



MARKETLINKS

# MARKETS IN FRAGILE CONTEXTS: LESSONS FROM THE SEED MARKET SYSTEM IN EASTERN DRC

CHAT TRANSCRIPT

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## PRESENTERS

Augustin Ngeleka, Agriculture Program Specialist, USAID/DRC

Roger Shongo, Agronomist, EEFS Consultant Team

Juan Ignacio Trives Pire, Seed Systems Expert and Agronomist, EEFS Consultant Team

## MODERATOR

Lourdes Martinez Romero, Agricultural Economist, USAID Bureau for Food Security

Karim Shrayedeh: Hello all, this is Karim Shrayedeh from Jordan-ME. working as a proposal writer with JOHUD organization

Charlin Caster (Marketlinks): Hi Indra! Thank you!

Charlin Caster (Marketlinks): Welcome Karim! Great to have you both

Indra Klein: HI Charlin, :)

Kabir Lawal: Hello Charlin.

Indra Klein: independent consultant, dc

Charlin Caster (Marketlinks): All, as you join the webinar, please introduce yourself and mention where you're joining from!

Charlin Caster (Marketlinks): I'm Charlin joining from DC representing Marketlinks

Kabir Lawal: Kabir Lawal, market systems specialist based in Nigeria.

Indra Klein: Inclusiveness: would you also include intergenerational perspectives: pros, cons, compromises?

Dick Tinsley: Dick Tinsley from frigid Colorado

Charlin Caster (Marketlinks): Welcome, Dick! Great to have you back! Stay warm

Adam Ahmed - Agrilinks: Hi Dick and Indra!

Indra Klein: HI Adam!

Veronica O'Connor: Hello. Veronica O'Connor with Feed the Future Partnering for Innovation, implemented by Fintrac Inc.

Charlin Caster (Marketlinks): Hi Veronica, thanks for joining

Diane Russell: Hi everyone, Diane Russell, consultant USAID/DRC's CARPE program. I did my PhD on upland rice markets around Kisangani so very interested in what you are learning!

Charlin Caster (Marketlinks): That's awesome, Diane!

Dick Tinsley: Question at maximum capacity what percent of the cultivated land can be planted with commercial seed what has to be planted with market seed?

Indra Klein: To what degree are farmers' inputs included in the Nat'l Seed Authority's policies? Can you discuss any challenges with regard to local buy-in/trust issues?

Dick Tinsley: How can you improve the quality of market seed

Adam Ahmed - Agrilinks: We will be starting the webinar in 3 minutes.

Juan: the availability of 2commercial seed is very low, probably under 1- %. According to Sterling the use of market grains can reach up to 52 %

Juan: the difference should be farm saved a local exchange

Dick Tinsley: Perhaps this is a solution:

[https://webdoc.agsci.colostate.edu/smallholderagriculture/The\\_Crop\\_Genetic\\_Pump.pdf](https://webdoc.agsci.colostate.edu/smallholderagriculture/The_Crop_Genetic_Pump.pdf)

Allison O'Boyle: Hi everyone, Allison O'Boyle here with Fintrac

Indra Klein: Is it possible to have access to slide deck for download?

Charlin Caster (Marketlinks): Hi Indra, the slide deck will be displayed soon

Alfred Mutundi: Alfred Mutundi, Seed Technologist from Coma, North Kivu-DRC. One of the African Seed Access Index, TASAI, DRC consultant team

Mary Beggs, Cardno: Good day everyone. Mary here from Cardno. Looking forward to the discussion.

Indra Klein: Charlin, thank you

Jen Peterson: Yes, we can!

Shachi Gurumayum: Yes

Stephen Walsh: Yes

Indra Klein: Yes

Mduduzi: Yes

Elodie Nsamba: Hello everyone, this Elodie in DRC Mission

Job Cheruiyot: Hi everyone, I am Job from Kenya. Looking forward

Indra Klein: loud and clear

Roger Dean NRC: yes!

