

Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources

National Seed Policy

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List of abbreviations

AFSR	: Appui à la Filière Semencière du Rwanda
ASARECA	: Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa
ASSR	: Appui au Secteur Semencier du Rwanda
ECAPAPA	: Eastern and Central Africa Programme For Agricultural Policy Analysis
MINAGRI	: Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources
MFI s	: Micro Finance Institutions
NEPAD	: New Partnership for African Development
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organization
PSTA	: Strategic Plan For the Transformation of Agriculture
RADA	: Rwanda Agriculture Development Authority
RAB	: Rwanda Agriculture Board
RBS	: Rwanda Bureau of Standards
SNS	: Service National Semencier
SSS	: Service des Semences Selectionnées

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rwanda has recently adopted the new National Agriculture Policy and the Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation (PSTA in French). Both documents shall make operational the long-term development orientations for the agriculture sector set forth in Vision 2020. They put special emphasis on the importance of agriculture in the Rwandan economy. They also propose ways and means to tackle structural and economic constraints limiting the agricultural sector performance.

The Rwandan agriculture is characterised by one of the lowest rate of the use of modern inputs in Africa and in the World. The rate of the use of improved seeds is 1.5%, whereas the use of mineral fertilizer reaches 8Kg/Ha/year compared to 150-180 kg/Ha/year prevalent in developed countries. This low use of inputs explains, in part, the low level of productivity of the Rwandan agriculture.

Seeds, in particular, are very important because they are the first deciding factors of production without which no other input or investment can have significant value. It is therefore highly needed to meet the seeds demand responding to different intensification schemes in various agro-bio-climatic regions of the country.

A sustainable increase in production and productivity depends to a large extent on the development of high yielding varieties and on the establishment of an efficient seed supply system enabling farmers to easily have access to those quality seeds.

It is within this framework that Rwanda wishes to have a National Seed Policy.

The National Seed Policy (NSP) shall contribute to the consolidation of past achievements and lay down the foundations of an organized and strong seed commodity chain responding to the challenges of intensification and promotion of other agriculture chains, and adapted to the new context characterised by the imperative necessity to support the agricultural development, to support the country's economy and to ensure the national food security.

The NSP shall promote the emergence of a strong and efficient private sector which shall integrate the activities related to production, distribution and marketing of seeds enabling the Government to focus on coordination, regulation and quality control activities.

This NSP paper was prepared in order to inform the development of an efficient Rwandan Seed commodity chain. It also takes into account the need to harmonise seed policies of the States in the Region within the process of the regional integration in which Rwanda is currently engaged.

It calls upon the private sector to join Government efforts to meet national seed demand and highlights the crucial role of research and extension services in order to

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raise the awareness of farmers about the importance of improved seeds as a key input in the agricultural production.

Lastly, this policy document does a critical analysis of the Rwandan seed sector and proposes policy orientations aimed at improving the current seed sector situation

Summary of Policy Orientations

This National Seed Policy document contains policy orientations regarding key issues of the seed commodity chain in Rwanda.

Policy Orientation 1

General Framework of the Government Intervention in the Chain

The Government intends to promote the role of the private sector in seed production and marketing activities. In so doing, the government shall progressively pull out from these activities focusing its efforts on coordination, regulation, quality control and other key activities that cannot be carried out by the private sector.

Policy Orientation 2

Research and Variety Development

The Government shall continue to ensure that high yielding varieties adapted to various agro-bio-climatic areas of the country are available on the market. Therefore, RAB shall be provided with the necessary means to accomplish this task through new germoplasm and crossbreeding programmes. The private sector, Universities and Higher Agricultural training Institutes shall be encouraged to contribute to this research while mechanisms regarding variety evaluation, release, plant variety protection and plant genetic resources conservation shall be put in place. The adoption of new biotechnology shall be encouraged according to the national Biotechnology and Bio-security policies.

The Government shall encourage the cooperation between national & regional research institutes within the framework of **ECAPAPA** and **ASARECA**. Lastly, various measures shall be adopted to ensure that, on one hand, all varieties have passed through the process of evaluation, registration and release before their introduction to the seed market, and that variety maintenance is regularly ensured on the other hand.

Policy Orientation 3

Seed Production and Conditioning

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Seeds produced in Rwanda are classified in the following 4 categories: i) Foundation Seeds; ii) basic seeds; iii) certified seeds; iv) quality declared seeds.

The Government shall continue to support the formal seed production sector spearheaded by the private sector. It will prioritize effective demand-based production following a pre-established national seed master plan.

The Government recognizes the role of the informal sector in supplying seeds in rural areas. It will help to improve the quality of seeds produced by the informal sector pending the time the formal seed sector will be able to meet the demand of improved seeds.

Policy Orientation 4

Seed Marketing and Constitution of Seed Security Stock

As well as for seed production, the Government shall encourage the private sector to invest in seed marketing and distribution. Likewise, the Government shall improve seed market information system and intervene in seed regulation and distribution in case of emergency or disaster.

The seed pricing shall be liberalized and bargained between producers, distributors and users.

The Government shall encourage and support farmers to constitute community seed security stocks to mitigate erratic seasons or acts of God.

Policy Orientation 5

Promotion of Seed use

To improve the low rate of seed use estimated at 1.5% of the total seeds used in the country, the Government shall promote the use of seeds and other agricultural inputs through the national agricultural extension system, better information on seeds and better geographic seed distribution.

Policy Orientation 6

Financing the Private Sector

To promote investment in the seed sector and better accessibility to seeds by farmers, the Government shall put in place more appropriate mechanisms to fund the seed sector by establishing credit and guarantee funds for farmers and seed traders as well as seasonal credit for seed users at the beginning of each season. Concurrently, innovations related to saving of inputs shall equally be encouraged.

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Policy Orientation 7

Seed Quality Control

To ensure seed quality control at all levels, the Government shall strengthen seed quality control services as well as increase farmers' awareness about seed quality issues.

Seed certification shall be compulsory for basic seeds but shall be performed on request for certified seeds, while the quality declared seeds shall progressively be adopted.

The Government shall adopt a flexible seed regulation system ensuring a continuous flow of seed supply to farmers. However, depending on the evolution of the seed sector, the regulation system shall be adapted accordingly.

Policy Orientation 8

Seed Import and Export

Seed import shall be allowed in case of the shortage of local seed supply or for seeds that are not locally produced in the country. As regards seed export, it shall be envisaged for seeds in which Rwanda has a comparative advantage, but under no circumstances should it jeopardise the national seed security. Seed import and export shall be controlled by the State.

