundation seed for sale to smaller companies;
- Establishing and supporting seed companies that produce solely foundation seed within countries or at the regional level;
- Developing the capacity of small- and medium-sized seed companies to produce their own foundation seed;
- Formulate and/or review national and regional policies to liberalize foundation seed production.

Subsequently to the Forum, USAID and the Foundation jointly commissioned a study on EGS production and delivery with Monitor-Deloitte, which has been concluded early 2015. A next step in this collaboration is the organization of a convening that seeks to share, discuss and vet the results of this study, and identify key implications. USAID and the Foundation, in collaboration, aim to further engage in sharing the results of the study during a series of national convening's in various countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to further country-level dialogue and action planning. Throughout such national-level discussions, the aim is identify a clear action agenda in addressing this major challenge, as well as to develop a catalytic pathway to address other structural problems hampering smallholder farmers having access to and using quality seed of improved varieties of food crops.

## The EGS Study

In order to assess the topic of EGS, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the USAID commissioned a study to Monitor-Deloitte. The team developed a generalizable framework that enables policy makers and donors to tailor their policies and interventions to the needs of specific crops based on market conditions, which are referred to as market archetypes. The archetypes are determined by (a) marginal economic value of quality seed of improved varieties and (b) the level of demand for varieties or crops grown with quality seed of improved varieties. The study recognizes, however, that several other factors contribute to a well-functioning seed sector. These include, but are not limited to: policy environment; value chain capacity and resources; quality assurance mechanisms; and enabling environment. Based on a set of representative countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zambia) and crops (maize, rice, sorghum, cowpea, common beans, cassava and sweet potato), the study provides examples of potential business models that could scale the production and delivery of EGS in a commercially sustainable manner. In the case where the public sector still plays a role, the study outlines opportunities for public-private collaboration and increased efficiencies in the sector. Finally, the study concludes by providing generalizable principles and recommendations to help guide key stakeholders as they pursue policies, investments and interventions. The outcomes of the study are made available in a summary compiled by Monitor-Deloitte (at this time available in draft version). A more definitive version of the complete deck will be shared one week in advance to the convening.

## Purpose of the Convening

- To share, discuss and vet the results of the study on early generation (EGS) seed with its defined archetypes and associated business models for EGS production and delivery;
- To recognize and assess specific implications for the role of public and private sector stakeholders with defined archetypes and associated business models for EGS production and delivery;
- To identify specific implications in terms of public expenditure for the defined archetypes and associated business models for EGS production and delivery;
- To identify specific implications for development organizations and programs;

- To seek expressions of interest to mainstream the implications of the study into their own programs;
- To seek expressions of interest for engagement in vetting the outcomes of the study, taking part or assuming responsibilities in country-level dialogue and action.

## Deliverables

- A synthesis report providing the strategic vetting of the EGS study, including indications of the implications in terms of public and private sector roles in EGS production and delivery, public expenditure and potential contributions by development organizations and programs;
- An increased awareness and understanding among key donors, development organizations and stakeholders in the seed sector of the study and its implications at various levels including expressions of interest to mainstream the outcomes of the study;
- Inputs to an action plan for follow-up country-level dialogue and action to foster further use for shaping strategic investments in the seed sector within the five pilot countries and beyond.

## Participants

- Key donor organizations active in the seed sector in Sub-Saharan Africa;
- Continental and regional economic communities;;
- A variation of private seed companies;
- Development organizations and international agricultural research centers playing active roles in strengthening the seed sector in Sub-Saharan Africa;
- Resource persons operating in public-private partnerships in the seed sector.

## Pre-reads

- Participants will be requested to read and study in detail the deck compiled by Monitor-Deloitte on the EGS study; a summary version of the deck is accompanying the current invitation;
- An updated draft version of the complete decks will be shared one week before the convening.

## Venue and date

- London, UK; location still to be finalized
- Monday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 (full-day)
- Participants are requested to arrive Sunday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> and depart Tuesday, March 24<sup>th</sup>

## Lead organizers

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