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## Definitions as per this Policy document

1. **Breeders' seed**-is a product of breeder. It is highly a pure seed of a variety and it is harvested from nucleolus.
2. **Basic seed**- is a progeny of breeder's seed. It is limited in quantities and is utilized to produce certified seed.
3. **Certified seed**- it is the progeny of basic seed. This is the stock farmers use for planting. It can be planted three times becoming the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations.
4. **Variety** or cultivar- is an assemblage of cultivated plants which is clearly distinguished by any characters (morphology, phenology, physiological cytological, chemical or others) which when reproduced (sexually or asexually) retains its distinguishing characters.
5. **Local variety** or land race is one which has evolved over a period of time under particular agro-ecological conditions of a defined area.
6. **Genetically modified organisms**- result from direct alteration of the genetic material of living cells in order to make them capable of producing new substances or performing new functions.
7. **Off-type plant**- a plant or part of the plant which deviates in respect of any characteristics of plants or parts of plant of the inbred line, cross or variety in question.
8. **Elite materials**- varieties or populations of high quality which has been carefully built up over several years of research, hybridization and selection.

## Acronyms

CBD:	Convention on Biological Diversity
DAR:	Department of Agricultural Research
DOC:	Department of Crops Services
DOM:	Department of Marketing
DFS:	Department of Field Services
DPPA:	Department of Planning and Policy Analysis
DUS:	Distinctness, Uniformity and Stability
FAO-UN:	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FoA:	Faculty of Agriculture
GoL:	Government of Lesotho
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
GMO:	Genetically Modified Organism
IPRs:	Intellectual Property Rights
ISTA:	International Seed Testing Association
MAFS:	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
MTICM:	Ministry of Trade and Industry, Cooperatives and Marketing
NGOs:	Non-Governmental organisations
NSP:	National Seed Policy
NUL:	National University of Lesotho
NVC:	National Variety Catalogue
NVRC:	National Variety Release Committee
OECD:	Organisation of Economic cooperation and Development
QDS:	Quality Declared Seed
SADC:	Southern African Development Community
SSD:	Seed Services Division
TCP:	Technical Cooperation Programme
TRIP:	Trade Related Intellectual Rights
VCU:	Value for Cultivation and Use
WTO:	World Trade Organisation

## Executive Summary

In line with Vision 2020, World Food Summit Declaration, Millennium Development Goals, Dar-Es-Salaam Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in the SADC Region and the Agricultural Sector Strategy the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) has developed the National Seed Policy. The Policy is the declaration of intent by the MAFS on how the seed sector should develop and operate. The seed sector is key for the achievement of sustainable agricultural production and food security.

This policy paper is the result of an extensive and reiterative process of reflection and elaboration with wide participation of stakeholders, supported by the Technical Cooperation Programme of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The process of consultations and workshops focused on the following partners in the seed sector: non-governmental organizations, directors of the MAFS, extension staff, farmers, farmer organizations, private seed companies, seed distributors, seed growers etc.

As a background in the review process, participants took into consideration, the role agriculture plays in contributing to the growth of the national economy, in terms of GDP and export earnings. However, seed which is a leading input in achieving increased agricultural productivity and overall national agricultural production was not easily available to farmers. It also noted that, the goals and objectives of the draft seed policy are in line with the government's agricultural policies. When a seed policy is put in place, it would accelerate the achievements of the objectives and goals of the agricultural policy which are directed towards the growth of agriculture, enhancement of profitability through competition both internally and outside, poverty alleviation, and also to attract people to go into agriculture as a sustainable business.

To achieve these objectives and goals, the review workshop recognizes the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in the seed programme, as primary and important to the provision of improved quality seed to farmers in the country. To this effect, all the players of the seed industry were identified and roles and responsibilities assigned and to be supported by Government when the need arises.