Policy Orientation 9

Coordination and Implementation of the Seed Policy

In order to better orient and organize the seed commodity chain, a National Seed Council (NSC) shall be established within the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI). The NSC shall be responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy and shall be legally empowered to update it whenever necessary. The Variety Evaluation and Registration Committees (VERC) shall also be established and shall be sub-components of the National Seed Council.

The different seed sector stakeholders from both private and public sectors shall respectively have a role to play in the implementation of this policy. The Government shall encourage the organization of seed producers and traders for the establishment of various management and internal quality control mechanisms expected to develop gradually towards the adoption of a charter of seed producers and/or traders.

Lastly, the Government shall continue to support the existing National Consultation Framework of seed sector stakeholders.

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Definitions

The terms used in this policy have the following definitions:

Seed: Any grain, plant or part of a plant used for plant propagation in general.

Quality Seeds: Are seeds meeting genetic, specific and physiological purity standards, free of any disease and meeting requirements set forth by the seed Law.

Variety: A set of plants belonging to the same family that are distinguished from other plants of the same species by morphological, physiological, cytological, chemical traits or any other features that are significant for agriculture, forestry or horticulture which, after (sexual or asexual) multiplication remain with their distinctive traits.

Categories of Seeds

Foundation Seeds: Seeds from multiplication of Foundation Seeds. They are produced under the direct control of the breeder or his duly accredited representative.

Basic Seeds: Seeds from the multiplication of Foundation Seeds according to the rules of variety selection. Their production shall meet the standards set up by the seed certification board and shall enable better maintenance of genetic purity and identity.

Certified Seeds: Seeds from the multiplication of basic seeds whose quality has been approved through official certification process.

Quality Declared Seed: Seeds declared by the producers as being in conformity with technical and quality standards governing seed production.

Breeder: Physical or moral entity who has developed a new variety.

Informal Seed Sector: Farmers or group of farmers who produce seeds for their own use or for the use of neighbours outside the official seed production and control system.

Formal Seed Sector: Seed production system under the official control by the relevant State services.

MINAGRI: Ministry having Agriculture in its attributions.

Seed Inspector: Trained and competent official belonging to a quality control department responsible for performing field control, sampling and analysis of seeds according to standards defined by the law.

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Seeds Producer: Any person or group of persons approved by the relevant authority, producing seeds according to the standards set forth by the Law.

Quality Control Department: The official Government organ responsible for seed quality control and law implementation.

Varieties Development: Development or creation of a new variety through selection and cross breeding techniques.

CHAPTER I: GENERAL CONTEXT

The National Seed Policy (NSP) presented herein is in conformity with the National Agriculture Policy (NAP) and the Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation (SPAT). For the Agriculture sector, both documents make operational the major orientations of the national development as set forth in Vision 2020 and EDPRS. They put particular emphasis on the importance of agriculture in the Rwandan economy and on ways and means to cope with the multiple structural and current economic constraints restricting the performance of this sector.

1.1. Brief Overview of the Agricultural Sector

The Rwandan economy heavily relies on the agricultural sector which represents about 43% of the GDP (in 2005). Moreover, the agricultural sector provides 87% of jobs and accounts for 80% of all exports.

The agricultural sector has registered mixed results over the last five years. It has, on one hand, registered an average growth rate of 4.2% during the period 2002-2005 but has, on the other, been affected by climatic hazards that led to significant changes in season, thereby increasing the vulnerability of the population in some regions of the country.

The crop production sub-sector is characterized by a very strong dependence on climatic conditions. It faces a set of constraints including mainly the following:

- i) Predominance of subsistence farming and a weak connection to the market;
- ii) Low level of productivity mainly due to the poor utilization of intensification inputs (1.5% for improved seeds, 8 Kg of fertilizers/ha/year compared to 150-180 Kg/ha in developed countries);
- iii) Overexploitation of the soil without restitution of the nutrients and/or washed away by soil erosion;
- iv) Poor performance of agricultural support services (provision of inputs, agricultural research, extension, funding).

1.2. Importance of the Seed Commodity Chain in the Agricultural Development

Seeds are very important in farming because they constitute a critical determining factor of production without which no other input or agricultural investment can be valorised.

Therefore, it is very important to meet the demand for seeds meeting required standards as to various intensification schemes within various agro-bio-climatic regions.

A sustainable increase in production and productivity depends to a large extent on the development of high yielding varieties and on the establishment of an efficient seed supply system enabling farmers to easily have access to those quality seeds.

The recent evolution of the seed sector in Rwanda was marked by the establishment of the National Seed Service in 2001 and the promulgation of the seed law in 2003. Moreover, the agriculture value chain promotion policy has led to an increased demand for high yielding seeds for traditional farmers and the necessity to develop new plant material for new farmers.

The shaping of the Seed Policy presented herein comes to consolidate the past achievements and establish a strong seed commodity chain responding to intensification challenges and promotion of other agriculture value chains and adapt to the new context characterized by deep technological mutations, regional integration, and the globalization of information and trade.

1.3. Compliance with National Agricultural Policy and Strategies

The objective of the National Agricultural Policy adopted by the Government in 2004 is aimed at ensuring a sustained economic growth, contributing to poverty reduction in the rural sector and increasing farm income.

Its specific objectives include: i) Enabling the rural communities to develop a sense of responsibility as actors in agricultural development; ii) Increasing agriculture, animal and fish production as a result of improvement in productivity; iii) Increasing revenue as a result of diversification of economic activities in the rural sector; iv) Strengthening the linkage between production and market; v) Ensuring a sustainable management of natural resources.

The National Agricultural Policy relies on the following four strategic axes: i) Transformation and modernization of agriculture; ii) Agriculture value chains development; iii) Promotion of competitiveness for agricultural products; iv) Development of entrepreneurship spirit.

The agriculture value chain approach constitutes one of the essential axes of Government intervention methodology which shall depend on strengthening professionalization and specialization of agriculture.

The Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation (PSTA) was adopted by the Government in January 2005. It was designed within the framework of implementing the National Agriculture Policy and Poverty Reduction Programme.

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The PSTA is based on the following four programmes: i) Intensification and development of sustainable production systems; ii) Support to the professionalization of producers; iii) promotion of chains and development of agribusiness; iv) Institutional development.

Regarding seeds in particular, the PSTA provides that the multiplication of seeds and seedlings must be carried out and supported through the support to professional organizations involved in this domain and through the promotion of the private nursery profession.

