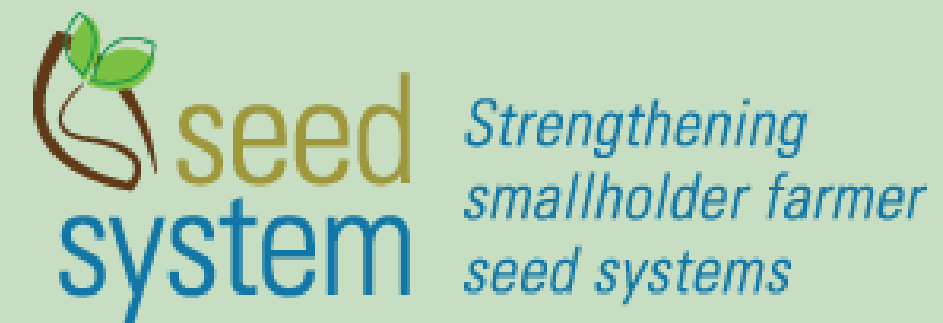




**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



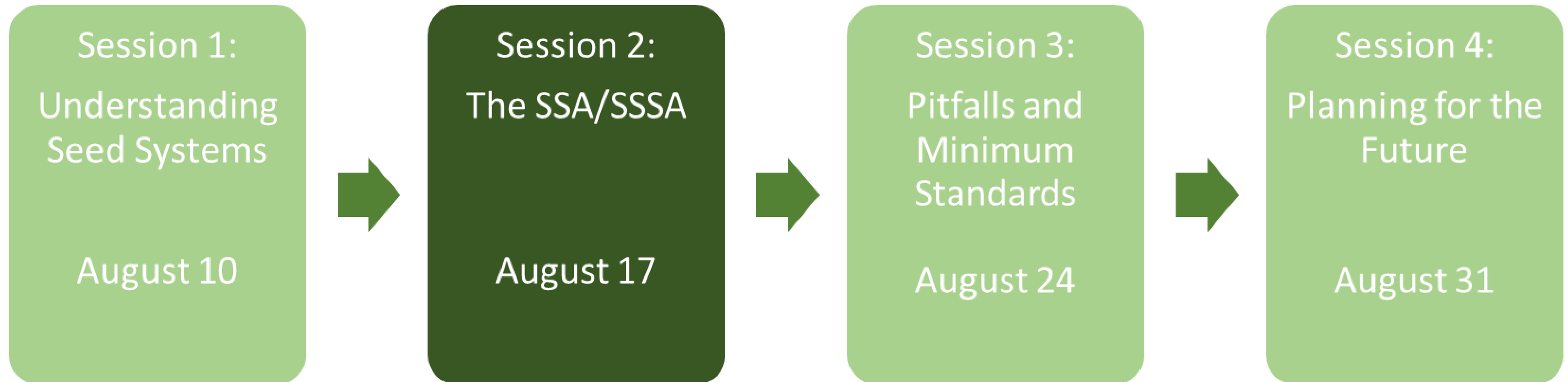
# SCALE Seeds Learning Group for USAID/BHA-funded Programming

Session Two  
August 17, 2022

*This Seeds Learning Group is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).  
The contents are the responsibility of the SCALE Award and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.*



# Today: The Seed System Assessment (SSA/SSSA)



# Session Two: The Seed System Assessment (SSA)



## Today's Agenda

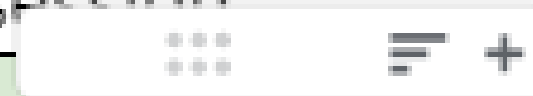
- 1 Introduction to SSA
- 2 Websites introduction
- 3 SSA Content
- 4 Responses
- 5 Resources, post-session task



# Comments / Recommendations from Session

## Questions / Concerns

Use this box to type questions/concerns throughout the session



A seed is considered a seed when the embryo, endosperm and seed coat is viable although seed health is a key physical parameter used by many rural farmers during seed selection and in the absence of certification process of seeds.

Strengthening and building crops system and technical expertise (both human resources and seeds institutions) is a key fundamental to building a sustainable seed system

## Recommendations

We will use this box to collate recommendations for SCALE or USAID for additional support needs, requests, etc. related to seed system programming and SSAs.

I am very interested on further training into seed systems and the SSSA, as I find the idea of implementing one quite daunting! the session was very interesting in that it goes back to the basics of seeds systems which makes it feel like it might be doable after all!

