



MARKETLINKS

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

PRESENTATION TRANSCRIPT

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## PRESENTERS

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## MODERATOR

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*Lourdes Martinez Romero:*

Welcome — good morning, good afternoon, or good evening to all of you tuning in from around the globe. I'm Lourdes Martinez Romero from the Office of Market and Partnership Innovations within USAID's Bureau for Food Security, and I will be facilitating today's webinar. Today we're going to talk about markets in fragile country contexts, particularly in relation to the enabling environment for private sector investment in the seed sector to sustain food security outcomes. By "fragile country contexts" we mean those faced with persistent conflict or other destabilizing events which weaken public sector institutions and the implementation of the formal rules necessary to support private sector investment. This is a particularly timely and important topic. The Journey to Self-Reliance is orienting USAID programming to better engage the private sector in its operating countries, including fragile contexts, to sustain inclusive outcomes beyond the timeframe of USAID support. To sustain inclusive food security outcomes, we know that farmers' access to quality inputs — particularly seed — is critical to their ability to increase productivity, disease resistance, and climate resilience. Yet, in fragile contexts, such as eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, smallholders often rely on direct distribution of seed from development actors or low-quality and counterfeit seeds from informal markets. The Feed the Future Enabling Environment for Food Security project — or "EEFS" for short — is a global provider of technical assistance for USAID Missions and Operating Units to understand and improve the enabling environment for food security. EEFS recently conducted an assessment for the USAID/DRC Mission of the enabling environment for seed market systems in six provinces of eastern DRC. The study examines how development actors and the public sector can support the foundation necessary for private sector investment in the seed sector. Today's webinar will have three parts: We'll describe the rationale for the study and discuss some of the Mission's objective in Eastern DRC. Next, we will hear from the consultants that carryout the DRC seed market system for a discussion on findings and recommendations, including to support the development of a well-functioning seed market system that will support more access to quality seeds. Finally, we will take the last half hour of our speakers to answer some of your questions. A few housekeeping items, and you already hear me repeating many times to mute your phones and particularly the presenters. Please introduce yourself in the chat box with your name and organization and be sure to pose questions you might have for our speakers. Our moderators will be collecting them, and we'll pose to the speakers for views during the Q&A session. If you experience technical issues, please raise them in the chat box and the team will assist you. Allow me to introduce our speakers. Augustin Ngeleka is an Agriculture Development Specialist at USAID DRC Mission and worked with USAID since 2008 in the

Economic Growth Office. Responsible for monitoring and supervision of agriculture development and activities and engaging with the donor community in advocating for improved food security, nutrition, and better agriculture practices. Prior to USAID, he worked more than 10 years with various agriculture organizations, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Seed Quality Control Service, and National Agriculture Research Institute and has a MS in agronomy from Texas A&M. Juan Ignacio Trives Pires seed production and actual property rights. Juan serves as a technical advisor at a Spanish national seed institute and has since worked across central and East Asia, in the Middle East, and north and Sub Saharan Africa where he has provided institutional support in capacity building to create a system, legal and institutional framework for seed market regulation. Juan graduated from the Madrid University and Roger Shongo is a Senior Agronomist, Central and West Africa, seed development startup, entrepreneurships in agro-forestry and biocarbon evaluation. Worked in DRC as seed expert for the national seed service, followed by serving as a branch head for PMURR, a rehabilitation and reconstruction program in its seed division. Roger has also worked on emergency and rehabilitation programs in the Central African Republic.

*Lourdes Martinez Romero:*

Okay. We're just having a little bit of background noise. Augustin, can you hear me?

*Augustin Ngeleka:* Yes, I can.

*Lourdes Martinez Romero:*

Yes. It's now your turn.

*Augustin Ngeleka:* Yes. I can hear you clearly. Hello, everyone.

*Lourdes Romero:* Go ahead, please.