Laura O: Yes, you are loud and clear!

H Loftin: yes

Cathy P: Yes!

Dick Tinsley: loud and clear

Christian Klein: Yes

Mduduzi: Yes clearly

Kate Longley: Yes

Kabir Lawal: Yes, we can

Rowan Dade: yes

Jen Peterson: We have you 5/5 :>)

Dan Langfitt: Yes!

Charisse Tillman: Good Morning

Job Cheruiyot: yes

Diane Russell: Yes, can hear.

Aastha Bhusal: yes

Hem Roy: Yes, we can

Elfreda Sheriff: yes

Alfred Mutundi: yes, we I can

Holiance Odhiambo: I can't hear

Elodie Nsamba: Yes, you sound clear

Jen Peterson: we can hear someone in the background. Please mute.

Shachi Gurumayum: Could the rest please mute their phones? Thanks!

Stephen Walsh: Kindly mute your phone.

Charlin Caster (Marketlinks): Hi everyone, please mute your phones.

Indra Klein: Would you also ask Ms. Romero to speak a little slower?

Charlin Caster (Marketlinks): Yes, will do, Indra!

Indra Klein: Thx, Charlin

David Resetar: My name is David working on seed and market linkage financing in northern Uganda

Charlin Caster (Marketlinks): welcome, David!

Alan Isaac: Hello everyone, this is Alan Isaac from Venture37 calling from the US.

Dick Tinsley: Someone still has to mute their mic

Corus International: Hi Everyone - Patrick Roisen from Corus International

Indra Klein: It sounds like there is another conversation in background

Kate Longley: We cannot hear Augustin

Chris Ibyisintabyo: Am Chris Ibyisintabyo, Sustainable Food systems Unit, WFP Ghana

Job Cheruiyot: Not so clear

Lourdes Martinez Romero: One second please.

Corus International: Can't hear

Eric SIKA: We cannot hear Augustin!

Prossy Adong: Not hearing a thing

Lourdes Martinez Romero: we are having some background noise over here

Aastha Bhusal: There's some disturbance from background. We are not able to hear

Jared K: is the moderator able to mute all non-presenters?

George Oguna: Hi, is there a break? cannot hear anyone speaking

Lourdes Martinez Romero: not really

Charlin Caster (Marketlinks): hi everyone

Christian Klein: not hearing anything either

Charlin Caster (Marketlinks): please mute

Eric SIKA: Would you kindly share the screen so that we can follow the presentation

George Oguna: Ok

Kabir Lawal: Has Augustin started speaking?

Laura O: Augustin is starting now.

Lourdes Martinez Romero: can you hear Augustin?

Laura O: Yes, loud and clear

Lourdes Martinez Romero: great

Prossy Adong: yes, we can hear

Aastha Bhusal: It's great. We can hear clearly.

Job Cheruiyot: Romero please check the connection

Lourdes Martinez Romero: ok

Job Cheruiyot: It's on and off

Charlin Caster (Marketlinks): Job, are you able to hear?

Dick Tinsley: Does the government have the financial resources to regulate a seed industry capable of providing seed for the entire country, or will the regulatory effort be mostly on the honor/baksheekh system as I think is the case in Nigeria

Juan: I need access to microphone

Lourdes Martinez Romero: you should be back on

Charlin Caster (Marketlinks): you should have it now

Juan: I do not see the microphone

Juan: The micro disappeared from the top menu

Juan: no, it is not there

Louise Sperling: yes

Dick Tinsley: may I suggest that in the future those making presentations from remote areas record the presentation before and then only play the recording while the individual is available for q&a

Indra Klein: Great volume, thank you

Lourdes Martinez Romero: Thanks for the recommendation Dick!

Job Cheruiyot: I can hear now

Eric SIKa: Juan is lost

Indra Klein: What is that background noise?

