ISSD Africa newsletter





Newsletter 4; April 2013

Editorial

Greetings to all our readers in Africa and beyond. As we share this, the fourth and penultimate edition of the ISSD Africa newsletter, taskforce delegates and consultants from eight African countries, together with representatives of international and national partner organizations and programmes, Regional Economic Communities, knowledge sharing networks and representatives of related initiatives in seed sector development are recently returned from the ISSD Africa synthesis workshop in Kumasi Ghana. Hosted at the college of Agriculture and Natural Resources of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), the Integrated Seed Sector Development (ISSD) in Africa programme draws its second phase to a close with the concluding synthesis workshop.

In the forthcoming final edition of the newsletter series, a summary of the main synthesis findings shall be presented along with other interesting outcomes of the programme, including future prospects, collaborations and activities. We are happy to be able to announce that the activities and collaboration in Ghana have already resulted in the recognition of Ghana's ISSD taskforce as a legitimate think tank and facilitator for development. The taskforce is an active proponent in the development of Ghana's very first specific seed policy, together with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Republic of Ghana, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to the United Nations, and Centre for Development Innovation, Wageningen UR.

Coming back to this edition, you can enjoy reading about the experiences shared in Malawi and Zambia during their respective seed entrepreneurship roundtables and national synthesis workshops, highlighting the systemic link between entrepreneurship in the informal, intermediary and formal seed systems, related programmes and policies, and a range of institutional challenges to the development of a more pluralistic and vibrant seed sector. Burundi also shares its experiences during the seed entrepreneurship assessment with striking resemblances to what was shared further south of the equator. Following that, we

have a special contribution from the Access to Seeds Index initiative. The initiative shares its approach to encouraging leading seed companies to increase their contribution to the development of smallholder farmers in emerging economies. Abishkar Subedi then shares news on the recently conducted assessment on the seed-development interventions of IFAD in country loan projects. Abishkar Subedi of CDI, together with the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) of the Netherlands coordinated the assessment in five IFAD loan countries. In the final article, CDI shares its point of view on the role of knowledge institutes in innovation systems. The Dutch call it the 'golden triangle', referring to partnerships among government, private sector and knowledge institutes, but is all that glimmers truly golden?

We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter. For further information on the programme, the consortium, and other related activities, please refer to the final page where a list of contacts and resources can be found.

Kind regards,

Gareth Borman, Marja Thijssen, Abishkar Subedi and Karen Verhoosel



In October 2012, a delegation of Ethiopian seed entrepreneurs visited the Netherlands on an international trade mission. Here seen at Agrico, a Dutch seed potato cooperative with a global focus.



Entrepreneurship as a driver for sustainability in the seed sector: a reflection on the past Malawi and Zambia assessments

Pietro Chiappini Carpena and Gareth Borman

Seed entrepreneurship assessments reveal underlying challenges to the seed sectors of Malawi and Zambia

Asking the guestion, how can the important contribution made by the informal and intermediary seed systems be supported, promoted and strengthened, important insights are gained into the more systemic challenges of doing just that. Programmes and policies have a fundamental influence over the environment that either enables or restricts seed sector players in their entrepreneurship. This becomes most apparent when looking for incentives and other opportunities afforded to seed producers in the informal and intermediary systems, as, in comparison, many players in the formal arena are empowered to lobby for more appropriate changes, suited to their needs and demands. This is likely due to the more transparent contribution they are making to agricultural and economic development, whereas the informal activities remain more in the shadows. However, we are increasingly aware of the relative importance of the informal and intermediary systems for disseminating seed.

Why is entrepreneurship important for achieving a dynamic and service-oriented seed sector?

In the first place, making a business out of seed production and marketing provides jobs and income to those directly involved, which could be considered a reason to stimulate entrepreneurship. But it is certainly not limited to that; through increasing the availability of, and farmers' access to quality seed of superior varieties seed entrepreneurship will contribute to enhancing farmers' income and household food security. The economic importance of the availability of such affordable high quality seed is higher than the value of the seed business in itself. Ultimately, the seed sector as a whole provides an essential service to the larger agricultural production system, and the value of this service is higher than the monetary turnover of the seed sector.

In this light, and in light of the fact that in so many African seed sectors, the predominant source of trusted planting material is within the informal arena, different forms of entrepreneurship to those currently practiced in the truly commercialised formal systems need to be considered. Improving the availability of quality seed of – here's the important part - the right varieties at affordable prices requires the integration of the formal and informal systems.