In this regard, the following Policy measures are envisaged:

- Building the national capacity for production of foundation, basic and certified seeds.
- Building the capacity of private seed multipliers or group of multipliers for the production of quality seeds within proximity to food production zones.
- Finding means needed to ensure seed quality certification and control.
- Supporting the organization of distribution circuits for quality seeds and seedlings by the organisations of producers.

The development of seed commodity chain is considered here as an important tool for the promotion of other chains of crop production as stated in the National Agriculture Policy and PSTA documents. Those seed commodity chains are faced by situations that are very different in respect of their seed needs and will require interventions whose scope and nature will depend on their development stage and on the performance level set by the stakeholders of each chain.

1.4. Harmonization of Seed Policies and Regulations at Regional and International Level

Regional integration is one of the pillars of Vision 2020 and Rwanda plays a major role in this process of regional integration, especially within the framework of NEPAD and COMESA. Moreover, Rwanda has recently joined the East African Community and it is already involved in the efforts to harmonize agricultural policies and programmes through regional programmes like ECAPAPA¹ and ASARECA².

The harmonization shall especially allow the development of an important regional seed market and shall facilitate the seed import/export and exchange of varieties. This regional market shall attract investments from big seed industries in the region. The

¹ Eastern and Central Africa Programme for Agricultural Policy Analysis

² Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa.

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harmonization shall also generate economies of scale, especially within the framework of variety development, seed trading and marketing activities.

The regional harmonization shall cover the following domains: i) variety evaluation, release and registration; ii) phytosanitary issues and regulations; iii) protection of variety producers' rights; iv) certification standards, as well as seed law and regulations.

CHAPTER II: DIAGNOSIS OF THE SEED COMMODITY CHAIN IN RWANDA

2.1. Background

Seed multiplication was under ISAR's responsibility since the independence up to early in the 70s when the "Service des Semences Sélectionnées" (SSS) was established within MINAGRI to deal with production of seeds.

- i) Various State-run agricultural projects were subsequently focused on seed production activities and especially the Belgian Cooperation Projects (SSS) and Rwanda Seed Sector Support Project (ASSR in French), which contributed to restructuring of the seed sector by supporting: i) the production of foundation, basic and commercial seeds; ii) the establishment of the National Seed Testing Laboratory; iii) the creation of the National Seed Service and the drafting of the current seed law in July 2003.

Since 2005, the Rwanda Seed Chain Support Project (AFSR in French) has supported the development of the seed chain, especially within the framework of the seed chain institutional and organizational support; support and empowerment of the private sector in seed production and promotion of the seed chain both upstream and downstream.

2.2. Organization of the Seed commodity chain

2.2.1. Seeds Systems

The Rwanda seed commodity chain is characterized by the coexistence of formal and informal seed systems.

- The formal seed system is rather recent and has been developed in response to an increase in agricultural productivity. It is based on services provided by the public sector stakeholders such as ISAR for the production of Foundation Seeds; the RADA Seed Production Unit and some agricultural development projects for direct production of basic and certified seeds. This production is done either by the State or under contract with people and seed multiplication groups. Participation of the private sector in seed production and conditioning is still very low. It is only limited to certain associations, cooperatives and enterprises, which produce and market seeds in collaboration with RADA Seed Production Unit.
- The informal seed system, which by far is the most important, consists of all actors who produce and market seeds without interacting with governmental institutions, which regulate seed production, control and marketing activities.

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It is mainly based on traditional practices of farmers who select and keep a portion of their production as seeds for the next seasons. It is also characterised by multiple transactions and exchanges between farmers themselves, or through traders from whom farmers can also purchase food commodities some of which are sorted to be used as seeds. The major shortcoming of this sector lies in poor quality of products and the risk of disease propagation such as bacteria in Irish potatoes.

2.2.2. Main Stakeholders of the Seed Chain

In Rwanda, we have two categories of stakeholders: institutional and non-institutional stakeholders.

The institutional stakeholders are: i) the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources and Public Institutions affiliated to it; ii) Rwanda Bureau of Standards (RBS); iii) Agriculture Financing Institutions.

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources is responsible for coordination and regulation of the whole seed commodity chain
- The Seed Production Unit within RADA is responsible for the production of basic and commercial seeds but intends to pull out gradually as the private sector engages in seed production activities. RADA is the operational wing of MINAGRI for all issues pertaining to seed quality control and coordination of seed commodity chain.
- The Rwanda Agricultural Research Institute (ISAR) is the only institution in the country in charge of variety development and maintenance and ensures Foundation Seeds production.
- The Rwanda Bureau of Standards (RBS) is responsible for seed certification but is not yet fully equipped to effectively fulfil this mission.
- The Agriculture sector financing agencies such as “Banque Rwandaise de Développement”, Union des Banques Populaires du Rwanda” and Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) are invited to play a key role in the development of the seed commodity chain. In this regard, it should be pointed out that cooperatives and associations involved in seed production activities are poorly financed due to governance issues that characterize them; lack of guarantee; and poor project planning and management capacity.

Non-institutional stakeholders are those who are directly engaged in seed production and marketing activities. These are especially:

- Seeds producers:
 - ✓ Seed multiplication Associations.
 - ✓ Private seed producers.
- Cooperatives and entrepreneurs specializing in seed marketing and distribution.
- End seed users as individuals or grouped in associations and cooperatives.
- Agricultural inputs and equipments suppliers.

2.3. Diagnosis of Key Components of the seed commodity chain

2.3.1. Variety Development

Variety development, which enables farmers to have access to high yielding and performing varieties, is the upstream and pivotal component of the seed commodity chain and is relevant to the development of agriculture at large. Variety development according to its current status is limited to the introduction and evaluation by ISAR of new varieties from regional and international institutions to identify those that adapt well to local conditions.

The lack of variety development programme limits the range of varieties meeting varied requirements in terms of taste, adaptability to some stressing conditions or to socio-economic conditions of farmers, which affect their acceptability and adoption.

On the other hand, agriculture research performance is limited by the fact that research is almost funded exclusively by the public sector through ISAR resulting in limited number of highly trained personnel and a lack of adequate equipment.

Today, higher agriculture training institutions and private operators are not involved in agricultural research.

2.3.2. Variety Evaluation, Registration and Release

The endeavours made over the last years to put in place a system for variety evaluation, and release have not been successful. Therefore, the varieties developed by ISAR are directly introduced in the seed chain without going through the whole process of evaluation, release and registration up to national catalogue. This lack of independent variety evaluation institution is likely to undermine the quality of disseminated seeds, especially in respect of the stability of newly introduced traits.