The stakeholders and the accompanying roles/functions are summarized as follows:

1. Department of Agricultural Research: Responsible for varietal introductions, germplasm and gene bank management, variety improvement, variety maintenance, field trials, release of varieties, breeder and basic seed production,
2. Variety Release Committee will be established and mandated to handle release of varieties through established procedures and this will be appointed by the MAFS,
3. Department of Crop Services: Field inspection, seed quality control and certification, prepare a directory of NGOs, and prepare training programmes to train them,
4. Legislative instruments would be enacted to regulate seed production, marketing, imports and exports of seeds and plant products, and the enforcement of plant breeders' rights,
5. Private sector participation in Seed Industry: the MAFS would create an enabling environment for the private sector to participate in seed production and marketing,
6. Community Based Programmes: Government will support development of community based programmes as part of recognizing and strengthening the role of the informal sector,
7. Emergency Seed Supply: The Government would respond appropriately to emergency seed situations, especially in times of drought and frost in the country,
8. A National Seed Committee is to be composed to function as an apex body to deal with policy issues. The membership is proposed to consist of most key stakeholders,
9. National Seed Stakeholders Forum: This would be an annual event to be facilitated by MAFS, to provide a forum for a feed back to progress in the seed industry,
10. National Small-scale Traders Associations and Cooperatives: MAFS would facilitate its formation to serve as a lobby on government's investment policy reforms and also promote information exchange.

## 1. Background

Lesotho needs sustainable economic growth in order to alleviate poverty, improve food security and enhance employment opportunities for its people. The Government of Lesotho (GoL) recognises the importance of agriculture in economic transformation since 80% of the population derives its livelihood from agriculture. Its contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and export earnings is estimated at 6.4% and 10.3% respectively (BOS 2008). Agriculture is increasingly becoming a priority area for development in the face of rapid population growth and declining employment opportunities for Basotho in the South African gold mines. However, low productivity in agriculture and the globalisation of world trade, which is characterised by open trade policies and alignment to international and regional trade institutions such as World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), respectively, is a big challenge to Lesotho's fragile economy.

The Government of Lesotho is committed to improving agricultural production and food security on sustainable basis, in accordance with the United Nations Millenium Development Goals, Declaration on World Food Summit and Dar-es-salaam Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in the SADC Region. In essence achieving efficiency in production is a strategic objective for making the economy competitive and less dependent on imports. It is for this reason that the Government is determined to institute measures for timeous provision of quality seeds and other inputs to all farmers.

There are fundamental weaknesses in the agricultural sector. Access to farm inputs such as quality seed is a major constraint to improved agricultural production. The government is aware that unless the daunting obstacles to increased productivity are overcome, through effective policies and strategies including capacitating private sector opportunities e.g. through provision of infrastructure, the country's vision of a prosperous nation by the year 2020 will not materialise.

The provision of key agricultural inputs, seeds included, is a prerequisite for achieving food security and reducing hunger. Seeds in particular, are a key input for the production of the annual crops that provide the most of the world's food requirement. They are both the means of establishing a new crop each season and they determine the genetic potential of the crop that is grown. Seeds also provide the vehicle to transfer new genotypes (varieties) from research institutions into the farming community. Despite this fundamental role in crop production, seeds also have some special attributes arising from their biological properties, which make them a difficult product to handle. This is not only a result of physiology and genetics, which are of general application, but there are also strong economic and policy dimensions that are specific to crops, countries and regions.