*Augustin Ngeleka:* My name is Augustin Ngeleka and I'm the agricultural development specialist at USAID Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, DRC. The completion of this seed assessment has been one of the highlights of the agricultural team and marks an important step forward in understanding the constraints of the seed sector here in the DRC. The mission is the shared seed assessment for two reasons. The first reason is that during the design process for new agricultural activities, it became apparent that knowledge about the state of the seed sector was an area which the mission needed to better understand. The lack of good quality seed undermines the country's agricultural activity for the case. Donors have also focused on more other priorities than the seed sector. However, it is not normal for a country with huge agricultural potentials like the DRC not to have a regulated and viable seed sector. With its favorable climatic conditions,

the DRC can play a role in agricultural trade and food security on the African continent. The second reason for the study was to share funding with both the donor community and the host government in order to provide investment opportunities in the sector at this precise moment when the new government is willing to develop the agricultural sector. A comprehensive survey of the seed sector would be a useful contribution and would support necessary reforms in the agricultural sector. Now, let me provide a little more context and explain briefly what the Mission is presently doing. The purpose of the Seed Sector Assessment conducted in Eastern DRC was to identify the barriers and opportunities for improving small orders from other farmers access to high quality seeds. The assessment was conducted in the following provinces. (naming provinces) the provinces are currently the area investments for USAID Mission and determinant in our Mission's Country Development Cooperation Strategy, CDCS. The Mission's flagship activity is being implemented in this Province of South Kivu focusing on coffee, and common value chains. The availability of good seeds is one of the major challenges for the successful implementation of these value chains. The challenges which undermine food security are the presence of armed conflicts, the current epidemics such as the recent Ebola outbreak and frequent population displacement. The Seed Assessment provides both a comprehensive review of the sector and actionable steps forward for reform that the new government of the DRC can focus on and provide a solid basis for development in the agricultural sector. With that said, I will now turn it over to you, Juan, for details on this assessment. Thank you.

*Lourdes Martinez Romero:*

Juan, now it's over to you, please. Juan, you should be now back on. Can you hear us? Juan, can you test now your microphone? You should be able to see it now.

*Juan Ignacio Trives Pire:* Okay. Sorry. I found it. Can you hear me now? I'm sorry for that. I didn't realize the small telephone was even there. Okay. Okay. Thank you, Augustin, for the introduction. Before we dive into the findings, recommendations of the assessment, it would be good to begin with common understanding of the objectives of seed system development. Success of a crop depends on the genetic quality of the seed used. Seeds carry the characteristics selected in the parent plants. Such characteristics included are up to particular environments like resistant to drought or length of the growing period. And based on this or nutritional value. The potential of the final crop is so defined the moment the seed is placed in the ground. The type of seed available with what time and what characteristic controls for security and attrition outcomes. The developed objective of the seed system development is to facilitate farmers access to quality seed. To do so, we need to available private sector investment in the

production and distribution of affordable, reliable, high quality seed which is adapted to their environment. The lists how fragile seed context can affect seed systems. Okay. I think I'm missing half of the slides. Okay. In any seed system, there are two subsystems that co-exist. One, the traditional subsystem represented in the graphic which is now referred to as the formal system. In the traditional system, farmers engage in traditional farm breeding and select their seed from their own crops or local exchange. Second, the formal subsystem which are the blue arrows in the graphics, in which modern plant breeding techniques or form of regulation are used to produce high quality seed with a specific characteristic for distribution of sale on a larger scale. Market ensure quality of seed in two main procedures. The first one is clearly defining the vital characteristic through the registration of the variety in a variety catalog. And second, based on those registered descriptions, conducting and testing during seed sale to specify that the seeds sold for farmers matches the description on the label. So, there is in the former system, there are specialized producing the seed. In the traditional system it's the same commercial system where the seed is selected for the next year. Similar to the pharmaceutical industry. Governments require clear definitions of ingredients in any medicine. That is to ensure quality and purity are maintained during production and proper labeling to consumers. There is a strange noise in the background. The systems as seen in the last graphic, a strong formal subsystem is represented by the solid blue line considers the introduction in response to farmer demand. Which increasing yields and resilience to climate change and leads to improved food security and attrition outcomes. The traditional system continues to succeed now with a mixture of traditional varieties and improved ones but is decreased in importance of source of agricultural seeds. Food grain not as seed and there is strong noise in the background. Can you hear me properly? I think it's gone now. In the contrary, in fragile context of some on the right graphic, the formal subsystem very often break downs and seed testing facilities and seed production machinery may be looted or destroyed, and violence and eternal displacement disrupt production and supply lines both for seed and commercial agriculture. As a result, seed regulatory institution lose ability to conduct proper vary, if and certification, which allows fake seed to enter the market and undermine farmer's trust in the seed sold often for humanitarian relief programs and government procurement. The scale of these procurements combined with insufficient capacity to regulate quality restricts for the scale seed producers and allows poor quality seed to farmers most in need of support. With a formal subsystem in disarray, the varieties are valuable to formers is substantially diminished, and the traditional subsystem takes on renewed importance, and our locally sourced seed is insufficient to meet farmer needs, and farmers resort to buying grain at local markets to use as seed. As a result, private sector investment in the seed system is stunted and farmers lack