Emergency programs should be explicit (clearly state) their goals. Then, the proposals would indicate the specific design element that will work towards meeting those goals

Seed System Assessments should be written up and shared in the public domain



# **Introduction to Seed System Assessment (SSA)**



# Rationale for SSA?



## **Food issues $\neq$ Seed issues**

- Households can have enough seed to sow a plot, but little to eat
- Households can have adequate food, but lack access to the seed they need to make plots productive

**Food insecurity  $\neq$  Seed  
insecurity**



## Intervening in seed systems is serious business

- Even short-term interventions can have effects over many seasons
- Repeated seed aid can have 'negative' consequences
  - Undermines local systems
  - Creates farmer dependencies
  - Distorts crop profiles
  - Destroys real seed business





# History of SSA



## “Routine” Seed Security Assessment c. 2005

- No Assessment
- Food Need Assessed = Seed need assumed
- Production (harvest) drops = Seed need assumed
- Lengthy surveys undertaken = Seed need decided

(before data in and analyzed)



**so assumptions, not facts, were shaping response**



# Frequent assumptions

1. Harvest failure = no seed  
(wrong!)



1. Farm families in stress eat  
their seed (often wrong)





# Assumption 1: Harvest Failure = No Seed

## Sorghum Seed Basics in Ethiopia

Crop	Miesso (Lowland)
Surface Area per Household	3/4 ha
Sowing needs (kg – for area)	11-12
Harvest/yield (good year)	1600 kg
<b>% Harvest needed for seed (good year)</b>	<b>0.75</b> (=12/1600)
Harvest/yield (bad year)	260 kg
<b>% Harvest needed for seed (bad year)</b>	<b>4.6</b> (=12/260)

*Harvest shortfall **NOT** necessarily equal to seed shortfall*



## Assumption 2: Farmers' eating seed is a sign of stress (from SERT)

Farmers in Biré, Haiti, **eat their entire bean stock year after year**. Beans are sown only one season annually and keeping seed for the next year just doesn't make sense. Beans **stored for many months often fail to germinate** and chemicals for keeping insects away are often unavailable and costly. Besides, the **local market can easily provide the bean varieties** routinely used.

*Eating seed **NOT** necessarily a sign of stress*



# SSA Support

## Towards effective and sustainable seed relief activities

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**181**



# Broad Policy Guidelines (International standards)

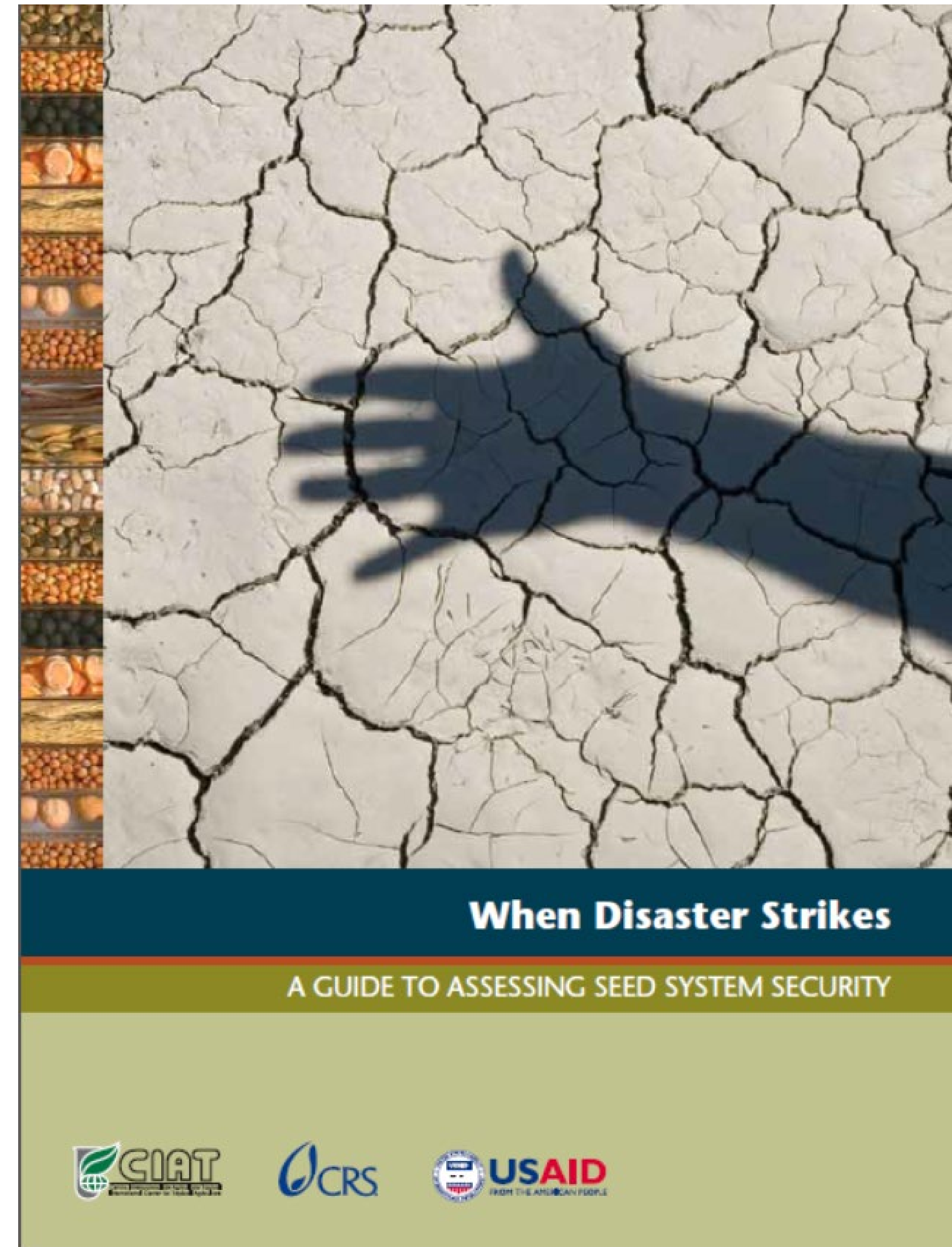
*FAO/UN: Basic Principles Guiding Seed Relief  
(adopted June 2003)*