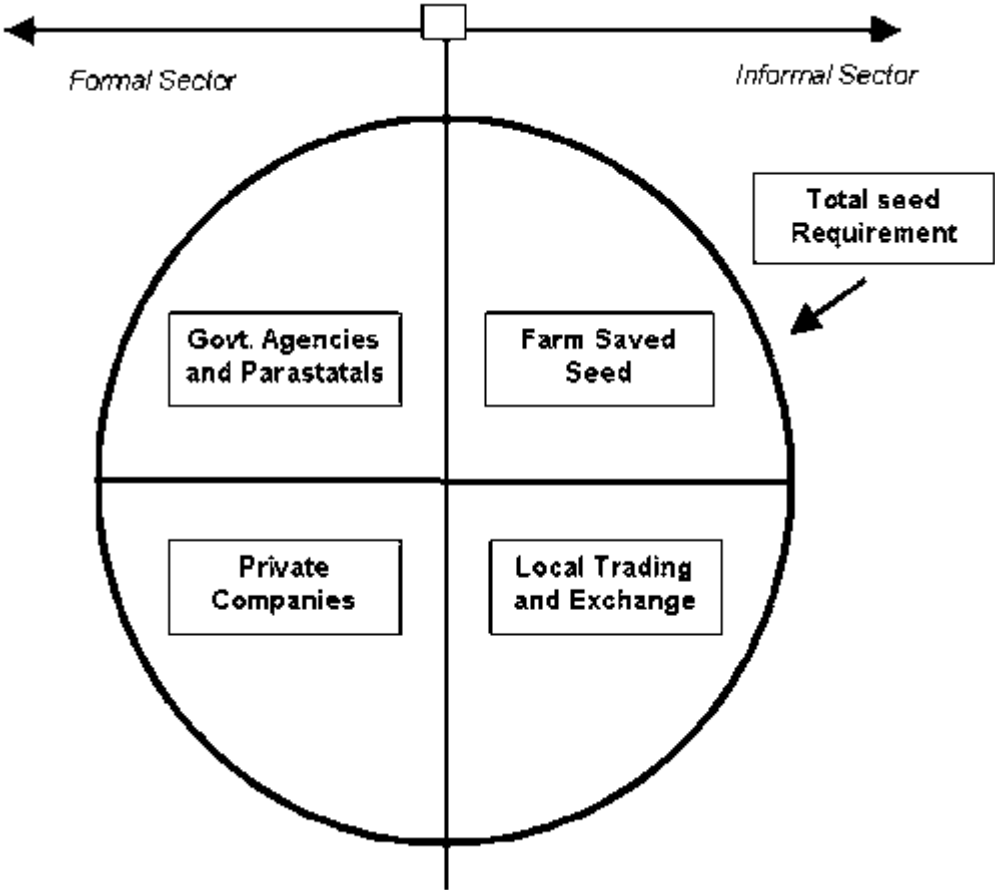
### Organisation of the Seed Market

There are some clear divisions within the seed market, which profoundly affect the organization of seed supply. One is the volume and value of the seed, both in themselves and in relation to the crops which they produce. This determines the extent to which it is possible to make a viable business from producing and selling seed, in other words, the potential to support a "commercial seed market". In general crops such as cereals, with high sowing rates and relatively low crop values, are difficult to commercialize, while those such as vegetables, with high sowing rates and high output

values, can command a good market price and support a commercial seed trade. Therefore the ratios of volume, value and output potential are major factors in determining how the seed trade works, and it is segmented into different crop groups.

A further consequence of this is the partition of the seed supply between formal and informal channels, as represented by Figure 1. This reflects the fact that in most crops, seeds can be produced by the farmers themselves and there is no obligation to purchase each year. Collectively, we may speak of the “seed supply system” to mean the complete mix of formal and informal channels by which farmers satisfy their total seed requirement each year. However, the actual partition varies widely between different crops and countries, depending on the economic circumstances. The term “seed industry” refers to the organized formal sector, which has local, national, and – in some crops-global dimensions. In contrast, the informal seed system is normally localized at the farm or community level and has relatively little organization.

Figure 1: Components of the seed supply system



## Policies in the Agriculture Sector

The specific development policies for agriculture, in which the seed sub-sector operates, include:

- Promotion of household and national food security,
- Promotion of the adoption of improved and appropriate farming methods and technologies,
- Improvement of the management of the natural resource base, particularly arable and rangelands, by implementing far-reaching land reforms and grazing control measures,
- Broadening the productive base of the rural economy, by emphasising high-value crops, livestock production, and off-farm activities through diversification,
- Reorientation of agricultural support services (research, extension, infrastructure and information services) towards areas of comparative advantage, and
- Capacity building and human resource development, involving institutional rationalisation, decentralisation and increased regional co-operation.