Scaling-up local seed business in Zambia and Malawi

Self Help Africa (SHA) is actively engaged in scaling up local seed businesses and bringing experiences from practice into the policy arena at the national and

international level. This is taking place also through the work that the Centre for Development Innovation (CDI) of Wageningen UR is leading under the Integrated Seed Sector Development (ISSD) in Africa programme, in collaboration with the African Union Commission's African Seed and Biotechnology Programme (ASBP). The goal of ISSD Africa is to support the development of a vibrant and pluralistic seed sector in Africa, one that is more accommodating of the different needs of farmers and entrepreneurs. ISSD Africa strives to support the development of programmes and policies that are coherent with the realities and practices of farmers and entrepreneurs.



Millet selection in Zambia: millet is among a wide range of crops appreciated by ISSD

It must be acknowledged that to a large extent, the professionalization and sustainable commercialisation of entrepreneurship among growers and organisations of growers can be supported by focussed tailored capacity development oriented interventions into the informal and intermediary seed systems, but in order to deliver a product both superior and differentiated to the needs of a wider range of farmers, institutional innovation is required. To help consolidate this point, consider the opportunities afforded to emergent seed businesses targeting producers of marginalised or neglected, but traditional and important local food and multipurpose crops, for which there is significant local demand. How sustainable a business model is such, particularly if producers have to cover the costs of inputs, overheads, value addition and marketing, all at an affordable price to consumers, whilst including a margin to recover the costs of licensing, certification and tax, which are standard for the formal system? The key word in the



former statement is 'standard'. The point is that a linear philosophy of developing the seed sector from one that is predominantly informal to one that is comprehensively regulated by applying a standard approach to availing varieties and early generation materials, incentivising breeders and entrepreneurs, assessing the credit-worthiness of entrepreneurs, and for certifying seed quality is inappropriate in the context of complex and robust African seed sectors. One size does not fit all, and trying to squeeze into that size is not flattering or even possible for all shapes and forms.

Supporting the development of programmes and policies coherent with the realities of farmers

The ISSD Africa seed entrepreneurship assessment provides powerful insights into the strengths and weaknesses of, and the opportunities and threats to seed entrepreneurs operating all systems of seed production and marketing/distribution. The assessment has collected information on a range of interesting, novel and exciting incentive mechanisms, initiatives and programme led interventions that may warrant scaling-up.

During the national synthesis workshops in December 2012 and January 2013, some of the talking points on the sustainability of local seed business and alternate models of seed entrepreneurship in Zambia and Malawi respectively, were the following:

- the lion's share of hybrid maize in resource allocation;
- the Farm Input Subsidy Programme and Food Reserve Agency stimulating hybrid maize demand;
- genetic resources erosion and the loss of agrobiodiversity in situ;
- promoting local varieties to increase farmer choices;
- different roles for private and public breeding programmes;
- intellectual property rights, plant breeders rights and access and benefit sharing;
- SADC/ACTESA COMESA harmonisation and UPOV;
- incentives for private sector to engage in production and marketing of marginalised crops and varieties;
- enabling for the formal release of landraces;
- establishment of formal institution to ensure availability of varieties and early generation seed;
- strengthening the capacity of national research systems to adequately address market demands;
- improving the research-extension-farmer linkage;
- participatory plant breeding and varietal selection;
- including marginalized farmers and groups within the reach of formal seed systems;
- increased seed subsidy or greater private sector engagement;
- integrated operation of seed sector regulation, input supply and marketing/distribution;
- public-private partnerships for sustainability;

As you can see, discussing ways to promote and strengthen entrepreneurship in the seed sector gives rise to a number of underlying systemic and complex challenges/issues. This indicates both that these issues are on the table and that there's a relatively common understanding, but also that entrepreneurship is not just a stand-alone theme, but crosscutting and an entry point, or a vehicle, for addressing sector dynamics.

Lessons learnt

The experience in Malawi and Zambia shows that putting many (different) heads around the table draws a diversity of topics for discussion and generates common understanding. It is an important step forward in facilitating prioritisation, agenda-setting and action. It also reaffirms the potential for multi-stakeholder collaboration in addressing complex challenges.