2.3.3. Variety Maintenance and Production of Foundation Seeds.

Once approved, the characteristics of the new variety should scrupulously be maintained over years in order to provide the seed chain on a regular basis with foundations seeds meeting its characteristics. At present, the operation is not ensured for all approved varieties. This results in irregular supply of Foundation Seeds for some varieties.

The problem is particularly acute for potato Foundation Seeds. Indeed, despite the production of vitro plants by ISAR, the foundation seed production capacity of the latter remains very poor in relation to the unceasingly increasing demand for potato seeds.

2.3.4 Intellectual Property Rights

The general Policy on intellectual property has been recently adopted by the Government upon proposal by the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture. However, in order to attract private investment in variety development, this policy shall be accompanied by concrete measures promoting and guarantying intellectual property in respect of variety obtentions to create an enabling environment for private investment in variety research.

2.3.5 Biotechnology

The use of biotechnologies in agricultural production is still very low due to lack of qualified human resources in ISAR, as well as lack of funds and adequate equipment.

Nevertheless, the Government is going to adopt a National Policy on Biotechnology and Bio-security aimed at creating an enabling environment for increased use of biotechnologies to boost the national economy.

2.3.6. Plant genetic Resources Conservation

Plant genetic resources constitute a basic element for all plant improvement. However, due to the depletion of natural resources or to the replacement of landraces by improved or exotic varieties, some species are being extinct leading to the diversity loss over the years in their centre of origin.

In Rwanda, the situation was aggravated by the 1994 Genocide, which destroyed the entire infrastructure and a big part of germless available in the country at that time. Significant efforts had to be made to re-introduce a part of this genetic patrimony destroyed but the process is still hindered by the absence of an efficient system of plant genetic resources conservation.

2.3.7 Seed Production and Conditioning

In Rwanda, the current and past trends of seed production reveal that seed production systems were more focused on quantities to be produced than on actual demand to be satisfied resulting in discrepancy between supply and demand.

In fact, the formal seed sector accounts for approximately 1.5% of the total quantity of seeds used in the country.

The informal system has always managed to bridge the gap in the formal sector in respect of the quality of provided “seeds”, but the quality of the material thus used is

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in most cases poor and/or questionable, the country agricultural productivity is considerably affected thereby.

Unfortunately, very little is known about the informal seed sector which is not even supported by public services.

The production of Foundation Seeds is performed by ISAR.

RADA Seed Production Unit is the only institution which produces basic seeds for most food crops (beans, potatoes, maize, sorghum, wheat, soybeans, peas, rice, groundnuts, and cassava), but this department does not have sufficient means to fulfil its mission as it lacks land and funds. If RADA SEED UNIT pulls out from the production of certified seeds, the financial resources available will be enough to meet the demand for basic seeds (except for beans and Irish potatoes).

Efforts are underway to attract private producers to invest in the production of basic seeds and progressively take over from public services.

For basic as well as for commercial seed production activities, all seed related projects have predominantly supported the public sector.

Therefore, the public sector contributes so far to more than 60% of the cereal seeds production, 79% of leguminous seeds, and 50% of potato seeds.

The demand for commercial seeds is not well known but it is far higher than what is available: the current commercial seeds production in relation to estimated demand for the year 2007 indicates that it represents 17% for cereals, 3.29% for legumes, 1.98% for potatoes as indicated by the table below:

Seed Demand for Seasons 2007A and 2007B

Food crop	Seed need season 2007 A (Tonnes*)	Seed needs season 2007 B (Tonnes*)	Proportion of potential seed buyers	Actual seed demand season 2007 A (Tonnes*)	Actual seed demand season 2007 B (Tonnes*)	Total seed demand agricultural year 2007 (Tonnes*)
Sorghum	259	4819	0.27	35	651	686
Maize	2699	875	0.64	864	280	1,144
Wheat	1226	1727	0.74	454	639	1,093
Rice	576	545	0.39	113	106	219
Beans	18735	12001	0.60	5620	3600	9,220
Soya	1413	1283	0.70	495	449	944
Potatoes	188645	165774	0.70	66026	58021	124,047
Cassava	927750000	807743100	0.87	403571250	351368249	754,939.499

(*) For cassava, the unit used for measurement is the number of cuttings.

2.3.8. Seed Marketing and Distribution

The predominance of an informal seed system has led to a poorly organized marketing and distribution system in which the quality of products available on the market is not known due to storage, conditioning and transportation conditions which do not match required standards. This system is characterized by various exchanges among farmers themselves or through food traders and it however gets its strength from its sustainability and proximity service among producers.

At the level of formal seed system, most of produced seeds are sold by RADA with price setting at the beginning of each season, which impacts on the prices set by other seed producers. It must be noted that some projects and NGOs provide subsidized seeds or distribute them freely. This practice constitutes an impediment to the development of the effective private sector in this domain.

It should also be made clear that seed marketing by RADA is done in a centralized system in which selling permits are issued at the Headquarters in Kigali, restricts seed accessibility due to heavy administrative procedures and to sparse distribution network. Moreover, there is not an efficient marketing strategy and the system is still characterized a structural inefficiency in meeting the demand.

Finally, it should be noted that there is no seed security stock, which aggravates the risks of vulnerability in case of a bad cropping season.

2.3.9. Promotion of seed use

Recent studies have demonstrated that the poor rate in the use of quality seeds is due, among others, to the fact that these seeds are not known to the users. This lack of awareness is due on the one hand to their non-availability, and to poor promotion to publicize their genuine qualities and techniques to be used to maximize their productive potential.

The poor promotion of seed use is generally the result of weak performance of the agricultural extension system, but also the result of lack of knowledge of the potential of seeds distributed by the formal system and of the fact that no measure for the improvement of the informal seed system has been taken so far.

2.3.10. Financing of the Seed Sector

The agricultural sector funding is the weakest of all the productive sectors and it is a major constraint to agricultural development in general and to seed sector development in particular. Indeed, it accounts for 2% of total bank credits allocated to the national economy. This is likely to jeopardize the Government political orientation

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in promoting the private sector within the agriculture transformation and intensification process and the disengagement of the State from seed production and marketing activities.

The poor purchasing power of the majority of farmers limits their access to quality seeds.

2.3.11. Seed Quality Control

In the past years, the quality control department was under then National Seed Service and is now under the Seed Production Unit of RADA. In this context, this department is considered as an internal quality control structure, whereas it should be an autonomous body so that it can cover all aspects regarding quality issues within the whole seed chain.