Despite the fact that Lesotho might have low projections of annual crop seed demands that does not warrant huge injection of resources in the country's economy, the country itself has a comparative advantage on crop production due to its unique topography and climatic conditions. Capitalization of the existing comparative advantage would enable the industry to target certain market niches hence attract even more investment in the seed industry. The Government is therefore committed to implementing a national seed policy, which will enhance seed provision and agricultural production at both household and national levels. This seed policy document is based on extensive stakeholder consultations (a full report is available detailing the process that brought this seed policy (Muliokela et. al 2001).

The seed policy objectives are consistent with the national agricultural sector development objectives for promoting public-private sector partnership to enhance commercialisation of agriculture and efficient delivery of technical services.

## **2. Goal of the National Seed Policy**

The goal of the national seed policy is to ensure the availability of quality seed of various crops to farmers in an efficient and sustainable manner in order to enhance crop productivity and food security in Lesotho and for export.

## **3. Objectives of the National Seed Policy**

- To develop an effective, efficient and sustainable seed system capable of producing and supplying high quality seeds of important grain crops (maize, wheat, Irish potato, sorghum, beans and peas as well as vegetables and other crops) not only to satisfy national requirement but also to tap into external markets
- To clarify and articulate global and holistic development strategies in the seed industry;
- To promote the development of an integrated seed industry involving both the formal and informal seed supply systems;
- To create a functional and efficient organisational set up to facilitate linkages and co-ordination in the industry;
- To provide legal framework (legislation) for seed quality control and certification, imports and exports, plant protection to include phytosanitary and quarantine, intellectual property rights (IPRs) to include plant breeders rights and farmers rights, and other seed related issues;
- To streamline and enhance germplasm development, variety evaluation, release, dissemination and registration and maintenance procedures in the country;
- To promote the conservation and utilisation of plant genetic resources
- To promote strategic partnership and linkages with international and regional institutions or organisations which enhance seed industry development;
- To promote public and private sector partnership in service delivery within the seed industry.
- To establish a National Seed Service to oversee the entire system.

Implementation strategies for the seed policy will capitalise on both the comparative and competitive advantages, which Lesotho has within the region in the production of a number of high value crops such as potato and vegetable seed. There will be deliberate efforts to exploit the niche market for seeds, which exist in the many remote areas of the country such as the mountain districts.

The MAFS will undertake regular policy reviews and adapt the proposed policy to the changing circumstances in the economy.

The following are the components of the proposed national seed policy and their implementation guidelines.

## **4. Implementation Strategy of the National Seed Policy**

### **4.1 Promotion of inter and intra-institutional linkages**

The MAFS will facilitate the formation of a technical liaison committee, which will have representatives from all research establishments in the country including Department of Agricultural Research (DAR), Department of Crops Services (DOC), Department of Field Services (DFS), Department of Marketing of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Cooperatives and Marketing (MTICM), Faculty of Agriculture(FoA) of the National University of Lesotho(NUL) and the private seed sector. The objective will be to share research results and also collaborate in programme development. In order to achieve meaningful collaboration with regional and international research institutions the MAFS will negotiate a memorandum of understanding with co-operating institutions in variety development and testing.

## **4.2 Variety improvement programme**

Seed production programmes are dependent on the continuous development of improved varieties and provision of elite planting material or breeder seed in a sustainable and orderly manner. The government is committed to strengthening variety improvement and maintenance programmes. MAFS will undertake the following initiatives in order to enhance technology generation and elite seed provision programmes.

- Implement institutional reforms that will motivate staff;
- Provide capacity to conduct plant breeding that target Lesotho's unique situation and possible export to SADC.
- Conduct adaptive tests in various ecological zones;
- Provide breeder and basic seed;
- Conduct formal variety maintenance programme;
- Promote partnership between government, and private sector research institutions;
- Enhance regional and international collaboration in research.