George Oguna: someone snoring/sleeping

Jen Peterson: Can anyone not speaking please mute themselves using the small icon next to their name?  
Thanks so much!

Aastha Bhusal: How has the assurance of quality seeds maintained for resilient seed system? Is there any mechanism for conservation of seeds of local crops?

Indra Klein: @ George, LOL

Kabir Lawal: This slide on mature vs fragile contexts draws many similarities with the Nigerian situation of seeds

Indra Klein: yes

Adam Ahmed - Agrilinks: Yes, we can hear you

Diane Russell: What institutions do farmers actually trust?

Dawit Blackwell: Hi everyone, please make sure to mute your phones and mics to prevent any feedback.

Indra Klein: To what degree has costs created barriers? for gov't & farmers

Lourdes Martinez Romero: Indra, what costs are you referring too? Can you explain a bit? Thanks

Lourdes Martinez Romero: Diane, thanks for your question, very important one

Stephen Walsh: Important to recognize that different crops have different business model - i.e., potential returns - so that we cannot consider the business opportunity for hybrid maize and vegetable seed the same as for OPV's.

Dick Tinsley: This slide is hard to read. I think agrilinks needs to provide guidelines for slides to make certain a reasonable font is used, and people can easily read them

Lourdes Martinez Romero: Stephen, that's correct and thanks for the comment

Indra Klein: access to seed, monitoring/managing inventory for example

Stephen Walsh: Thanks Lourdes, I was part of the team that was in DRC for this assessment.

Lourdes Martinez Romero: Dick, you're right. We will consider that for the next presentation

Lourdes Martinez Romero: Stephen, I know!

Stephen Walsh: Question: What is the danger to farmers and to integrity of seed system from having CERTIFIED seed a standard requirement from donors but a regulatory framework that is well known to not be able to produce and validate seed as "certified"?

Kabir Lawal: Question: Are there sufficient local/ regional industries that can mop up the additional produce that improved seeds will bring? If absent, farmers could see it as a disincentive to produce more since they will lose money from low market prices and post-harvest losses. This is common in Nigeria

Alan Isaac: Can you tell us how you approached the study with gov (SEMASEM and other) participation with the aim that they can use this info and recommendations in a practical way.

Dick Tinsley: it should be noted that in Colorado only 25 -30% of wheat seed is certified the license is for 3 years of retained seed, thus certified seed not always required at least for self-pollinated or open pollinated crops/varieties

Lourdes Martinez Romero: Stephen, thanks for your question. I think you know the answer to please feel free to share your thoughts

Lourdes Martinez Romero: Kabir, great question. Very good point

Dick Tinsley: the need is for local retention that preserves quality and avoid hybrids that cannot be retained.

George Oguna: @ Walsh; I get you the current system is limited in capacity to 1. Produce Certified seeds and 2. to Evaluate /confirm Seed quality- the report being presented may begin to give us the road map to these current inadequacies

Lourdes Martinez Romero: Thanks for the question Alan

Lourdes Martinez Romero: Everyone please keep the comments coming, they are really good!

Jessamy Nichols: Did they find that the humanitarian and development community are crowding out private sector investment?

Lourdes Martinez Romero: Jessamy, unfortunately yes. But I will leave the experts to answer your question

George Oguna: @ Kabir Lawal; your observations are great- when working in one of the provinces in 2015, farmers got a lot of harvests, but most got spoiled as the poor infrastructure could not allow export to markets where the farmers could get returns. This reduces production to small scale household level in many of the places. The hidden question is whether much more needs to be done to cope with the positive impact of quality seeds access in a sustainable manner

Lourdes Martinez Romero: George, and also the issue about market access.

Indra Klein: Can anyone elaborate on the building out of infrastructure with regard to taking product to market? For those farmers who incurred loss due to harvest spoiling, what has been their recourse?