The department has a Seed Testing Laboratory which is not sufficiently equipped to carry out all the required tests related to quality control.

The capacity to carry out field inspections, to take samples and analyze them remains very limited (on average 300 inspections and 1000 samples per year for the whole country).

A Seed Certification Department shall soon be established within the Rwanda Bureau of Standards (RBS).

This Department is still new and has not yet started performing certification activities. It needs to be strengthened in terms of human capacity building and equipment.

As regards legal and regulatory framework, the Decrees to implement the seed law have not yet been adopted. As a result, most of seeds are produced and sold outside the quality control and certification system.

2.3.12. Seed commodity chain coordination

The Seed commodity chain coordination remains very weak and the information flow among various stakeholders very limited. The lack of appropriate structures and mechanisms explain this situation. While RADA was supposed to perform regulation, coordination and organization activities along the whole seed chain, it got strongly involved in production activities limiting the scope of its action in this domain. The establishment of RADA and the Seed commodity chain Coordination Framework is nevertheless a good starting point for better organization and coordination. But the need for the establishment of a national institutional framework integrating all the components of the seed chain is of paramount importance.

CHAPTER III: FORMULATION OF THE NATIONAL SEED POLICY

CONTEXT AND RATIONALE FOR THE POLICY

The weak level of seed commodity chain development is strongly linked to the overall Rwandan poor agricultural development. The new political orientations and strategies in the area of agricultural development put particular emphasis on the crucial role of seeds as first determinants of production without which no other input or investment can be valorised.

The PSTA equally recognizes that sustainable production and productivity growth depends to a large extent on developing new high performing varieties including regular supply of quality seeds to farmers, in sufficient quantity and in due course.

That can only be done through a strong programme of varieties development, a sustainable system of seeds production and marketing and strict quality control at all levels.

To achieve this, Rwanda must have a clear policy defining the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders within the whole seed commodity chain.

The National seed Policy is expected to create necessary conditions for developing an organized and strong seed commodity chain in which the private sector plays a prominent role. This seed commodity chain should respond to challenges of intensification and promotion of other agriculture value chains and shall be adapted to the new context characterized by an imperative necessity to support agricultural development, support Rwandan economy and ensure food security.

The National Seed Policy will, in particular, facilitate the emergence of a strong and efficient private sector which can integrate seed production, distribution and marketing activities, thus enabling the Government to concentrate on capacity building, coordination, regulation, quality control and certification functions.

Vision

The Government vision on seeds is:

“An organized and high performing seed commodity chain, which contributes to increasing agricultural production and productivity growth resulting from a coordinated and complementary action of its public and private stakeholders who can interact to produce and put at the disposal of agricultural farmers quality seeds, in due course, which are in adequate quantity and adapted to different agro-bio-climatic conditions in Rwanda”.

National Seed Policy Comprehensive Objective

“Promoting the collaboration of public services and private sector in order to ensure adequate production and supply of quality seeds, and a strong awareness of farmers about the crucial importance of quality seeds in agricultural production.”

Specific objectives

- Promoting regular introduction of high performing and adapted varieties in the seed commodity chain through national capacity building in relation to variety development and regional cooperation in this domain;
- Promoting the central role of the private sector in the production and adequate supply of quality seeds to agricultural farmers;
- Building national capacity related to seed commodity chain coordination, seed quality control and certification.

Political Elements

I. GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF THE GOVERNEMENT INTERVENTION IN THE SEED COMMODITY CHAIN

The Government and its institutions have always played a fundamental role in the seed commodity, especially in direct production of foundation and basic seeds and in organisation and support to production and marketing of basic and certified seeds by the private sector.

However, it is clear that this omnipresent State intervention is no longer appropriate to the current economic context. So there is a need to redefine the role of the Government as to seed issues such as regulation, promotion, quality control and facilitation.

1. The Government is convinced that the future performance and sustainability of seed commodity chain shall substantially depend on the private sector capacity and farmers organizations to take over the responsibility in seed production and marketing activities from public institutions.

In this context, the Government has decided to involve them in a decisive manner in the seed commodity chain management and build their capacity to ensure the success of its own disengagement.

2. Consequently, the role of Government shall be refocused on issues regarding regulation, quality control, promotion and facilitation. However, the government shall continue to carry out some crucial activities such as production of foundation seed, constitution of strategic seed stock, regulation and seed relief in case of emergency.

II. VARIETY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

II.1. Variety Research

1. The Government is responsible for setting up a strong basis of seed chain through national programme of introduction and development of appropriate varieties suitable for farmers.

Therefore:

The Government shall continue to provide ISAR with sufficient means to facilitate the completion of its mission which is to i) ensure the availability of new varieties adapted to agro-ecological specific systems and niches; ii) conserve all plant genetic resources in the country by ensuring germoplasm conservation and management for approved varieties and ensuring the constitution and management of a genebank according to known international standards; iii) avail to the whole seed commodity chain Foundation Seeds of good quality and in required quantity to ensure satisfactory production of basic seeds needed for production of commercial seeds required by farmers.

- Research should put agricultural farmers at the heart of all variety development programmes by establishing a partnership between them and researchers.

2. The variety development programmes must contribute to the development of sustainable production systems, especially in terms of productivity, profitability and environment friendliness.

Therefore:

- The Government shall encourage local variety development to complement introductions and evaluations of varieties from foreign research institutions.
- Research shall use innovative approaches allowing tremendous increase in productivity through the use biotechnology and introduction of new genetic resources.
- Research shall be focused on priority crops defined in the National Agricultural Policy while continuing to develop new varieties for the major traditional food crops, which constitute the basis of the national food security.

3. The Government is committed to encouraging and supporting the private sector, Universities and Higher Agricultural Training Institutions to get involved in variety research and development. To this end, the Government will in particular, create an enabling environment for the private sector to invest in agricultural research by ensuring the protection of intellectual property rights and facilitating the introduction of new genetic material.
4. The Government shall continue to encourage the exchange of information and cooperation with regional and international research institutions.

To this end,

- ISAR shall continue the exchange of genetic material with countries having similar climatic conditions with an aim of accessing varieties already available at regional and international level.
- Joint research programmes with other institutions, regional and international organizations shall equally be promoted.

2.2. Variety Evaluation, Release and Registration

1. Variety evaluation, release and registration are public services and are therefore under exclusive responsibility of the State.