access to high quality seed. Figuring out how to reestablish the foundations for private sector investment, the formal seed system is the critical challenge of fragile context. Let's check about the assessment. An environment for seed security project and took a study in July of 2019 across six provinces of the Eastern DRC, highlighted in orange on the map, with a focus on seed target crops. The team consulted more than 100 stakeholders, including seed producers, agro dealers, importers, national and provincial government officials, seed research institutions, NGOs, and other donors to gain a well-rounded view of the dynamics. The team employed the seed clear methodology, the stance for seed commercial legal institutional reform, which evaluates the enabling environment for seed by assessing the relative maturity of both the legal framework and seed regulatory institutions. This methodology key points where reforms will be most effective and outlines the strategy for seed system development, even in fragile contexts such as the DRC. Recommendations from the construction of the roadmap, the DRC report provides a roadmap for seed system development in Eastern DRC. This is just a screenshot of a portion of the roadmap, and Roger will get you into the details of the recommendation in just a moment. We wanted to provide an overview of what the roadmap is and how it is intended to be used. First, the roadmap will have a long time and require coordinated investment by the government and development partners. It covers 15 years in three phases from reforms necessary in years one and two, to long term reforms targeted for year eight and beyond. Second, the roadmap covers various aspects of the legal framework, regulatory institutions and market development strategies, recognizing that all three must be developed in tandem over time to have a well-functioning seed system. With that I will now turn things over to Roger to discuss the findings and recommendations in more detail. You can take over, Roger, with findings and recommendations.

*Roger Shongo:*

Good morning. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Roger. Before jumping into detail of the findings of recommendations, it should be good to make a short overview of commitment of donors in the seed sector in DRC. Eastern DRC, the region experiences repeat periods of political upheaval and insecurity since 19 (feedback) which have a donor effort to transform the seed sector and prevented implementation of a long-term strategy. Donor efforts were suspended twice in 99 and recent increase and new Ebola outbreak currently to disrupt seed support once again. The legal framework for seed is not complete. So, regulations exist, but the country as a whole, still lacks seed law and comprehensive, holistic regulatory framework. In addition, seed regulatory institutions which have already weakened walls from multiple rounds of looting, do not receive consistent support. In this context, access to seeds in the Eastern DRC is primarily guided by short term development projects, which results in reactionary response from seed sector actor rather than a long-term vision for

seed system investment. It has been difficult in this environment to establish strong institution of seed companies and establish seed market. Overview of key findings now. The seed for research in the Eastern DRC can be divided into two groups while both groups represent strategy aisle contexts, they have very different characteristics. In the North Province of South Kivu, North Kivu and others are a chronic instability have resulted in the seed market driven by emergency seed relief programs. The formal system continues to operate at least nominal to serve the needs of humanitarian programs, but these programs actually the production of quality of seeds, because the massive size of the seed tenders drives traders to provide any seed or grain available and the Seed Authority to process sufficient seed to meet the tender demand without having the capacity to do so properly. While there are some private seed producers, very few sell directly to farmers and they struggle to compete in a market that does any quality. In the Southern Province these have largely been restored and commercial literature is beginning to be established. Seed producers with donor support have created a way to engage one seed issue and the region has even begun exporting a small amount of seed informally. This is not more they keep it to regulate, the formal seed sector in this province is then and now and the region needs substantial investment in strengthening the regulatory framework and institution to build the condition for renew private sector investment in the seed sector. Now, the market development in fragile context, we will discuss findings and recommendations across three key areas and seed system development in fragile contexts. Market development, strengthening, seed regulatory institution and national and seed policy. First, market development, as described by Juan, and in overview of the two regions of Eastern DRC, seed market is in fragile context are often stunted demand due to lack of agricultural literature in the areas. Affects seeds to enter the market which undermines trust between the farmer and seed producer, where private seed private sector investment remains, seed companies are use business model to reduce risk by serving only a very limited blocker market on integrated integrating seed production with their own agricultural prediction with little commercial demand and marketing skills are weak. There will also be very few varieties available for seed company to produce, either because research institutions do not have the capacity to maintain and produce basic seeds or because demand is by humanitarian tender and that centered on limited subset of varieties. Now, the recommendation for improved market development in fragile context. The recommendation for market development varies depends on the type of fragile context. In the conflict area, immediate post conflict region such as Northern Province, the primary goal should be to improve donor coordination and orient humanitarian program in a way that will have the production of high-quality seed. This can be accomplished through, for example, establishment in code of conduct of private sector sensitive guideline for seed standards, and increasing