1. Seed relief interventions have to be clearly matched to the context - e.g. war vs. drought
  - o Assessment needed
1. Interventions need to build on understanding of local system
1. Interventions must facilitate choice by farmers – crops, varieties – strategies



# Guide: Seed System Security Assessment (2008)

- 7-step guide
- Chronic + acute stress
- Development opportunities







# The Sphere Project

**Humanitarian  
Charter and  
Minimum Standards  
in Humanitarian  
Response**



## Sphere (2011)

- Special seed security assessment checklist



# Major Tool Development

- SeedSystem - 2006 (ongoing)

<https://seedssystem.org/>

- FAO – 2016

<https://www.fao.org/resilience/resources/resources-detail/en/c/282218/>

- S34D - 2021 (ongoing...)

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1kwyfzWjsbzFU9vIR2kYckcY1XM-oSmaP?usp=sharing>



# Vision: Seed System Assessment (SSA)



- NOT calculating seed needs
- Looking at functioning of **seed systems**
- Assessing *if* there is problem
- Matching problem to response
  - Acute problems
  - Chronic problems
  - Developmental opportunities



# Terminology

- Seed System Security Assessment (SSSA)
- Seed Security Assessment (SSA)
- Seed System Assessment (SSA)
- Rapid Seed System Security Assessment (RSSSA)



## Comments from USAID



# Importance of Agriculture and Seed in BHA

- FY 21: 185 agriculture applications inc. 121 with seeds and seedling components totaling \$234.7m
- BHA among the largest donors globally in emergency seed aid.
- BHA expects seed assessments when seed is provided **in same location for 3 consecutive seasons.**
- Seed AID in terms of total value and # of countries is increasing.
- Close to 2 decades BHA has supported initiatives to improve emergency seed assessment (SSSA) and more recently RSSSA under S34D





## **Poll time!**

*Have you yourself ever conducted a  
Seed System Assessment (SSA)?*



# Feedback on SSA/SSSA Reports

- 2-3 volunteers
- Share 1-2 key takeaways/reaction from the SSA/SSSA report you read





# Websites for SSA (SSSA)



# Tool Development

- SeedSystem - 2006-ongoing

<https://seedssystem.org/>

- FAO – 2016

<https://www.fao.org/resilience/resources/resources-detail/en/c/282218/>

- S34D - 2021- ongoing

[https://drive.google.com/open?id=1kwyfzWjsbzFU9vIR2kYckcY1XM-oSmaP&authuser=alove%40mercy Corps.org&usp=drive\\_fs](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1kwyfzWjsbzFU9vIR2kYckcY1XM-oSmaP&authuser=alove%40mercy Corps.org&usp=drive_fs)



# SeedSystem Website

The screenshot shows the SeedSystem.org website in a Chrome browser window. The browser's address bar displays "seedsystem.org". The website's header includes the logo "seed system" with the tagline "Strengthening smallholder farmer seed systems". Navigation links include "Field Assessments Around the World", "Assessment Tools and e-Learning Course", "Seed System Support Practical Guidance", "Research Resources Datasets SSSA", and "About Us".

A blue banner below the header contains the text: "SeedSystem.org provides practical ('how-to') guidance and strategic thinking to help professionals design seed-related assistance. We aim to foster productive, resilient, and market-oriented seed systems, even in times of emergency and chronic stress."