### **4.2.1 Development of adapted varieties for various agro- ecological zones**

There are no suitable varieties for some other crops for some of the agro-ecological zones in Lesotho such as the mountain region. A programme to conduct classical breeding and other methods of plant improvement work will be initiated to develop adapted varieties. The Department of Research will prepare a detailed action plan to target identified agro-ecological zones. Priority crops will include maize, sorghum and Irish potatoes. Other crops will include wheat, beans, peas, vegetables and fodder.

### **4.2.2 Variety Maintenance Programme**

Variety maintenance programmes ensure that elite materials that enter the production system are true to type. The breeder will develop guidelines for injecting fresh or elite material into the seed production cycle on a regular basis.

It will also be a requirement for a breeder to provide a written variety maintenance plan or procedure for each variety under certification. The owner of the variety will also be expected to provide detailed information about Value for Cultivation and Use (VCU) and Distinctness, Uniformity and Stability (DUS). It is realised such information has to be kept under confidential arrangements as part of intellectual property rights obligation. Small quantities of breeder seed will be preserved under controlled environment for long-term storage.

### **4.2.3 Provision of breeder and basic seed**

The DAR will assess long term breeder seed requirements for different crops and make appropriate seed production or import arrangements including payments of royalties if necessary.

The DAR will establish the seed unit that will take charge of the breeder and basic seed production. A revolving fund will be created to sustain the programme. There will be an aggressive sales campaign. The Department of Crops will facilitate the supply of basic seed to seed producers and supervise production at field level.

### **4.3 Variety Promotion**

Variety dissemination is central to seed industry development. The MAFS through the DFS and DOC will mount a special campaign to promote use of quality and improved seed. The government will also form partnerships with the seed companies and private sector in the promotion of varieties.

## **5. Implementation Guidelines**

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security will:

- Introduce new varieties – through a programme of variety trials
- Enhance on-farm and community seed production and entrepreneurship
- Produce data on economics of production;
- Develop information centres in districts offices;
- Package data and disseminate through internet, TV, workshops and print media;
- Conduct collaborative variety promotion programme with NGOs, and private seed companies;
- Promote better practices of seed relief support among NGOs and other stakeholders;
- Facilitate the declaration by government of a National Farmers Day in order to promote agriculture.

### **5.1 Seed Quality Control and Certification Services**

A seed certification and quality control programme guarantees the quality of seed being produced and traded in the country. The Ministry will foster the development of an efficient Seed Services Division, which will implement an effective internationally recognised certification and testing programme.

The Ministry will establish the Seed Services Division which will combine the seed testing laboratory (formerly under Research Department) and the seed inspectorate section of the Crops Department.

The Seed Services Division will play a pivotal role in policy implementation. Its major task will be to follow up on National Seed Committee initiatives.

The Seed Services Division will implement a certification programme based on tried and tested schemes such as that of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) seed scheme. Lesotho will adopt seed testing rules of the International Seed Testing Association (ISTA).

The MAFS will formulate seed legislation, which will have the following key areas in order to facilitate seed industry development:

- Voluntary (Non compulsory) seed certification system
- Licensing of private seed inspectors, seed analysts and seed testing laboratories
- Recognition of Quality Declared Seed certification class (QDS).
- Monitoring of seed in the trade i.e. conducting stock checks on seeds in the distribution outlets.
- Harmonisation of seed regulations with SADC member states
- Provision of standards for seed imports especially phytosanitary and quarantine.
- Enact Plant Breeders Rights and Farmers Rights

The national Seed Services Division will create and maintain electronic database on seed production statistics including imports, exports and in-country production.

## **6. Legislation**

### **6.1 Plant Variety Protection Legislation**

The MAFS will develop Plant Breeders' Rights to protect local and foreign-bred varieties to include farmers' right. The Government of Lesotho is also obliged to have intellectual property rights under international protocols especially Article 23 (b) of (Trade Related Intellectual Property) Agreement (TRIPS).