coordination of knowledge sharing among donor projects and NGOs to promote seed distribution strategy that enables farmer's choice and build a link between farmer demand and private sector prediction. In areas with emergent commercial agriculture such as the Southern Province, greater focused can be put on direct support for private sector developments such as building private sector capacity for high quality production and facilitating access to commercially available varieties, in the long term and shift to expanding potential for exporting locally produced seed by facilitating the registration of local variety in regional seed catalog. Now, strengthening seed regulatory institution. The second key area of seed sector development is strengthening seed regulatory institution. As Juan discusses, the most critical aspects of seed regulatory are clearly defined seed varieties. True variety development and maintenance and controlling and certified seed quality during distribution, simply put without proper variety description, there is no real formal seed system. In the DRC, the seed catalog does not define the genetic identity of the varieties listed, which means that there is no way for seed researchers to properly maintain the variety. And there is no way for seed inspector to judge the quality of seed produced for certification. This leads to poor quality generation seeds, and the poor quality rose exponentially when the seed multiplies through successive generation for commercial certification. In some countries where seeds don't have the quality standards necessary to be defined as first reproduction, certified seed, the government will recognize other categories of seed with the least region quality requirement. These categories do not exist at present in DRC. Nonetheless, continue to certify one seed, and in addition in the low capacity and resources of seed breeding and maintenance program means that there are very few varieties being maintained even at a lower quality standard which limits the potential diversity of variety produced by the private sector. Now to strengthening seed regulatory institution. They lack capacity across a wide range of regulatory function and all where necessary to proper functioning of the private seed market. Given these extensive and long-term needs for physical and development, it can be very difficult to know where to start. We recommend at phase of investment to put good quality, control function first and leverage regional and private sector support where possible to fill other necessary roles. For example, variety registration could be delegate temporary to regional seed institution such as seed sector and as member, the variety are automatically admissible in the DRC. Regional seed institution, CGR centers and the private sector may have greater capacity at this point to support new variety development and ongoing maintenance and storage of reference sample for existing varieties. In the meantime, donor resource could be best be spent in buildings and NSMs capacity to implement seed inspection consistent with vital description, provided by regional catalogs. This will require seed information management system and clearly and clear

organizational structure for CISM well as human capacity development and at this human capacity development the production of seed category existing that require less regional control at level in line with existing institutional capacity. For example, quality declared in emergency wow time is up two more slides. I can continue. As this capacity develops, the DRC should recognize and promote the production of seed category that requires less stringent quality control at the level in the line with existing institutional capacity. For example, clarity declared seed and emergency seed could both be implemented with the existing CISM resource and would ensure the seed certified by CISM actually meets the quality standard of the category of seed market on the label. Medium and long term supports can gradually expand. CISM or in more technical area as capacity and resources permit while ensuring quality control continue at the high level. National and provincial seed policy, the third area of seed system development we want to discuss is national and provincial seed policy. Ordinarily, we might discuss the legal and regulatory text first, but we have put it last in this presentation in recognition that in fragile context, the formal role may have little bearing on what farmers and seed producers actually experience. A clear legal and regulatory framework is essential in robust formal seed system, but it must be developed in tandem with the capacity of seed tree institution and while supporting private sector seed development. It is also important to note that while laws and regulation are often best at the national level, action is local. And this divide can lead to different policy priority at the national and provincial level. While the national government might need to continue working on aligning the national, legal, and regulatory framework with international based and regional seed agreements, implementation on the system must be built locally from the ground up. That requires local authority that acts the public/private coordination between those stakeholders most familiar with the local context. In DRC, this field being designed as the National Seed Authority, CISM has not formally been granted the necessary authority to carry out this mandate. In addition, public and private dialogue mechanism have only just begun to be established at the local level and lack coordination to effectively lobby at the national level. Now, the recommendation for the national and provincial seed policy. In short term, we recommend enabling locally led action through granting consistent with local realities and supported by local stakeholders. This will require lobbying for passage of seed law and authority for CISM as well as strengthening the local dialogue mechanism, (?), the legal framework should provide the basis for the gradual expansion regulatory function in line with institutional capacity and the need of private sector. In long term, strong public/private dialogue can provide inputs and buy in a small complex regulatory function as developed such as plan breeder rights. Thank you.