The main content area features a large image of people handling white sacks of seed. To the right of the image is a section titled "Humanitarian Assistance" with the text: "Decision guides to identify effective seed system response, 'how-to' technical information, and manager checklists for proposal development and field evaluation." Below this text is a green "Learn more" button. A small credit "photo credit: s.walsh/crs" is visible at the bottom right of the image.

Below the main image, there are three columns of content:

- Latest Blog Posts:**
  - Informal Seed Traders: The Backbone of Seed Business and African Smallholder Seed Supply
  - COVID-19 and Seed Security Advice: Feedback on Resources
- COVID-19 and Seed: Emergency Guidance:**
  - COVID-19 and seed security response now and beyond
  - Seed Security Response to Covid-19: now and beyond
- Tweets by @SeedSystemOrg:**
  - SeedSystem @SeedSystemOrg COVID-19 and Seed Security Response Now and Beyond

The bottom of the screenshot shows a Windows taskbar with various application icons, including a calendar showing "29", and a system tray area with a "Screen Shot" notification indicating the date "2022-07-29 11:30 AM" and resolution "1,440 x 900".



# SeedSystem Tools

seedssystem.org/assessments-and-e-learning-course/



- Field Assessments Around the World
- Assessment Tools and e-Learning Course
- Seed System Support Practical Guidance
- Research Resources Datasets SSSA
- About Us

## Assessments and e-learning course



This section shares the basic tools and practical planning aids needed to assess seed security— that is, to conduct a Seed Security Assessment (SSSA). We stress the concept of a seed 'system' since assessments of seed security go well beyond the seed needs, although that may be part of the work. Attaining seed security means finding ways to support the systems that farmers ongoing access to seed of the crops and varieties they require.

The four links below allow managers and field practitioners to plan and implement an SSSA.

The *Guide* gives an overview of the SSSA approach: its rationale, where and when it can be used, key questions and checklists. The *Specific Tools* share actual forms (downloadable!) that can be used in the field as well as an automated data program. The interactive e-Learning course introduces essential steps in both an assessment and choice of response, and participant through practical (and fun!) exercises using real field examples. Finally, tips give detailed insights into field plan implementation logistics.

- [When Disaster Strikes: overall assessment guide](#)
- [Seed System Security Assessment: specific tools](#)
- [Seed System Security Assessment & Response: an e-Learning course](#)
- [Tips for Planning & Implementation](#)

SeedSystem is a collaboration among diverse national and international organizations aiming to improve seed security in vulnerable and high-stress areas of the world. More about us

Alliance



Bionersity | CIAT | USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE | CRS CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES | PABRA Pan-Africa Bean Research Alliance Better Beans for Africa



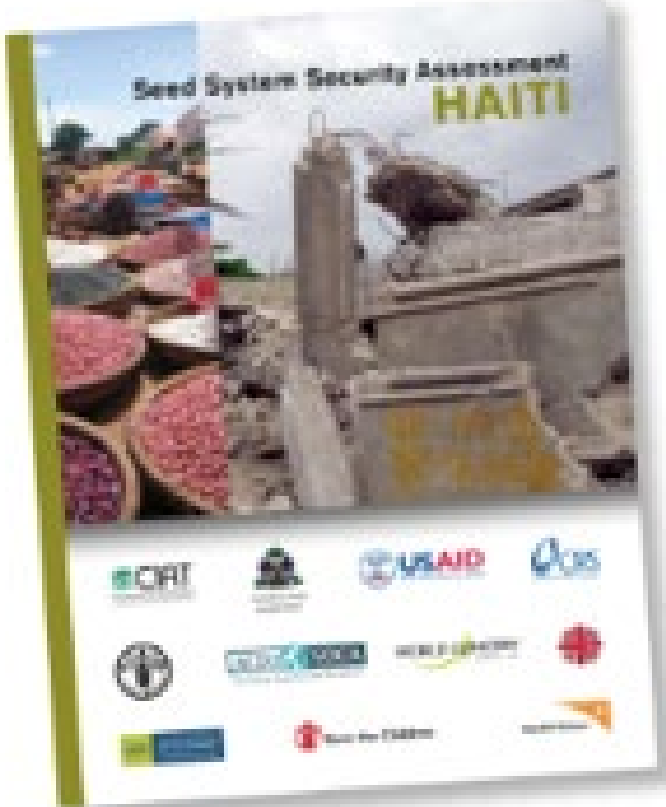
# SeedSystem Field Assessments

seedsystem.org/field-assessments-action-plans/

**seed system** *Strengthening smallholder farmer seed systems*

Field Assessments Around the World | Assessment Tools and e-Learning Course | Seed System Support Practical Guidance