Variety protection programmes enable the originators of the technology to derive some monetary benefits from usage of their variety. In addition it is a protection against pirating. It also encourages both private and public investment in the seed industry.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security will establish a technical sub-committee whose mandate will be to facilitate the preparation and enactment of the plant breeders rights legislation through a consultative process. The proposed terms of reference for the technical sub-committee will include:

- Review variety protection legislation from different countries.
- Consult with stakeholders
- Determine feasibility of incorporating farmers rights in the legislation
- Prepare a draft plan variety protection legislation
- Develop benefit-sharing protocol for public bred varieties

### **6.2 Quarantine and Phyto-sanitary Legislation**

Seed imports can be a vehicle for the introduction of new pests and diseases into the country, which may devastate crops in Lesotho. Government recognises the need to introduce legislation for regulating seed imports.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security will develop phytosanitary and Quarantine legislation through a consultative process in order to monitor seed imports. That consultation process will take into account efforts to harmonise phytosanitary legislation within SADC. The new Act will take this into account in order to facilitate regional and international trade. The capacity to implement legislation and plant quarantine activities will also be strengthened through the establishment of a Plant Protection Division within the Research Department. Lesotho will work closely with Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations (UN), to establish the benefits of joining the international plant passport system.

## 6.3 Variety Release Procedures

A Variety Release programme protects the farmers against the introduction of inferior and insufficiently tested varieties. The MAFS will establish a National Variety Release Committee, which will have a mandate to approve new improved varieties and remove obsolete ones.

The membership of the Variety Release Committee shall include the following organisations:

- Agricultural Research Department
- Department of Crops Services;
- Department of Field Services;
- The Faculty of Agriculture of the National University of Lesotho
- NGO's;
- A farmer organisation representative;
- Plant protection officer;
- Seed services representative;
- A seed company representative.
- Breeder responsible
- Department responsible for marketing

(i) Conditions for variety release will include:

- Recognition of VCU performance data from countries with similar ecological zones.
- Contracting institutions (local and international research centres) to test varieties on behalf of Government of Lesotho;
- Acceptance of variety descriptions from the breeders;

(ii) National Variety List

All varieties will be entered into the National Variety Catalogue, comprising.

- Recommended varieties from formal breeding programmes;
- Local and indigenous varieties;
- Varieties descriptors to assist in inspections and variety maintenance programmes.
- Varieties that have been developed from molecular techniques (Genetically Modified Organisms) which have passed the risk assessment test as per Biosafety and biotechnology policy and have necessary documents.

## 6.4 Seed Certification and Quality Assurance Procedures

The purpose of the Seed Certification and Quality Assurance System is to promote the seed varieties listed in the National Variety Catalogue and traded within the country and to ensure that it is of consistently high and known quality.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security will develop certification system and standards in consultation with the stakeholders in Lesotho. The system developed will be in harmony with the developed SADC certification and quality assurance system.

The System will have the following seed certification classes:

- Pre-basic seed,
- Basic Seed, Certified Seed (1<sup>st</sup>. Generation),
- Certified Seed (2<sup>nd</sup>. Generation)
- Quality Declared Seed.

The authorised staff from the established Seed Authority and licensed personnel will be responsible for quality assurance procedures in accordance with the Rules for Seed Testing of the International Seed Testing Association (ISTA).

## **7. Private Sector participation in Seed Industry**

The MAFS will create an enabling environment for privates sector participating in seed industry. The objective will be to attract private seed company investments in order to enhance competition in the industry.

The Government through the relevant ministries will facilitate the provision of incentives for private Seed Companies for participation in Lesotho. These will include supporting legislation, policy reforms and investment incentives, e.g. proposed tax holidays, and removal of bureaucratic procedures that hinder investment. The newly created Seed Authority will designate an investment desk officer who will be mandated to facilitate the creation of enabling policies for private sector investment in the seed industry.

## **8. Support for Community Based Programmes**

The Government recognises that there are distinct seed sub-systems in the country. These are the formal sector which source seed from the seed companies or direct imports and the informal sector, which is served by on-farm saved seed and community based programmes conducted by NGO's.

The Government will develop appropriate policies to strengthen the community-based programmes.