*Juan Ignacio Trives Pire:* Thank you, Roger. Thanks to everyone for participating and for being with us through what is a rather complex topic. Maybe we can take it down into some key principles or top takeaways for you to remember. In the context, it would be these three. First, be realistic about the timeframe. Acknowledge the long terminate of the seed system development, particularly in fragile context and plan early for coordination. Second, leverage regional support. Work with regional seed institutions where possible to alleviate the need to remedy all areas of seed regulation immediately. And third, focus on the bright spots. Find what is working and build a strategy around existing assets like skilled seed inspectors, nascent commercial agriculture. Okay. Now with that, the presentation is finished, and we'd like to open it up to your questions.

*Lourdes Martinez Romero:*

Okay, so thank you very much, Juan and Roger again, and to you Augustin for your presentations. We have several questions and comments from the participants. Thank you so much. They're super good comments. So, I am going to read some of the questions from the audience, so I'll start with first a question for Roger and Juan. Do you find the humanitarian development community direct to distribution are crowding out private sector investment?

*Juan Ignacio Trives Pire:* Okay. what we saw with the humanitarian intervention because they were making this huge procurement of seed that was not possible to produce in the short time and that led to immediately production of fake seed and low-quality seed. With the best intentions, international institutions request the quality as by the current seed regulations, which means certified seed. The question is that in absence of proper maintenance of basic seed, in such a short period of time of those included in the procurement, this cannot be physically produced, but anyway, the agents, mostly opportunistic agents coming into seed production provide that this seed cannot be of the quality and this rocks the seed market and puts aside the small seed producer that normally can either make feed seed or are left out of the market. Do you want to add something, Roger? Hello?

*Lourdes Martinez Romero:*

Roger, we cannot hear you.

*Roger Shongo:*

Hello. I saw an example and 92 turn of certified maize seed with CISM certificate and only 30 days to conclude the tender, it's particularly impossible to meet. The size of the tender also limits the participation of small seed producer to compete with the grand market for seed tender. Impossible and realistic to divide small tender in small lots. That's a concrete example of humanitarian situation of seeds in the East of DRC.

*Juan Ignacio Trives Pire:* Okay. This is one of the reasons behind our recommendation to set up lower requirements, categories of seeds that can actually be reached. One was quality of seed, doesn't have the requirement and necessary the mother seed has to be basic foundation seed, but any kind of certified seed is allowed to be used to produce quality DRC seed which would allow to find still more qualities of declared seed that is truly certified quality declared seed. And then what we saw sometimes was people with cynicism identifying commercial crops that could be potentially used as seed crops, and then the seed crop will later use to provide the procurement of certified seed, but evidently, if you use a commercial grain crop to get seed, this can never be certified seed and that's why we proposed the commercial crops could be upgraded to this emergency seed because there is no other way to provide for the procurements.

*Lourdes Martinez Romero:*

Thank you. I have more questions coming up, again for you Juan and Roger. Lewis points out the importance of informal traders as key channel for distributional seed for farmers in DRC. Can you please tell us if the informal sector was considered in this study?

*Juan Ignacio Trives Pire:* Well, yeah. We studied the seed system, the seed system dynamics. Okay. We're talking about informal sector, and I think this is the movement of seed outside what is called the formal sector. The seed systems are unique. It's completely interrelated so when improve enters farmer's crops it's going to be multiplied by farmers but somebody now just pointed out that for serial seed in Colorado, online 30% of families covered for certified seed for three years, farmers were reducing for three years but were using the safe farm the farm safe seed but that doesn't mean this seed evaluates formal or informal, but the fact that they are using the seed because they're licensed to the owner of the variety then when you're talking about informal traders of seed, I don't know exactly what does it mean. Maybe is it a person who does have a license to sell seed but brings a small amount of certified seed to the local market. We've seen so in Katanga with the new components producing is mostly pockets with intention of distributing them through seed markets. Another different thing is proper seed for farmers or local seed that changes, with you know, the genetic background of the seed, we have selected, we know the plants. In contests and do not to displacement of people, to catastrophes or war or whatever reason, the locally available seed as in Katanga isn't available anymore because of flooding, because of terrible drought, and then if the normal system is not working, farmers have to go to the grain markets to provide grain and use these grains as seed. Technically they're not proper they are not proper seeds because we don't know the genetic background and I don't know what to expect of the grain at different levels.