## Field Assessments Around the World



Country (Year)	Summary
Burkina Faso (2017)	
Burundi (2017)	
Democratic Republic of Congo (2012)	ve been carried in a range of conte...
Ethiopia (2016) - CRS & partners	Following drought, flooding, earthqua...
Ethiopia (2016) - FAO, CRS & partners	specific recommendations and acti...
Ethiopia (2007)	l on <i>inter alia</i> : variety release, seed...
Ethiopia (2007) (Exec. Summary)	ese SSSAs can serve as important b...
Haiti (2010)	
Kenya (2011)	
Madagascar (2013)	
Malawi (2011)	2012 and 2017)
Mali (2006)	
Sierra Leone (2014)	
South Sudan (2010)	
Syria (2015)	
Timor-Leste (2013)	
Zambia (2013)	
Zimbabwe (2009)	



# FAO - SSA Website

fao.org/resilience/resources/resources-detail/en/c/419024/

## Resilience

Home Background Areas of work Regional approach Global Network News & Events Multimedia Resilience

Cross/Sectoral


Natural hazards

Food chain crisis

Protracted crisis

### Seed Security Assessments (SSA)

TAGS: SEEDS, SEED SECURITY, SEED ASSESSMENT, RESILIENCE, Jun 2016



Sustainable development cannot be achieved without **resilient livelihoods**. FAO assists countries to increase the **resilience** of households, communities and institutions by helping them to effectively prevent and cope with threats and disasters that impact agriculture, food security and nutrition. To resume agricultural production after emergencies, farmers need to be **seed secure**. **Seed security assessments** are a tool for better planning of seed related interventions, and therefore contribute to support agricultural recovery effectively. Capacity building measures are often necessary to allow countries implement sound seed security assessments. Dissemination of findings and adoption of



# FAO - SSA Tools (guide) (2016)

fao.org/3/i5548e/i5548e.pdf

1 / 72 | - 100% + | [ ] [ ↻ ]



Seed Security Assessment

**A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE**



# FAO - SSA Field Assessments

fao.org/resilience/results/en/?keywords=SEED%20ASSESSMENT

English Français Español

## Resilience

Home Background Areas of work Regional approach Global Network News & Events Multimedia Resources

### Related Topics

Results filtered by: **SEED ASSESSMENT**

A photograph showing a person in a field of golden crops, likely wheat or corn, under a clear blue sky. The person is wearing a light-colored shirt and dark pants, and is bent over, possibly working with the crops.

[FAO Syria releases Seed Security Assessment findings](#)  
NEWS AND EVENTS - 19/06/2020

---

The logo of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), featuring three stylized green leaves.

[Seed Security Assessment - Lesotho 2016](#)  
PUBLICATIONS - 14/09/2016

Two small images side-by-side. The left image shows a close-up of hands holding soil. The right image shows a field of crops, possibly corn, with a person visible in the background.





# S34D - official report on rapid tool test (2021)



Rapid Seed System Security Assessment (R-SSSA)  
Pilot Evaluation Report





# S34D - Tools (Rapid SSSA)

drive.google.com/drive/folders/1LJAX11807qtnb\_nxFVvAYQFp-09V-010

Search in Drive

Shared with me > Rapid SSSA Tools

Files

Name ↑

**Ag expert interview 25.03.2...**

W

**Agrodealer interview revise...**

W

**Focus Group 8-28-20.docx**

W

**KII Grain Trader rev 4-29-22...**

W

**pilot feedback template.docx**

W

**Rapid SSSA Methodology 9-...**

W

more



# Your Tool Choice?



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

**Minimum Technical Standards for Seed System Assessment (SSA) in Emergencies**  
USAID/OFDA, SeedSystem and UN/FAO consultations

**Any tool set that  
meets Minimum  
Standards!!!**

*From 2020.*

*To be updated in Session 3!*



# Questions on websites



# Seed System Assessment Content



# SSA Content: Overview

- **Assess Seed System Functioning**
  - Demand side/need (Community/Household)
  - Supply channels
- **Identify if/type of problem**
  - Problem: Short-term (Acute)
  - Problem: Longer-term (Chronic)
  - Opportunities?
- **Recommend Response(s)**



# Seed Security Framework

Parameters	Definition
Availability	Sufficient quantity of seed of adapted crops is within <b>reasonable proximity</b> (spatial availability) and <b>in time</b> for critical sowing periods (temporal availability)
Access	People have <b>adequate income</b> or other resources to purchase or barter for appropriate seeds
Seed Health / Quality	Seed is healthy: good physical, physiological and sanitary quality
Variety Suitability / Quality	Varieties are <b>adapted, meet farmers' preferences</b> (men and women) and are market-acceptable