Entrepreneurship is not a stand-alone theme in seed sector development, but rather a lens through which perspective is gained into the systemic operation of the sector and it's systems and into the dynamics of the seed value chain(s) itself. This lends to the nomination of entrepreneurship as a driving force in seed sector development, the sustainability of which requires integration of the formal and informal systems and partnership between public, private and civil society institutions, including those generating and disseminating knowledge and innovation.

Another important lesson for the programmes that SHA coordinates and contributes to, in the countries where it operates, is that beyond building the capacities of seed growers and entrepreneurs, in the quest for scaling up local seed business and the like, not all can be achieved at the grassroots level. By supporting, facilitating and actively engaging in multi-stakeholder processes for developing a more enabling environment for a pluralistic, vibrant and entrepreneur driven seed sector, truly institutional change can be achieved.



The caption transposed onto the photograph (left) captures the context, but not mentioned is that the Honourable Prof Peter Nelson Mwanza, MP, Minister of Agriculture and Food Security is seated front row centre.

Pietro is sustainable agricultural advisor at SHA, and coordinator under the ISSD Africa collaboration with CDI. Gareth is ISSD Africa assistant coordinator at CDI.



Seed business in an embryonic phase: reflections from the ISSD seed entrepreneurship assessment in Burundi

Alexis Ntamavukiro, Cyriaque Simbashizubwoba and Astere Bararyenya

The seed entrepreneurship assessment in Burundi shows that the seed business is, in general, at an embryonic stage with a range in different starting points regarding seed systems and entrepreneurial motives. The major challenges identified during this analysis include the common use of highly advanced generations of seed, with corresponding low quality. Improvement strategies in the field of production, distribution and marketing of seed in Burundi are limited.

Common understanding of seed entrepreneurship

The different seed systems identified have common ground in their respective understanding of seed entrepreneurship. The range of entrepreneurs are unified in their targeting of the following key elements: investment; innovation; self-reliance in production techniques; and established market demand. Seed entrepreneurs are motivated by foremost by profit and appreciate that their product must be of high quality to meet specific consumer demands.

The definitions of seed entrepreneurship by different seed projects and programmes have some common elements. It is agreed that entrepreneurship is based upon individuals' decisions for engaging in economic activities of seed production, and that the roles of government and the private sector have to be separated. Technology and innovation are also key elements for entrepreneurship in the views of these programmes.

Government: an enabler

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Department for Promotion of Seeds and Seedlings (DPSP), the essential information for seed entrepreneurs resides in seed production standards, norms and regulations. The Government's role is to create and enable a favourable environment for seed entrepreneurship.

Testimony of a Bean Grower:

"After adopting the technology, I have got surprising results". Mr. Leonard Rwasa lives in the Rwabiriro village in Mwumba Commune. He succeeds to obtain 5 tonnes production of dry beans per season. With this, he realises a turnover of more than 3 million Burundian Francs (~Euro 1,470). This is why he has been ranked as the best producer in the province during the year 2011 by the Agricultural and Livestock Provincial Department of Ngozi. He was honoured by FAO on October 18th, 2011, at the start of the agricultural year.

Burundi's ISSD programme is a practical approach

It considers the three co existing seed systems clusters (informal, intermediary, and formal). Quick market analysis clearly displays how most producers access seed from informal systems. Whilst striving to increase

productivity, consumers gradually turn to intermediary and then formal institutions. Once entrepreneurs in the intermediate cluster meet fully the needs of the seed market, they enter into the formal system. This makes no mention of the regulatory environment for assuring that such demands are met, and this is where the focus of ISSD comes in.

In order to sustainably promote entrepreneurship in the three clusters of seed systems, those need to be addressed. In Burundi, the strategic directions are as follows:

- i. facilitating access to technologies and basic seed;
- stimulating private initiative and strengthening public-private partnership;
- iii. building capacities with grant allocations to specific identified needs;
- iv. improving the business environment through collaboration with strategic partners and projects operational at an institutional level.



Seed markets in Burundi are still predominantly informal



However, promising technologies have high potential for commercialisation.

Alexis and Cyriaque work for IFDC in the CATALIST 2 programme; Astere is consultant under ISSD Africa.



Access to Seeds Index: leveraging contributions from leading seed companies



Access to Seeds Index

Ido Verhagen

The Access to Seeds Index is an initiative to encourage leading seed companies to increase their contribution to the development of smallholder farmers in emerging economies. When the running appraisal project leads to a positive conclusion, the first Index will be developed in 2014.

