

WHAT IS A SEED LAW?

Seed laws are developed by governments and industry to control the formal or commercial seed sector. They also determine country and commercial seed industry standards that regulate the quality and purity of seed varieties.

Seed laws deal with

- ❶ variety release systems;
- ❷ seed certification;
- ❸ seed quality control procedures; and
- ❹ quarantine and phytosanitary systems – to control diseases and pests.

There are national variety release committees and seed certification institutions and systems that work with the procedures relating to seed laws. These procedures work in favour of private seed companies, who want to commercialise improved seed so that they can make a profit.

In order for seed to be approved for marketing in a country, it must meet special criteria, or standards, called DUS. (*DUS* stands for *distinct, uniform and stable*.) Varieties of seed that have been approved are listed in a **National Variety List or Catalogue**. Thereafter, the seed varieties must be certified according to strict rules and procedures that measure seed quality and purity.

A Seed Law is an instrument used to replace and undermine the farmer-managed seed system. This is having a negative impact on the diversity of local varieties and farmers seed systems, and even on household income and food security.