# Seed system problems and appropriate responses

Parameter	Acute (short-term)	Chronic (long-term)
Unavailability of seed	<b>Direct distribution of seed</b> <small>Decorative SCALE logo with four green leaves</small>	<b>Rarely happens: except for new varieties</b>
Farmers do not have access to seed	<b>Vouchers and cash</b> <b>(w/seed fairs)</b>	<b>Income generation activity;</b> <b>Agro-enterprise development- value chains</b>





# Seed system problems and appropriate responses

Parameter	Acute	Chronic
Seed of poor quality	<p>Seed fairs with quality controls</p> <p>Direct distribution of test samples of quality seed</p>	<p>Programs to improve seed quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● seed companies</li><li>● on-farm (CBSP)</li><li>● in local markets</li></ul>
Lack of appropriate varieties/crops	<p><u>Limited</u> introductions of new varieties</p>	<p>Introduce new varieties/ with technical support</p> <p>Variety selection/ breeding</p>



## Repeated Seed Aid Delivery in Many Countries

Site	Extent of Seed Aid
Burundi	36+ seasons: since 1995.....
Eastern Kenya	92-93; 95-97; 2000-2002, 2004, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2011.....
Zimbabwe	Near continuous since 1991 (food aid, seed aid or both) .... 2016??
Malawi	15 seasons or more, since 1992
<b>Ethiopia</b>	<b>Since 1974 : 42 years</b>



## USAID Rule - 3 Seasons

*Partially to distinguish acute from chronic*

- If the same intervention is repeated in the same area **3 seasons in a row** do an assessment (paraphrased)



# Demand



# Does this answer give you enough information to understand the need?

The Farmer/community says:	Does this give you enough information to understand the need?	
	Y	N
I have no seed/ there is no seed		
I/we ate our seed		



**Poll time!**

*Assessing Demand/Need*



## SSA Content: Assessing demand/need

**Key technique:** Ask, “Why are you planting less?” (or more/same)

Uncovers:

- If there is a concrete problem
- The extent of the problem
- The exact stress (so tailor response)

# Key Technique: Reasons for 'Planting less' (subset)

→ Large range of possible reasons!!

Gets at exact stresses

## CONSTRAINTS THAT ARE SEED RELATED

### Seed availability

- 1= no seed available in market
- 2= no seed/cuttings available from neighbors

### Seed access

- 3= no money to buy seed/poor finances or seed price too high

### Seed quality

- 4= seed available is not good quality or the variety is not liked

## NON-SEED FACTORS OF PRODUCTION (limits)

- 5= no/insufficient labor
- 6= illness/health problems
- 7= no/insufficient land or land not appropriate/sufficiently fertile
- 8= lack of tools/tractor/ other machinery to farm
- 9= plant pests/diseases make production not possible

## OTHER PRIORITIES/STRATEGIES

- 14= markets for crop or crop products not well-developed
- 15= other priorities than agriculture (e.g. have shop)
- 16= Changing crop priorities or changing agricultural practices