Stephen Walsh: Lourdes, I have my own ideas on the impact of requiring CERTIFIED but having no system to do it. However, as a group - donors and implementing partners do not think enough about this and reflect on the impact of setting STANDARDS that cannot be met.

Kabir Lawal: @George. Thanks for the comment. I think donors needs to be more holistic in their approach to markets. If the great to absorb is available, then increasing production is fine If not, the market needs to be created before extra production creates a glut that benefits few

Adam K.: George - I would add that improving seed quality is not only about increasing yields (volumes). It is also about increasing resilience with varieties that may have genetic qualities that are more resistant to pressures such as pests, diseases, droughts, etc.

Alan Isaac: A question not quite related to the study, but what level of awareness and concern about Fall armyworm did you notice within the private sector (seed providers, input providers, etc.)

Dick Tinsley: Again, do you have the financial resources to provide this service, please see example from Nigeria: <https://smallholderagriculture.agsci.colostate.edu/impact-of-financially-stalled-government-limited-variety-improvement-seed-certification/>

Aastha Bhusal: Is there any incentives from government sector or other stakeholders to the farmers for marketing their products?

Diane Russell: There is a lot of effort in the conservation community to reforest areas or to adopt agroforestry approaches to production. But quality tree and shrub seeds/cuttings are even harder to find than staple crops. Also, when working on this issue at World Agroforestry Center we found that there was a tendency to over-regulate seed systems and this was a disincentive to use any official seed distribution.

Stephen Walsh: Roger Shongo makes an EXCELLENT point on the value of having a NEW seed class - which is not called 'certified'. Thank you, Roger.

George Oguna: @ Adam K -- genetic qualities for an overall increase in yield

Lourdes Martinez Romero: Alan, it is an important question. we did not focus on that per se but are pretty much all tied to emergent pest in the continent

Corus International: Hi - will these slides be shared?

Indra Klein: If data indicates that donors and humanitarian efforts are crowding out private sector, how is conversation changing between NGO's and donors?

Stephen Walsh: Dick, thank you for sharing this example of inverse relationship between control and compliance.

Lourdes Martinez Romero: Thanks Stephen, feel free to share here your ideas

Lourdes Martinez Romero: Aastha, can you clarify your question? You mean the gov doing marketing of seeds or products?

Diane Russell: Yes, CGIAR should be strengthened to support sustainable seed systems. There has already been a lot of work on this in the CGIAR.

Dick Tinsley: I think the article I mentioned at the beginning would address some of the limited capacity being mentioned. the Article is:

[https://webdoc.agsci.colostate.edu/smallholderagriculture/The\\_Crop\\_Genetic\\_Pump.pdf](https://webdoc.agsci.colostate.edu/smallholderagriculture/The_Crop_Genetic_Pump.pdf)

Aastha Bhusal: Yes. any gov. sector involved in seed production and marketing?

Lourdes Martinez Romero: Diane, thanks for the comment about trees and agroforestry, t that's an area we didn't address during this study, but it is such an important sector

Stephen Walsh: We - as a community - need to have a much more CRITICAL look at what is called CERTIFIED. My sense is that there is value in more "decentralized seed production" and looking at informal seed sector players as mechanisms for delivery of quality seed, notably for OPV's. The informal sector is largely ignored.

Lourdes Martinez Romero: Thanks for clarifying Aastha

Carl Wahl, Concern: @Stephen Walsh ... YES.

Lourdes Martinez Romero: Stephen, that's the problem with informality, it is there but nobody pays the right attention to it. The question is how? How do we include the informal actors?

Kabir Lawal: @Stephen Walsh I agree with you on that

Louise Sperling: Two other recent assessments might be useful to this discussion. The Seed System Security Assessment (SSSA) in Tanganyika (2012) showed 96% of seed accessed from the informal sector. The SSSA in Kasai Orientale (2017) showed 99% of seed accessed from the informal sector (both on seedsystem.org). hence to dismiss analysis also of the informal sector in this SeedCLIR study may be an important gap? Especially in fragile contexts, the informal systems (including Traders) may be important entry points for strengthening seed systems that can serve all farmers. Traders can even move modern varieties. So, my question is why informal and even integrated systems seem to have been completely ignored here.