*Lourdes Martinez Romero:*

Thank you.

*Juan Ignacio Trives Pire:*

Sometimes the trade origin, they can have information about what these grains are. I don't see that informal trade by itself can improve the seed system, they can as far as they are intermediary in the supply of high-quality seed.

*Lourdes Martinez Romero:*

Juan, thank you very much. We have many more questions coming up to you so we can ask to shorten the answer so we can get to them. We have another question from Diane Russel, and both have asked a question about trust. Are there issues of farmer trust with government institutions given the fragile context? And I would also like to know if we could get Roger and also Augustin, if you can share your experience? Thank you. Roger or Augustin, can you hear us? Do you hear the question?

*Augustin Ngeleka:*

Yeah, regarding the trust, we considered, in fact, when you look presently, there is not a clear seed market existing under which you can have different actors who can believe who can trust each other because seeds are during the late 1980s when the government built a number of seed farms with all necessary equipment to process seeds, at that time since there were the actors did not mean, the market could not really catch up at that time to be able to make those seed factories work properly. I think they were in the number of eight spread out in different provinces. All of them went broke and around them, there were the development of a number of seed producers who were working with these seed plants to produce the seed that would have been processed and packaged as seed by the plants. So now all that is remains is the informal seed production. We have I think one or two actors remaining mainly in the provinces, the Province of Haut Tanga, I think we have one actor that is still there but mostly of the plants went broke. As the trust is concerned, the trust is not there anymore because it is difficult to go and find something because there is not defined seed needs that are clearly localized based on which the producer can work and deliver. Sometimes they can produce and there is no buyer or there is no request, and having seeds already treated that you cannot consume, being just remaining like this, I think it was difficult to do it for a second try. So, this is one of the reasons that the trust is being broken. We have seen some seed companies coming out and trying to start something using a number of producers, small producers to work with them and make up something trying to get into the formal aspect of seed production, but it has been difficult until now. And another thing that you can you can consider is that for several years, the

seed actors have been working on developing seed law, which in turn, is not yet being adopted until now by the government, but the donor community is now decided to work alongside to have at least a government come up with a new seed law based on which the old actors can work and formalize the seed activity. I don't know if Roger has something to add. I'm handing it over to him.

*Roger Shongo:*

I would just like to add something to what Augustin said just now. We saw in Katanga one example of (?). (?) is one of seed farm that is available after the looting, the remaining seed farm from the initial World Bank seed farm so from the looting, the provincial government had seed production in 2016 by ordering seeds to distribute free for farmers in 2017. The seed farm has made no effort to develop its own market. It is dependent on irregular demand and political support from the provincial government. That's the way you see that activity cannot continue if there is not, they are not able to develop the market themselves.

*Lourdes Martinez Romero:*

Thank you both for your answer. This is a nice segue to the next question. Can you tell us how you approach these studies with the government? With CISM other agencies? And the participation of these, you know, agencies with the aim that they can use these information and recommendations in a practical way. I think Augustin, that would be also for you to talk a little bit more about the work that the Mission is doing with the Government of DRC.

*Augustin Ngeleka:*

Yes. Thank you. I think the Mission is envisioning using the recommendations from this study and engage a broad, a much broader discussion with the donor community and the government in order to start a discussion on how to first come up with the seed law which should be the basis for seed activity or seed business in the country because if we do not have a seed law, it's really difficult to make something formal out of these discussions. So we intend to meet and engage a discussion with the new authority it's, including the Minister of Agriculture and probably the Prime Minister and make sure that when the new national assembly convenes for the future, for the next session so that the seed issues can be discussed and maybe brought to the attention of the President for signing a law regarding that.

*Lourdes Martinez Romero:*

Thank you. Thank you very much. We have also a question about the challenges with it in fragile context. How can quality be controlled and how can you know the genetic source of seed when controlled borders is relatively limited given the circumstances. Juan or Roger, take it away.