Since its first edition in 2008, the Access to Medicine Index (ATMI) has proven to be successful in leveraging transparency and business contribution to social change in the pharmaceutical sector. ATMI is a Dutch initiative sponsored by the Gates Foundation. This example raised the idea of exploring the potential to replicate this intervention to other sectors. Recently the project investigating the feasibility and potential of an 'Access to Seeds Index' started.

Essential element

The Access to Seeds Index (ATSI) aims to address seeds manufacturing companies to utilize their means, knowledge and influence to the benefit of farmer development in developing countries. The project is initiated by the Dutch government. It takes the view that access to quality seeds for farmers is an essential element in creating an enabling environment to unleash the potential of the rural economy and improve food security. International seed companies have the potential and responsibility to play an important role in unleashing this potential, in addition to existing local seed systems.

It goes without saying that the role of medicine in health promotion does not compare with the role of seeds in agricultural development, if only for the simple reason that medication is likely to have the same effect on patients around the globe, whereas the effect of seeds varies across different ecosystems. The business dynamics in both industries differ too.

Another difference is that where certain regions simply lack the availability of medicine, this is not the case with seeds. Multiple local formal and informal seed systems exist. The last thing the ASTI aims to achieve is to become a vehicle for multinational seed companies to outcompete existing seed systems. Rather should be investigated how companies, next to their own business and value chains, can contribute to building the capacity of those local seed systems.

Multi-stakeholder dialogue

All in all, enough reasons to start an appraisal of the potential of an Access to Seeds Index, before taking the decision to develop a first edition. That's the process we go through this year. First, based on desk research and case studies hypotheses for the Index are formulated. These are discussed and fine-tuned in a multi-

stakeholder dialogue in two Round Tables. The result provides the basis to develop a high level methodology for the ATSI.

Likely the initiative raises questions like: what are the indicators, what methodology is used, which companies will be included in the ranking? Since the design of the Index is the result of the stakeholder dialogue, final answers cannot be given yet. Nevertheless, preliminary studies and discussions, have led preparatory proposals.

Mutual respect

What stands is the philosophy of the Access to Medicine Index. The big idea is simple (1) create index indicators based on on-going stakeholder dialogue, providing companies with a common view giving direction to their access activities (2) give credit to access behaviour of companies, whilst creating transparency on best practices that can be learned from by others and raising awareness on corporate contributions; (3) rank companies in a comparable and quantitative way to encourage positive competition to take an extra step stimulated by investor appreciation, media attention and public opinion.

Even more than external pressure, mutual respect between competitors is what makes companies want to achieve a higher ranking or prolong a leading position. Rather than blaming and shaming, the Index gives credit to companies for their access activities or for refraining from bad practices, identified as undesirable in the multi-stakeholder dialogue.

Companies are invited to participate by providing information on their access activities. The ATSI likely addresses activities in the fields of advocacy, RandD and capacity building. In each field it looks at what companies say, do and achieve. Actual programmes and practices count most: intentions are nice, results are better. Companies unwilling to participate are assessed on publicly available data. This likely affects the rank.

Scoping the Index

Before developing indicators, the scope of the index is defined. What kind of best practices with regard to which crops, which farmers and which countries will be taken into account? And also: which companies will be included?

A broad crop focus is proposed. Staple crops cannot be ignored from a food security perspective. Vegetables are important for a balanced diet and offer most potential for small holder commercial activity. The need for intercropping and crop rotation also advocates a broad crop focus. Point of discussion is non-food cash crops;



drivers for farmer development but less linked to food security.

The proposal is to focus on small commercial and subsistence farmers, excluding large scale farmers. Most added value of increased private sector contribution is with small commercial farmers, having an intrinsic motivation to develop in farming and adopt new techniques, inputs and business models. At the same time, the Index should also value the provision of opportunities to subsistence farmers to upgrade to small commercial, one of the pathways out of poverty. The real question is where to set the upper boundary between small and large scale farmers.

As with the Access to Medicine Index, the proposal for the country scope is to include activities that are focussed on countries on the World Bank's LMIC-list.

A precondition for the final selection of companies is mutual identification and respect between the firms. One could look at largest market shares. But this implies that leaders in certain crops or large regional seed companies active in LMIC countries fall out of scope. Therefore all three dimensions for company selection are proposed.