**Any Questions?**

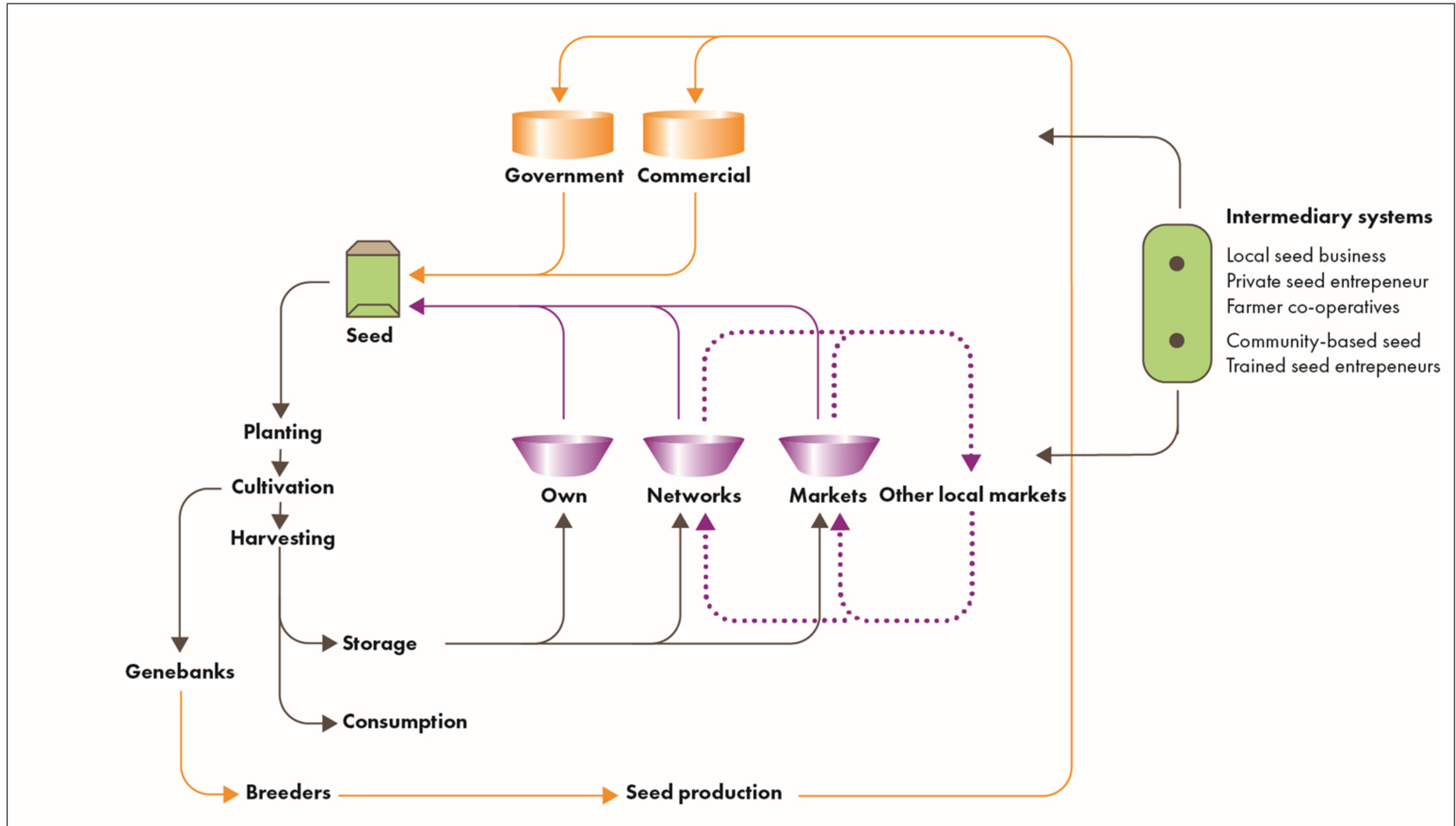


# SSA Content: Supply Side

- Not counting seeds (!!)
- Figuring out if supply channels are working (i.e., if they can serve farmers needs)



# Channels through which Farmers Source Seed





# Activity 1: Seed System Functioning (Supply Side)

*drawing on your expertise*

- 15 minutes in breakout groups. Assign note taker.
- Go to **Google Document** and find your **Group's box**.
- Imagine your team has been tasked with **assessing how well seed channels are functioning**.
- Discuss as a group how you would do this assessment. For example, consider:
  - *Which seed channels would you assess?*
  - *Which sources/types of actors would you talk to? What info would they have? What kinds of questions would you ask them?*
  - *How are you going to do it? (i.e., elements of the process).*
  - *....what else?*
- Try to come up with 5-10 issues/suggestions.
- Choose 3 main ideas to feedback to the bigger group



# Group Work Feedback

What did you discuss?



# Activity 1 Responses: Seed System Functioning

- **All seed channels:** so not just the formal ones. Don't forget farmers' own stocks
- **Key crops:** Be clear about which crops are the main focus for the upcoming season-
- **Talk to key suppliers:** (formal, informal and intermediary)
  - Seed companies and local agro-dealers;
  - Large traders who know something about local seed (regionally as well as local)
  - Specialized community based groups (although they provide only small amounts)
- **Visits to markets/stores/seed outlets:** Observe the quality on offer, ask about its origins and if it can be planted
- **Prices:** Prices of seed (incl local seed); Prices of accompanying inputs, like fertilizer