These phases are in fact of major importance for the seed commodity chain since they enable to: i) put in place a fair system for collecting and disseminating information allowing an assessment of qualitative and quantitative traits of varieties developed by researchers; ii) protect the rights of beneficiaries and promote open competition between public and private researchers and maintain quality standards; iii) limit certification to only registered varieties; iv) protect farmers against risks of buying inferior quality seeds.

A decree from the Minister of Agriculture will allow the establishment of a National Variety Evaluation Committee and a National Variety release Committee and determine instruction as to its composition and mode of functioning.

2. Before entering into the seed commodity chain, all varieties must pass through the process of variety evaluation, release and registration.
 - The varieties evaluation activities must conform to defined procedures based on criteria of distinctiveness, uniformity and stability ensuring that only high potential varieties are released in the seed commodity chain .
 - Varieties release procedures shall be defined by MINAGRI upon proposal by the National Variety release Committee.

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- With future involvement of the private sector in the seeds activities, varieties developed by the latter shall be subjected to same evaluation and release and registration procedures as those from the public sector.
 - Nevertheless, this process shall be simplified for varieties already approved under the ECAPAPA framework.
3. MINAGRI shall create and regularly update the National Catalogue where names of varieties, description of their merits and agronomic values shall be recorded.
- This description shall be done by variety breeders and checked by the department responsible for seed certification on the basis of tests carried out by the latter.
 - MINAGRI shall, each year, publish a list of new varieties which shall be included in the catalogue upon recommendation of the National Seed Council.
 - The catalogue shall constitute an essential tool for certification and particularly for seed quality control in the field.
4. The Government shall work with other Governments in the region to establish a common regional catalogue so that Rwandan farmers can benefit from research results carried out in neighbouring countries.

2.3. Variety Maintenance and Production of Foundation Seeds

1. The maintenance of a variety shall be regularly carried out as long as it is still in use in the seed production chain. This activity is essential in order to:
 - i) Ensure the conformity of Foundation Seeds from this variety to original characters at the time of variety release.
 - ii) Preserve the agro-ecological merits of this variety;
 - iii) Ensure the regular supply of the variety in the seed chain and consequently its availability to the farmers.
2. All varieties in use should have a detailed description which shall form a basis for the maintenance program. For each variety release, the variety breeder gives at least 1Kg of the genuine sample of this variety to the department responsible for quality control which will later on serve as a reference.
3. The seed quality control department shall work in consultation with the variety breeder or his/her representative to carry out all the regular tests on the samples of foundation seed lots resulting from successive multiplications.

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4. The variety breeder or his/her designated representative are the only qualified persons responsible for supplying Foundation Seeds required for the production of subsequent seed categories.

Maintenance methods and procedures proposed after the variety release shall be scrupulously followed by the person or institution responsible for the maintenance of this variety.

5. For all seed supplies not developed in Rwanda, maintenance shall be performed by the company that introduced them or by its local representative.

2.4. Intellectual Property Rights

1. Crop varieties developed by public research institutions remain the property of the particular performing institution and shall be used by seed producers free of charge with regard to intellectual property rights issues.
2. The Government shall adopt appropriate legislation on intellectual property rights concerning variety breeders' rights as well as conditions of the use of public obtainments by the private sector.

This registration shall have the following objectives:

- Give variety breeders, whether public or private, the opportunity to be compensated for the efforts and means invested in developing that seed variety through an intellectual property rights sharing system;
 - Constitute a motivation for sustained investment in activities of developing seed varieties;
 - Encourage the private sector to invest in the production of basic and certified seeds;
 - Encourage and reinforce a public variety development programme through payment mechanisms of public seed breeders whose varieties are used by the private sector.
3. Seed varieties developed by individuals or private companies shall remain the property of those who developed them.

2.5. Biotechnology

1. The Government shall encourage the adoption of biotechnology techniques which are not harmful to individuals and the environment and which have shown evident contribution to the agricultural and economic development of Rwanda. For that

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reason, the introduction of any technology shall be in conformity with the National Biotechnology and Bio-security Policy.

2. An *ad hoc* technical committee shall be set up within ISAR to determine which technology to introduce with the authorization of the national authority which shall be put in place in the framework of the National Biotechnology and Bio-security Policy.

2.6. Conservation of Plant Genetic Resources

1. The Government reaffirms its commitment to international conventions on conservation of plant genetic resources that it has ratified including :

The Convention on Biodiversity of Rio de Janeiro of 1992 and a Global Plan of Action concerning the Convention of Leipzig (1996) on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

2. The Government is aware of the danger presented by genetic erosion on variety development research and on agriculture in general but also the significant loss of plant material which the country experienced in the course of the last decade. Consequently, the Government commits itself to protecting and conserving the germoplasm which is still available in order to use it in future research activities.
3. The Rwanda Agricultural Research Institute (ISAR) shall be the first legal germplasm depositary and custodian.
 - In that respect, ISAR shall be provided with required human resources and means to conserve these plant genetic resources according to international standards.
 - ISAR shall organize the collection, documentation and conservation of all genetic material available with particular emphasis on endangered crop species.
 - ISAR will seek and encourage the participation of the community in the inventory and conservation of *in situ* plant material at their disposal.
4. The exchange of genetic material with other regional and international institutions shall be encouraged.

III. SEED PRODUCTION AND CONDITIONING

1. Seeds produced in Rwanda are classified into 4 categories namely:

- i) Foundation Seeds;
- ii) Basic seeds;
- iii) Certified seeds;
- iv) Quality declared seeds.

3. The production of seeds must be based on effective demand.

It is within this framework that the Government intends to develop a National Seed Master Plan involving the main stakeholders of the seed commodity chain. This plan shall determine effective needs for different seed categories and determine production methods, necessary investments and possibly imports to be made so as to respond to farmers' demand for quality seeds.

- The Government shall continue to support ISAR to improve its capacity to produce high quality Foundation Seeds, in required quantity for subsequent multiplication. To this end, it will mobilize additional funds to provide laboratories and lab equipments and shall provide additional scientific and technical personnel. The private sector shall also be encouraged to invest in this domain.
- MINAGRI information management system shall be adapted to the needs of seed chain in such a way as to ensure the collection and dissemination of information especially on preferences and needs of seed users, supply as well as distribution circuits and prices.