Lourdes Martinez Romero: Louise, thanks for the information. I am very glad you joined us

Jessamy Nichols: I'm curious if the project has collaborated with the Southern Africa Seed Trade project? They have good experience in regulating seed labels across a region, etc.

Alan Isaac: There is good content in the chat-- can the chat transcript be shared later to everyone?

Alan Isaac: I mean a copy later

George Oguna: Comment: Seed Systems development in DRC should be championed alongside infrastructural improvements

Charisse Tillman: Good Question

Adam Ahmed - Agrilinks: There will be a copy of the chat transcript in the post-event resources

Diane Russell: Louise, I totally agree with your comment. Traders and local merchants are typically ignored, and this is a big mistake because they are out there all the time with farmers. They plan an ESSENTIAL role in distribution of inputs and evacuating products.

Dick Tinsley: I think you have to be very careful with you encourage governments to provide services in excess of their financial capacity to fully support them. This becomes an open invitation for informal income opportunities to declares something as certified when it is not.

Lourdes Martinez Romero: Alan, I will make sure we do

Diane Russell: \*play not plan :)

George Oguna: I work in the East, whenever we put up tenders it's the same few venders who apply for the tenders

Alan Isaac: You are talking about NGO seed procurements-- that can eb large. Is there a positive role for "seed fairs" and another voucher approaches that can favor small-scale producer participation?

Bivan: What is the DRC team experience in terms of determinants of farmers seed purchasing behavior?

Stephen Walsh: Thank you again Roger for a GREAT point - the tender process is deeply damaging - thank you for the recommendation for small lot tendering and citing the example of a 90-ton tender for certified seed and a 30-day window. One can only imagine the actual quality of that seed.

Carl Wahl, Concern: Is QDS widely available on the market?

Kabir Lawal: Very true @Dick. Tee less government involvement in the actual value chain, the better for actors involved

Dick Tinsley: I fully agree with Diane analysis of traders they mover the majority of the business needs of smallholders; You might want to look at this webpage:

<https://smallholderagriculture.agsci.colostate.edu/private-service-providers-family-oriented-fragmented-business-environment/>

George Oguna: The informal sector is often times disadvantaged by the geographic challenges. We have tried to organize local seed fairs to include informal sector participation but often times they are limited by their capacity to move to various locations to sell their seeds

George Oguna: They lack the financial and logistical means hence often times they get sidelined

Dick Tinsley: you might enjoy the rest of the website I have been referring to it is:

<https://smallholderagriculture.agsci.colostate.edu>

Diane Russell: It is the traders who go in to buy produce and also sell commodities in rural localities. They can be petty traders or medium scale with truck or motorcycle.

George Oguna: the informal seed venders also lack the capacity to engage SENASEM for approving their seeds prior to selling to other farmers in local fairs

Dick Tinsley: Don't forget the farmers are over extended and any time marketing will be time away from the primary task of crop production

George Oguna: @Dick, sure.

Stephen Walsh: Recent publication regarding case studies on market led interventions in emergency seed security response. Link to article: [https://seedssystem.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Market\\_and\\_See\\_final\\_Walsh\\_and\\_Sperling.pdf](https://seedssystem.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Market_and_See_final_Walsh_and_Sperling.pdf)

George Oguna: for effective seed systems development in DRC, Eastern DRC in particular- there is need to provide significant subsidies to attract private sector development for production of quality/certified seeds. The subsidy for a period will caution the investors from losses due to potential of inadequate demand from farmers. As this is being done, significant investment should concurrently be done, to assure farmers that it is ok to access quality seeds - and whose results in form of better production will be good for them through access for markets for their produce