The Crops Department will prepare a directory of all NGO seed programmes in Lesotho. The Department will also facilitate the strengthening of the existing NGO network, which promotes information exchange such as seed demand and supply and experiences in programme delivery.

- The NGO's will also prepare regular returns to the Crops Department;
- NGO's will incorporate sustainable exit strategies in their seed programmes;
- The Crops Department will prepare and implement a training programme on a regular basis for NGO's,
- The Government will support the introduction of quality declared seed scheme in the country to support NGO programmes and will encourage the NGO's and informal seed players to adopt the UN/FAO scheme for quality declared seed.

## **9. Small Scale Enterprise Development**

Lesotho has comparative advantage in a number of crops and small-scale business. The Government will create an enabling environment to stimulate development of small-scale seed enterprises.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security will:

- Mobilise small-scale farmers to produce seed under associations, as communities or as individuals - the focus will be on areas of comparative advantage in terms of adaptation and market potentials;
- Train farmers in seed business skills;
- Facilitate access to credit;
- Identify markets and provide market intelligence;
- Provide central processing facilities on cost recovery basis;
- Facilitate linkage with big industries.

## **10. Plant Genetic Resource Conservation**

The government is aware that plant genetic resource conservation is of paramount importance for sustainable agriculture and forestry development to protect the country's plant heritage, which includes indigenous crop varieties. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security will strengthen plant genetic resource conservation programmes through capacity building and appropriate institutional reforms.

The plant genetic resources unit in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Agricultural Research Department is understaffed and lacks operational funds. The Ministry will strengthen the unit through the creation of Plant Genetic Resources Division within Agricultural Research Department. The mandate of the Division will include :

- conducting civic education
- providing technical leadership in implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity undertaking
- Doing the classical activities related to conservation and utilisation of plant genetic resources.

## **11. Emergency Seed Supply**

Disasters resulting from drought and frost are common in Lesotho. In many instances farmers require seeds in order to mitigate the impact of crop failure. Government is committed to providing emergencies seed supply under such circumstances but avoiding taking out the private sector out of business.

The government will provide the strategic stocks of seed in the case of disaster e.g. drought etc.

Lesotho has early warning system and disaster preparedness strategies for food grains. The MAFS will lobby government to include seed security in this programme. The Ministry will also compile details (5 years) of recent disasters and related relief seed supply activities. The objective will be to establish disaster patterns, response alternatives and recurrent issues. A directory of seed suppliers will also be established. It is recommended that a strategic plan be prepared to include modalities for responding to disaster to take into account past experience and targeting of relief seed beneficiaries. Such a plan will be reviewed and updated regularly. The country will promote better practices of disaster mitigation such as the use of seed vouchers.

## **12. Market Development**

A functioning output market system can stimulate private sector investment in the seed industry. The government will facilitate the development of an effective market for seeds through policy reforms and provision of market intelligence services. Such information will ensure that the Government response to disaster does not hinder the private sector participation.

There is a weak rural market network in the country for agriculture. The Department of Marketing of the Ministry of Trade, industry, cooperatives and Marketing (MTICM) will facilitate the implementation of a number of market sector development initiatives.

Specific issues will include:

- Provision of an incentive scheme for seed distribution such as tax breaks;
- Provision of warehousing facilities to the trade on a cost-recovery basis;
- Commission studies in the market sector to identify constraints and opportunities;
- Creation of a database for, seed demand and supply and rapid dissemination of such information to the industry.
- Facilitation of seed fares country-wide during pre-winter and summer cropping seasons.

## **13. Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO)**

There is a growing international trade in the genetically modified crop varieties including food crops such as maize. Some genetically modified crop varieties have been introduced in neighbouring country. Hence the National Seed Service Would incorporate the guidelines from biosafety and biotechnology policy in the variety release system of GMOs

- Government will pass the bill on Biosafety and Biotechnology which will control and monitor genetically modified crop varieties in Lesotho.
- The introductions and planting of GMO will be in accordance with the National Biosafety Policy and Bill.