4. Promoting the role of the private sector in seed production shall be the engine of the seed commodity chain :

- It is within this framework that the Government intends to reduce, as soon as possible, the direct involvement of public institutions in the seed production and marketing by promoting a great participation of private enterprises and farmers' cooperatives in these activities. This process shall equally target the promotion of investment in the seed production as a profitable and attractive activity to the private sector.
- The Government departments shall continue to produce basic and certified seeds and progressively withdraw as and when conditions for the private sector to take over are in place.
- The Government shall build the capacity of associations and cooperatives which already intervene in seed production and encourage the emergence of private companies progressively as the agricultural

sector modernizes. The intervention of these actors shall be carried out according to seed legislation and will be in conformity with required quality standards.

- Particular support shall be granted for the promotion of hybrid seeds taking into account their high productive potential. In this framework, the Government shall facilitate private enterprises to import hybrid seeds or produce them in the country.
- Support to the emergence of decentralized technical service providers shall be contemplated to build the capacity of seed producers.

4. The Government recognizes that the informal seed system plays a predominant role in the seed supply to farmers and that it needs improving. For that reason, it intends to promote the quality of seeds distributed by the informal sector in order to increase its contribution to the agriculture intensification.

To this end, the following is envisaged:

- Identifying the most active actors in the informal sector and strengthening their capacity in order to help them improve the quality of their seeds and help them progressively integrate into the formal sector.
- Promoting the introduction of new, high yielding varieties in the informal sector in order to accelerate their distribution. This shall especially be done by distributing seed samples.
- Organizing demonstration sessions on the best seed selection and conservation techniques.

IV. STRATEGIC SEED SECURITY STOCK AND SEED MARKETING

1. The Government shall promote the role of farmers in relation to seed security. In this respect, seed banks shall be established and promoted at community level in order to guarantee their availability in case of a season failure or natural disaster occurrence.
2. The Government shall encourage the promotion of a high performing system of seed distribution and marketing in order to guarantee the supply and increased availability of high quality seeds to farmers.
 - To this effect, the Government shall establish an incentive framework for a stronger care of the seed commodity chain by the private sector especially with regard to storage, transportation and marketing.

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- Seed production cooperatives and private enterprises shall be encouraged to adopt high efficient marketing strategies and to collaborate with research and extension departments in order to significantly increase the adoption rate of quality seeds by farmers.
 - Through the consultative framework of seed commodity chain stakeholders: the Government shall encourage the interaction and exchange of information on seed needs and availability in order to enhance seed distribution and marketing.
3. The Government prefers seed price liberalization
- To this end it shall encourage different stakeholders to consult each other during the price setting of different seed categories.
 - However, the government can adopt measures to subsidize foundation or basic seed prices depending on needs.
4. Free distribution of seeds shall be done only under exceptional circumstances and shall be regulated by the Government.

V. SEED USE PROMOTION

1. The National Agriculture Policy fixes the reference framework for agricultural extension and the basic principles thus retained shall also apply in the seed use promotion. It is within this framework that:
- Strengthening of linkages between agricultural research, extension services and farmers organizations shall be utilized in the promotion of new varieties available on the market.
 - Communication and information programmes using a range of various techniques and materials adapted to the needs of various farmers shall be regularly developed and spread.
 - The utilization of participatory approach shall be generalized and shall allow to better take into consideration farmers' preferences as well as their effective seed needs.
 - Extension staff shall also benefit from continuous training so as to enable them master the changes related to seed technologies and extension approaches.

VI. SEED QUALITY CONTROL

1. The Government recognizes that the availability of quality seeds to farmers constitutes the basis for an improvement of agricultural productivity and consequently food security of the country. Therefore, the Government shall initiate a progressive process of disengagement from seed production activities in order to concentrate on coordination, control and regulation activities. The Government commits itself to strengthening the current seed quality control system so that it is capable of extending quality control on all components of seed commodity chain from the development of varieties, the production, conditioning and stocking up to marketing and distribution of seeds.
 - In this framework, the seed quality control department is called upon to play an important role within the Rwanda Agriculture Development Authority (RADA).
 - The department shall be provided with competent staff composed of seed inspectors and qualified laboratory technicians capable of managing all activities related to seeds control.
 - The Government shall improve and optimize the use of existing infrastructures in order to valorise investments already agreed upon. The National Seed Testing Laboratory shall be strengthened and sufficiently equipped to ensure all necessary tests are carried out in accordance with international standards.
 - The department shall maintain partnership relations with regional and international seed analysis and quality control institutions.
2. However the Government recognizes its limited capacity in controlling all quantities of seeds produced throughout the country. Hence it encourages seed producers, distributors and traders to bear the initial responsibility for the quality of seeds they produce or sell.
 - In this framework, the Government shall promote the establishment of decentralized seed quality control systems within the proximity of farmers to promote the quality of seeds. To this end, it will encourage the creation of regional quality control commissions in order to promote awareness and ownership of quality control issues by seed commodity chain stakeholders.
 - These commissions shall be trained by quality control staff assigned to the different regions of the country but will ultimately be under the responsibility of seed commodity chain stakeholders themselves.

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- The organization of seed producers and their commitment to internal quality control shall progressively lead to the adoption of a seed producers' charter.
3. The Government shall promote declared quality seed system along with certification system which shall be performed on request.
 - In this system, the seed producers shall bear the first responsibility for the quality of seeds they produce.
 - The authorized quality seed producer shall be sufficiently informed of seed quality norms/standards and apply them throughout the seed production, conditioning and storage process. Seeds which have gone through such process shall be considered by the office as being of good quality.
 - The quality control department shall carry out control tests on certain selected samples without need to inspect the entire quantity of seeds or the whole seed lots, the conformity or non-conformity of these samples to established standards shall apply to the whole production.
 4. In order to ensure that quality procedures are respected at the upstream level of the seed commodity chain, the certification of basic seeds shall be mandatory.
 5. Bearing in mind that regulation constitutes the basis for all quality control and seeds certification system, the Government shall establish seed regulations adapted to the country's seed commodity chain development. Nevertheless, the Government shall avoid introducing very restrictive legislations which would impede the development of strong seed commodity chain as well as the regular supply of quality seeds to crop producers.

The objective of such legislation shall be:

- Create awareness among seed producers and traders about the necessity to produce and market quality seeds;
 - Determine the minimum quality standards regarding seed production and marketing.
6. Taking into account the existence of the seed Law of 2003, the Ministry having agriculture in its attributions shall adapt this law to the current seed policy and those of the countries in this region in the framework of harmonization. Moreover the Ministry shall accelerate the preparation and promulgation of ministerial decrees needed to make this law effective.