*Roger Shongo:*

Do you want me to? Hello?

*Juan Ignacio Trives Pire:* Okay. Well I guess you're talking about imports. In general, in South most was demand, most of the demand was for ivory and some went through official custom and some went through the border, but it was high quality seed because it was demanded. The seed to border control is not working in the DRC, also because of the lack of proper seed law. And there is no efficient control as the quality of the seed is relying completely on the seed producer in the following country, and so again without seed law, it's very difficult for the seed later to guarantee seed quality. But to a certain extent, if people we lie on imported seeds from well-known seed producers in Zambia.

*Lourdes Martinez Romero:*

Thank you. So, the next question is about markets. Is there sufficient local or regional demand for rules 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. This is more about like the final the final product. What is the demand, the regional demand that will create incentive for farmers to produce seed? Juan or Roger?

*Juan Ignacio Trives Pire:* Okay. Let me read again the question.

*Lourdes Martinez Romero:*

The question is about local and regional demand.

*Juan Ignacio Trives Pire:* Unfortunately, DRC not in a position to establish the regional seed market regulations, especially because of lack of capacity and technical financing of resources. So, it would need to get a certain level in the situation of the regulatory background or frameworks to be able.

*Lourdes Martinez Romero:*

Do you also look at the output level, like the final products? You know, not just the seed but the market for, you know shows different products in the region that will create incentive to produce seed?

*Juan Ignacio Trives Pire:* Well, there is a problem with, in fact, what we've found is the problems that were in this emerging seed companies was a lack of demand. A lack of demand because of the very low level of commercial agriculture, with far more limited by the lack of transparent infrastructure so it was very difficult to develop a commercial agriculture when you don't have access to import or to sell your product. So, to develop local agriculture, commercial agriculture is very important because that would limit the demand. In the demand now in Katanga, most of the food needed, like the staple food is maize. They have to import like three fourths of the requirements of maize food to feed their people, and they import it a very high prices, so it would be no problem to do commercial agriculture. We saw that a little bit of development of commercial agriculture

with like schemes and developing around flower factories where the farmers ensure buyer for the pickup trucks. But at the time being, the production is very low, and this affects the seed demand also.

*Lourdes Martinez Romero:*

Thank you, Juan. So, we have time for one more question, and this is a question for Augustin or Roger. Does the government have the financial resources to implement the seed law once enacted? Roger and Augustin? We cannot hear you.

*Augustin Ngeleka:* Okay. Can you hear me now?

*Lourdes Martinez Romero:*

Yes. Now we can hear you.

*Augustin Ngeleka:* Okay. I was saying that it is, I think that the government is now willing to do something, and since we think that the willingness to push on agriculture now is compared to what we have been used with before, it is different. We have the new authorities trying to they have increased the agricultural budgets and now it is something that is between 5 and 10% and in the past it was always below 3%, and this is a sign that maybe studying now we will engage in discussions, there would be some progress of this, and also if we have more and more investors coming in agricultural sector, there will be a clear demand of agricultural products and specifically for agricultural product, you need to have, besides varieties that have a specific characteristic that can only be guaranteed by quality seeds. So, we think that this way it will be pot not only for the government, but also for the private sector to move on and work together with the government in order to come up with the progress that we all are looking for to see in the agricultural sector. Thank you. Maybe Roger has something to add.

*Lourdes Martinez Romero:*

Perfect. Great. Thank you, Augustin. It's time for us to wrap up this webinar. I would like to thank our speakers for sharing their expertise on these topics and encourage you all to read the full report which is available in both AgriLinks and MarketLinks. I would also like to thank the participants in the chat room that your comments and your suggestions are really, really good. Keep an eye for our post event resources from today's webinar, including a recording as well as presentation slides and transcripts to be posted on both AgriLinks and MarketLinks in the coming weeks. And if you're interested in hearing more from the Feed the Future for food security project, please access the activity page on AgriLinks and be sure to sign on for the project newsletter and links are located in the web links side bar. If you enjoyed today's webinar, join

Marketlinks for their next webinar on February 19 which will explore the minimum economic recovery standards for improved market-based programming and offer guidance and tips for mainstreaming as the donor, institutional, and practical level. You can learn more and register at [MarketLinks.org](http://MarketLinks.org). Thank you again for joining us today and enjoy the rest of your day. Bye.

*[End of Presentation]*