There will also be need to strengthen the capacity of local laboratories to test GMOs.

## **14. Institutional Framework Policy Implementation**

The seed industry of Lesotho comprises several institutions, which include public and private sector organisations such as research institutes, non-governmental organisations (NGO's) and associations. The government recognises the need for effective collaboration amongst institutions in order to foster harmony and synergy in programme delivery. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security will therefore establish a number of committees and associations, which will promote inter institutional linkages in the seed industry to include the following:

### **(i) National Seed Committee**

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security will establish a National Seed Committee for the purpose of implementing the national seed policy. This will be highest level policy making body. Membership will be drawn from the seed industry stakeholders including public and private sector representatives. The mandate of the National Seed Committee will include: co-ordination of seed industry development, facilitation of policy reforms, and act as well as technical advisor to MAFS on seed issues.

### **(ii) National Seed Stakeholders Forum**

The National Seed Committee will convene a national seed stakeholder forum to present annual progress reports on seed industry development and solicit feedback on development issues.

### **(iii) National Seed Trade Association**

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security will facilitate the formation of a National Seed Trade Association, which will lobby the government on investment policy reforms and promote information exchange.

The formation of the National Seed Committee should be taken as a top priority in order to initiate the policy implementation process in an expeditious and orderly manner.

### **(iv) Membership of the National Seed Committee**

The Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security will solicit nominations from various organisations in the seed industry to sit on the National Seed Committee through a national seed stakeholder meeting.

The proposed full Complement of the committee will include to:

- Principal Secretary (Chairperson) ;
- Four directors from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (Planning, Research, Field Services, and Crops) ;
- The Seed Authority (to be created) – will serve as a secretariat for National Seed Committee (1) ;
- Non Governmental Organisation representative (2) ;
- Farmers Association/organisations representative (2) ;
- Lesotho Commercial farmer representative(1) ;
- Seed Company representative (1) ;
- Faculty of Agriculture representative (1) ;
- Department of Marketing representative (1)
- Seed trader (Dealer at lower level)

The proposed Terms of Reference for the National Seed Committee will include to:

- Facilitate implementation of policies and strategies;
- Review policies and recommend appropriate reforms to government where applicable;
- Facilitate preparation of project proposals for donor funding in the seed industry;
- Provide technical direction to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security on seed issues;
- Prepare comprehensive action plans for effective implementation of the seed policy and strategies;
- Facilitate monitoring and evaluation studies on the seed programmes;
- Prepare regular program reports on the seed industry development and circulate widely to stakeholders.

The National Seed Committee will convene 3 times in a year. The frequency may be reduced after 3 years depending on satisfactory progress in the implementation of seed programmes. The National Seed Committee will also constitute technical Sub-committees in order to focus on specialised issues. Membership in sub-committees may include non-National, Seed Committee members.

#### **(vii) National Seed Stakeholder Forum**

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security will be mandated to convene an annual National Seed Stakeholder Forum, which will be attended by a minimum of 40 seed industry stakeholders drawn from both the private and public sectors.

*The proposed terms of reference for National Seed Stakeholders Forum will include:*

- To contribute towards priority setting in the seed sector,
- To provide feedback to government on performance of the seed industry.

Meetings will be convened once a year. The chairperson for the meeting will be a representative of the private sector. The Seed Services Division will provide the secretariat for the forum. National Seed Committee will follow up on the recommendations of the National Seed Stakeholders Forum.

**(iii) National Seed Trader Association**

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security will facilitate the formation of the National Seed Traders Association. It is proposed that the membership be drawn from the seed industry to include:

- Seed traders;
- Seed producers;
- Seed companies;
- NGO's;
- Transporters/ Distributors

*Ex-officio members would include:*

- Department of Crops
- Department of Planning and policy Analysis;
- Department of Agricultural Research
- Department of Field Services

*The proposed terms of reference for National Seed Traders will include to:*

- Lobby government on policy reforms to create an enabling investment climate;
- Promote seed business;
- Networking;
- Provide an avenue for information exchange.