The principal decrees, among others shall be on:

- Establishment of Committees in charge of Evaluating and Certifying new varieties;
- Publication of a list of varieties and creation of a national catalogue
- Release and registration of seed producers and traders;
- Regulations on production of various seed categories;
- Seed conditioning standards;
- Methods of controlling seed produced and sold;
- Charges involved in the control and certification of seeds produced and sold.

VII. SEED IMPORT AND EXPORT

1. Seed import shall be authorized to bridge the gap between seeds required and the national seed production or to acquire high potential genetic seeds which are not locally produced or which cannot be locally produced due to the required level of technology. In all such cases, seed import should not entail any risk for the environment, health or bio-security. The following considerations are required:
 - All seed imports should have prior *ad hoc* authorization from the competent department in the Ministry having agriculture in its attributions;
 - Seed import should respect quarantine rules and regulations to avoid entry into the country of diseases and pests which would otherwise compromise Rwandan agriculture;
 - A sample of each imported lot shall be conserved at the department responsible for conservation of plant genetic resources;
 - Imported seeds must comply with required quality standards related to genetic purity, have capacity to germinate and be free of diseases.
2. The promotion of seed export shall be envisaged for crops in which Rwanda has a comparative advantage in the sub-region. In any case, such exports shall be regulated in order to avoid compromising the country's seed security. The authorized departments of the Rwanda Bureau of Standards (RBS) in collaboration with those of the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources shall ensure that exported seeds comply with related international seed export standards.

VIII: FINANCING THE SEED SECTOR

1. To promote the intensification of agriculture through the use of agricultural inputs including seeds in particular, the Government shall put in place efficient and appropriate financing measures for the seed sector so as to:

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- Promote the utilization of improved seeds ;
- Improve the access to credit by private operators involved in seed production and sale ;
- Enhance poor farmers' access to seeds through credits which can be recovered after harvest.

Therefore, the Government intends to:

- Promote partnership with financial institutions capable of giving efficient and sustainable services to seed producers;
- Put at the disposal of these institutions a credit fund to finance the production, distribution and sale of seeds and/or make already existing facilities more accessible to seed commodity chain operators
- Put at the disposal of MFIs a seasonal fund to seed users to enable them access seeds and other inputs during the planting season with possibility of recovery after harvesting.
- Put in place support and capacity building mechanisms for seed producers and traders in order to help them enhance their production and also access loans;
- Support initiative aimed at promoting the inputs saving systems.

IX. COORDINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SEED POLICY

1. The implementation of the National Seed Policy shall be ensured through a strong partnership between public services, in this case, the Ministry having agriculture in its attributions and its agencies and private partners involved in seed activities under the supervision of the **National Seed Council** which shall be created for this purpose.

For this reason a National Seed Council which shall be a supreme organ responsible for guiding and supervising the implementation of the National Seed Policy shall be created by a Ministerial order.

It shall be composed, of:

- Permanent Secretary in MINAGRI
- Director General of RADA
- Director General of ISAR
- Director General Rwanda Bureau of Standards (RBS)
- Representatives from Agricultural Institutions of Higher Learning
- Head of the Unit in MINAGRI having Planning and Policy Formulation in his/her attributions
- A representative from RHODA
- A representative from the National Forests Office
- Head of Seed Development Unit in RADA
- Head of Quality Control Department in RADA

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- The Bureau of the National Consultative Framework Committee of the Seed commodity chain
- A representative from farmers' organizations
- A representative from seed production and marketing enterprises or cooperatives
- All other persons deemed pertinent by MINAGRI.

The Council shall be chaired by the Permanent Secretary of MINAGRI and the Head of the Unit in charge of seed development in RADA shall assume the Permanent Secretariat.

2. The Government recognizes the importance of the consultative framework initiated by the seed commodity chain stakeholders and is committed to supporting its structuring and organization.
3. The roles of different actors involved in the implementation of the Seed Policy are defined as follows:

3.1. The National Seed Council shall have the followings role:

- Supervise and guide the implementation of the National Seed Policy ;
- Formulate and update the political orientations and strategies of the seed policy ;
- Adopt the National Seed Policy and ensure its implementation ;
- Advice the Ministry having Agriculture in its attributions on all affairs related to seeds.

3.2. Rwanda Office for Agricultural Development

- Is the technical arm of the Council;
- Coordinates and monitors all seed commodity chain activities through its Seed Development Unit;
- Ensures regular monitoring of seed activities;
- Ensures the promotion of seed use;
- Ensures capacity building for seed commodity chain stakeholders
- Ensures seed quality control at all levels through its quality control department;
- Its Production Unit assumes the role of Permanent Secretariat of the National Seed Council.

3.3. The Rwanda Agricultural Research Institute (ISAR)

- Insures the development of new varieties for producers;
- Produces foundation seeds required;
- Ensures the maintenance of varieties in circulation;

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- Is responsible for the conservation of plant genetic resources of the country.

3.4. National Variety Evaluation Committee

This committee shall play the following role:

- Defines varieties evaluation procedures;
- Evaluates the potential the varieties are likely to contribute to agriculture;
- Recommends the best varieties for release and introduction into the seed commodity chain ;
- Recommends the elimination of obsolete varieties.

The National Varieties Evaluation Committee must, among other things, be comprised of representatives of MINAGRI and its research institutions, extension services, farmers associations and the private sector.

3.5. The National Variety release Committee

The role of this Commission shall be especially to:

- Propose for release and multiplication new varieties ;
- Determine varieties eligible for certification ;
- Recommend relative charges for certification ;
- Advise the national department responsible for quality control.

The National Variety release Committee shall be composed, among others, of representatives from:

- i) Research and seed production, plant protection and extension Departments;
- ii) Seed commodity chain consultative framework stakeholders
- iii) High Agriculture Training Institutes
- iv) Private seed producers.

3.6. Rwanda Bureau of Standards (RBS)

In collaboration with RAB quality control department, the Rwanda Bureau of Standards shall be in charge of seeds certification and in collaboration with RAB shall control the seed import and export activities.

3.7. Seed commodity chain Consultative Framework

It shall be comprised of representatives of all seed commodity chain stakeholders, and shall have the following mandate:

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- Create a platform for exchange of information and consultation for seed commodity chain stakeholders
- Facilitate the implementation of the Seed Policy and the National Seed Master Plan ;
- Contribute to the critical examination of the seed policy and laws
- Represent the actors in different national fora.

3.8. Private seed producers and traders

This group is comprised of individuals, associations, cooperatives and private societies involved in production, distribution and sale of basic or certified seeds. It constitutes an important linkage in the implementation of the seed policy.

Outline of the National Seed Policy Implementation

