

MINISTRY PAPER 85/2018

THE NATIONAL SEED POLICY AND ACTION PLAN

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 Tabling of the National Seed Policy and Action Plan as a Green Paper.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The National Seed Policy and Action Plan was approved as a Green Paper by Cabinet Decision #35/16 dated 18 October 2016. The policy has been developed based on the recognized need for Jamaica to increase agricultural production and productivity to meet the country's food security needs, import substitution and exports to generate foreign exchange and reduce the trade deficit. The agricultural sector is critical to achieving these national objectives as it generally supplies vegetables, legumes, fruits, roots, tubers and condiments for domestic consumption and agro-processing.
- 2.2 The ready availability of adaptable varieties of high quality seeds is one of the steps in improving production and productivity. Seed within the context of this policy means parts of agricultural, forestry and horticultural plants intended for sowing or planting purposes. Increased farm productivity is largely based on the yield of seed acting together with other farm inputs. One of the serious problems in crop production is the inability of farmers to know how their planting material will perform before committing their resources into crop establishment.
- 2.3 Jamaica's domestic seed industry is not well developed as most planting material is from farmer saved seeds or imported. Seeds are produced and distributed locally by several key players, namely, Government (including commodity organizations), research institutions, private nursery operators, commercial and subsistence producers and farmers organizations. Private sector involvement in certified seed production is limited for most crops, so the public sector is expected to meet the demand for locally produced planting material for key crops. The public sector seed programme is constrained by inadequate human resources for key skills, lack of funding for production and distribution activities, limited production capacity and stealing of the crops used for seed production.
- 2.4 In addition, Government's agricultural and food security programmes and projects are targeted towards improving production of critical crops, for which the availability of locally produced planting material are inadequate and have negatively impacted on the rapid expansion of these programmes. This situation has hampered the efforts of Government to adequately tackle the high food import bill, increase export earnings from the agricultural sector and increase the income of producers and other stakeholders along

the value chain. In order to meet the objectives of national agricultural and food security policies, the seed system needs to be significantly improved to provide adequate, quality planting material to farmers on a timely basis.

3.0 Highlights of the National Seed Policy

3.1 The policy seeks to address the areas of research, plant breeding, varietal evaluation, seed multiplication, processing, storage, quality control, marketing, promotion and protection of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. Provision is made for the implementation of an appropriate institutional framework, building of technical and institutional capacity, promulgation of seed legislation, financing strategy and a communications programme.

3.2 The goal of the policy is:

“To establish a sustainable seed system that ensures a consistent and reliable supply of clean, affordable and accessible seed in support of agricultural production, productivity, food security and biodiversity.”

3.3 The objectives of the policy are to:

- i) Facilitate development, evaluation and maintenance of pest resistant/ tolerant, high yielding varieties that are adaptive to given local agro-ecological zones and challenges posed by climate change.
- ii) Increase availability and access to clean seed to meet production requirements.
- iii) Improve regulation and monitoring of the seed industry to ensure adherence to quality standards.
- iv) Improve the sustainable marketing and distribution of seeds.
- v) Protect national plant genetic resources.

4.0 Policy Recommendations

4.1 Institutional Considerations

4.1.1 The Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries will be responsible for implementation of the National Seed Policy and Action Plan. The main bodies proposed by the policy to support implementation of the policy are outlined below.

- i) A National Seed Committee (NSC) will serve as an advisory body responsible for oversight and coordination of the Seed Policy and Plan.
- ii) A Varietal Release Committee (VRC), which will be a sub-committee of the NSC, will develop and implement a mechanism for orderly release of new varieties of crops, whether imported or locally developed.

- iii) A seed certification agency shall be established and charged with the responsibility of conducting the necessary field inspections and laboratory tests aimed at providing the necessary quality checks and assistance. It will also be responsible for the licensing of private sector inspectors and seed analysts to support its certification and quality control work.
- iv) The legislation for the Protection of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (2013) established a Management Authority which is mandated to provide guidance on policy and legal measures that provide for the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources and the equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of their use. At present, this Management Authority is being housed within the Research and Development Division of the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries.

4.2 Legislative Considerations

4.2.1 The implementation of the National Seed Policy and Action Plan will require the promulgation of new legislation to support the seed industry and protect plant breeders' rights. It will also require a review of existing legislation and regulations.

- The national seed legislation will be promulgated to ensure reliable standards of seed quality, protect seed suppliers and users and develop a quality-oriented seed industry.
- The plant variety protection legislation will be subsumed under the national seed legislation to ensure the rights of breeders of new varieties are protected.

5.0 Implementation

5.1 The National Seed Plan outlines the framework of activities that will be critical in implementing the National Seed Policy, thus improving Jamaica's seed system. The National Seed Policy will be implemented over a period of ten (10) years and is projected to cost \$214.4 million. It is expected that this policy will create the framework to guide development and direction of the seed industry by addressing gaps in the current system and by taking advantage of opportunities to increase domestic seed production.



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