Ido is a consultant at Boer & Croon and member of the project team at the Access to Seeds Foundation

Recent news: assessment of seed-development activities in IFAD funded loan projects

Abishkar Subedi

Many IFAD country loan programmes include technical, market, regulatory and/or policy activities for supporting public and private seed sector development. Considering the complex nature of the seed sector, issues related to national technical capacities, institutional development, policy environment, regulatory framework and seed market demand and supply continue to be critical issues that need to be better assessed for enhanced project design, implementation, monitoring and impact.

With this overarching background, the IFAD Policy and Technical Advisory Division (PTA) invited the Centre for Development and innovation (CDI) of Wageningen UR and the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) to organise an assessment in five countries: Nepal; Niger; Philippines; Sudan; and Uganda, with field-level assessments carried out in both Nepal and Uganda. The specific aim of this assessment was to produce "how to" guidelines in

support of design, implementation and monitoring of seed-related projects in IFAD country programmes.

From this assessment, and by harnessing the experiences gained during the implementation of the Integrated Seed Sector Development (ISSD) Programme in Africa, the activity resulted in a summary report and a series of technical notes which covered the various key aspects of the seed sector, namely: a) promoting integrated seed sector development; b) seed systems analysis; c) seed value chain analysis; d) seed intervention landscape analysis; and e) seed enabling environment analysis. These technical notes will now be tested in a selection of programme design missions and will be further refined based on new experiences.

Abishkar is ISSD Africa advisor at CDI, and together with colleagues at KIT, consultant to IFAD for the country loan funded projects assessment.

Going for gold in innovation partnerships: the role of knowledge institutes in agriculture and food systems

Gareth Borman

This article provides a brief summary of relevant information shared by Wigboldus, van der Lee, Borman, Buchanan and Hijweege in the policy paper entitled Going for gold in innovation partnerships responsiveness to food insecurity in Africa (2011). The paper is a synthesis from two volumes of the full study that was commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation. Full texts are freely downloadable from the WUR Library Catalogue.

Food and nutrition security as an outcome of food and agriculture system performance

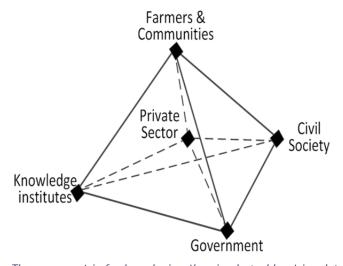
Though the increase in food availability has kept pace with soaring population numbers, in absolute numbers of people, food insecurity has increased over the past decades, while at the same time threats to food security are gaining momentum. Complex dynamics involved in achieving food and nutrition security ask for appropriate governance in terms of food system performance as well as governance of related innovation processes.



Innovation governance involves connecting innovation across dimensions, levels and sectors. This not only relates to regulation, but very much to the creation of an enabling context for the optimal performance of the food system. This enabling context also concerns the facilitation of collaborative innovation processes in connection with food systems.

The 'Golden Triangle'

This so-called 'golden triangle' has been instrumental in Dutch advances in agriculture, livestock production and horticulture and has brought prosperity and food and nutrition security to the Dutch. The model portrays the partnership among government, private sector and knowledge institutes. Notwithstanding the success of this model, questions can be raised as to whether all that glimmers in this triangular partnership is gold. The kind of food and agriculture system that has emerged has brought damage in the form of environmental degradation, and is heavily dependent on foreign natural resources such as imported animal feed. The associated ecological footprint is unlikely to be affordable or desirable to most African countries. In addition, the 'golden triangle' fails to represent the role of civil society, including the likes of producer organisations, which plays a key role in agricultural innovation in Africa. Hence, what may be considered golden in industrialised Holland, may not carry the same value in foreign currencies of Africa. To be frank, the notion of a prescribed formula for innovation systems within the complex institutional landscapes of African agricultures really lacks lustre.



The argument is for broadening the simple 'golden triangle' model for further stakeholder inclusion.

The 'innovation system' perspective does nevertheless provide a basis for a broader understanding of who needs to play what interactive role in enhancing food and nutrition security in Africa. Multi-stakeholder processes and partnerships are a progressive step in challenging the ingenuity of prevailing institutions.

What are innovation systems?

"[Networks of] Organizations, enterprises, individuals focused on bringing new products, new processes, and new forms of organization into economic use, together with the institutions and policies that affect their behaviour and performance. The innovation systems concept embraces not only the science suppliers but the totality and interaction of actors involved in innovation. It extends beyond the creation of knowledge to encompass the factors affecting demand for and use of knowledge in novel and useful ways." (Rajalahti, Janssen and Pehu, 2008). Innovation systems can be identified at different levels, and in relation to different domains (e.g. environment, agriculture, health). Due to the complexity of issues involved, food and nutrition security requires (actors at) different levels and domains of innovation systems to work in unison. This requires different forms of 'orchestration'.

Partnerships for development

Public and private actors are not always an easy combination. Conflicts may occur as to what should take pre-eminence: economic viability, social equity or environmental integrity. The real challenge is to develop partnerships along the lines of big and strategic challenges, such as addressing the challenges to 21st century food and agriculture systems.

The importance in innovation partnerships to interlink players and help them interact more effectively has been highlighted in many studies. Contemporarily, there is the need to go beyond knowledge sharing, with the inclusion of more process facilitation, involving individuals or organisations that can play flexible roles. These roles could be played by individuals from any of the key players the innovation partnership. However, knowledge institutes are particularly well suited to provide those services.

The role of knowledge institutes

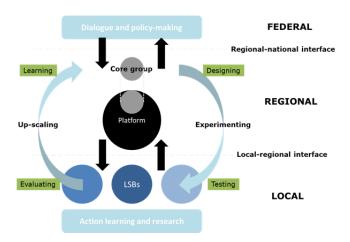
The first association that people have regarding the work of knowledge institutes relates to the role of science and technology. Science & technology has won its spurs in many cases of innovation for development, particularly at the level of product and process innovation. But, in the complex context of our perceived future milieu, innovation needs to be taken to a next level. This involves a two-pronged approach for the role of knowledge institutes: 1) Improving innovation effectiveness through e.g. more interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and integrative which (beyond science) research; and, 2) transforming the way in food system operate.

Putting the concept into practice: partnerships for seed sector development

The partnerships and innovation component of the ISSD Ethiopia programme aims at solving jointly-defined development challenges in the seed sector by collaborating with those institutions that are unable to address these challenges on their own.



This modality is comprised of regional partnership platforms and core groups. The core group, comprised of a select number of key stakeholders from public, private, research and civil society sectors, forms the decision-making body of the regional partnership platform. Partnership projects aim to initiate change through continuous and iterative adjustments in the seed sector that generate knowledge, facilitate learning and feed into policy dialogue. The objective is institutional change, as only lasting (or at least sustainable on a contextual basis) systems change can be achieved through the endorsement of the critical mass of those affected.



The challenges faced by the seed sector are complex, systemic and cannot be solved by independent linear pathways. Key to overcoming these challenges is the inclusion of sufficient stakeholders in the seed sector for

pulling innovation in the direction of market opportunity. Partnership interventions are designed to bring together the operators in the value chain (seed producers and marketers), the supporters (NGO's and universities) and the enablers (government agencies). Bringing together all important stakeholders is key not only in the learning process, but also for identifying common goals, joint interests and mutual benefits.

Partnerships; however, do not happen spontaneously. Finding mutual benefit among multiple stakeholders and encouraging shared responsibility and accountability is paramount. From experience, the choice of individual facilitators who can broker these partnerships between individuals and institutions is crucial. Such a facilitator's competencies should include: good communication, mediation and contextualization skills; a positive and energetic attitude for motivating others; the ability to think strategically; and having extensive and strategic networks valuable for making linkages to resourceful parties. In addition, it is important that this individual is seen as independent for trust to be effectively established, therefore enabling resourceful linkages to be opened up and for inspiring others to participate in the process. Having a good understanding of the key issues in that context from an objective and comprehensive overview, and an intrinsic link to relevant knowledge and technology are enormous assets. To this extent, ISSD Ethiopia utilises the strategic positioning of universities in the Ethiopian seed sector for facilitating its intervention process.

Gareth is ISSD Africa assistant coordinator at CDI.



See also our ISSD websites:

http://www.cdi.wur.nl/UK/programmes/Projects/ISSD_Ethiopia/http://www.cdi.wur.nl/UK/programmes/Projects/ISSD_Africa/

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