## **SSA: Responses**

*Seed System Assessment + **Response***



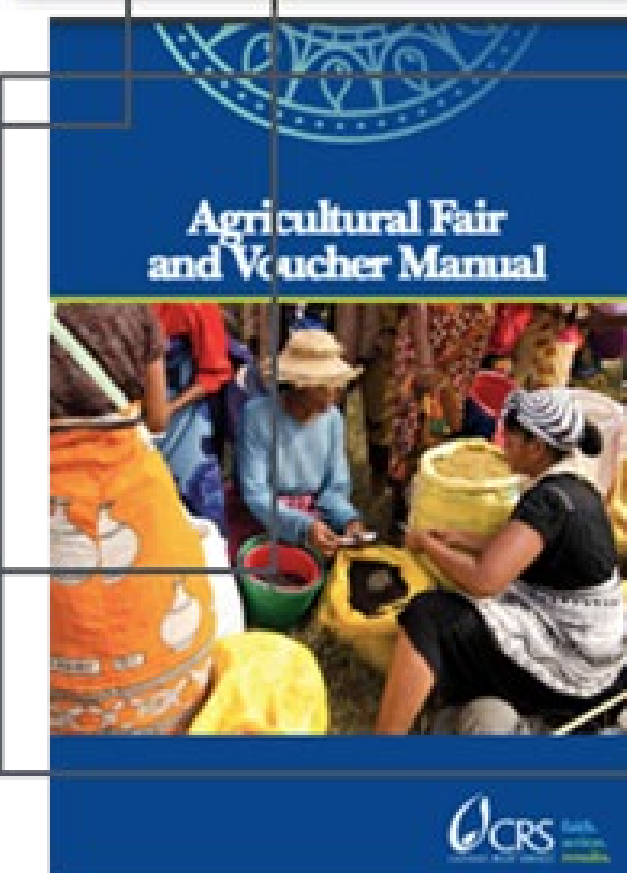
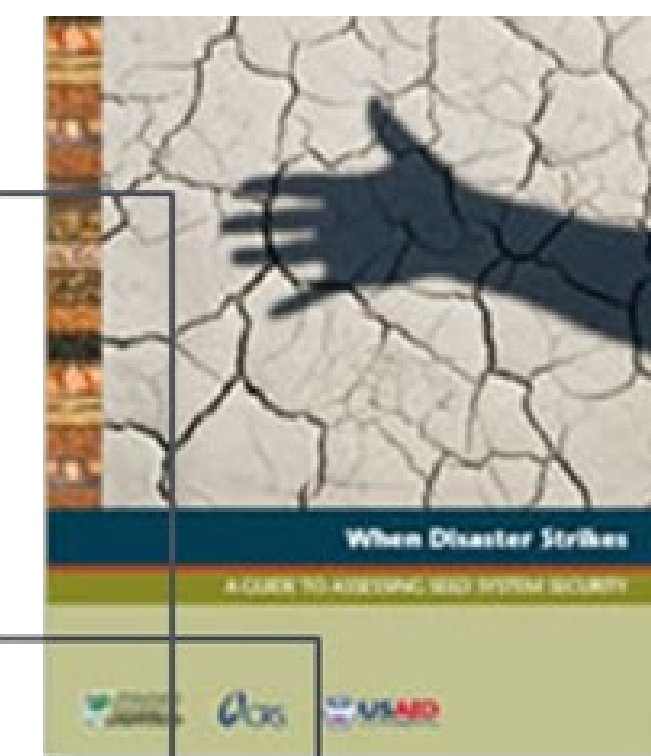
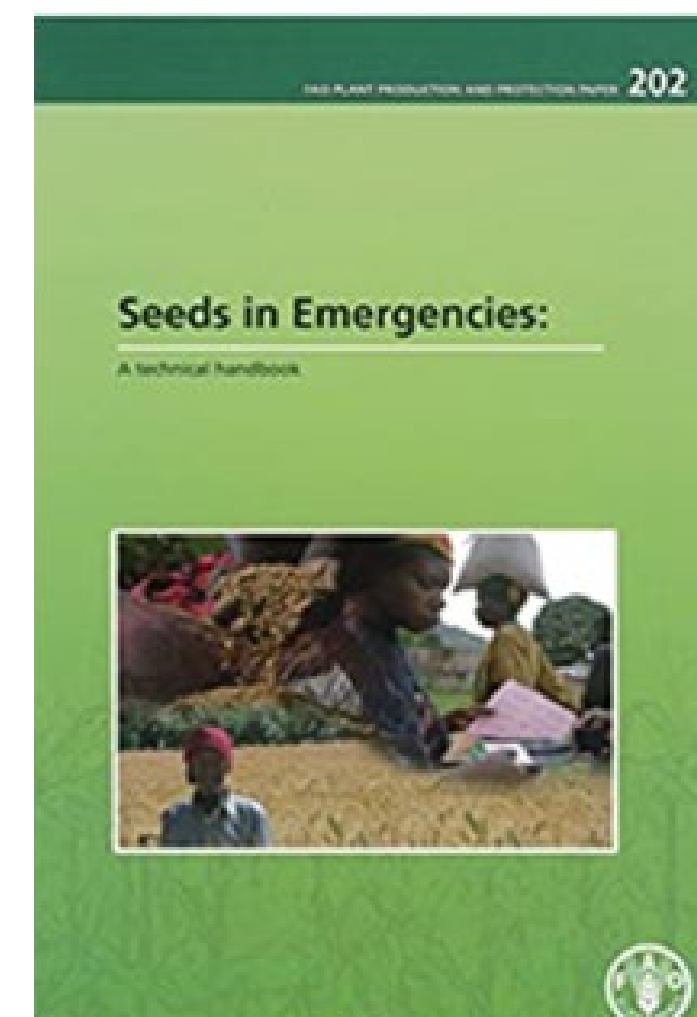
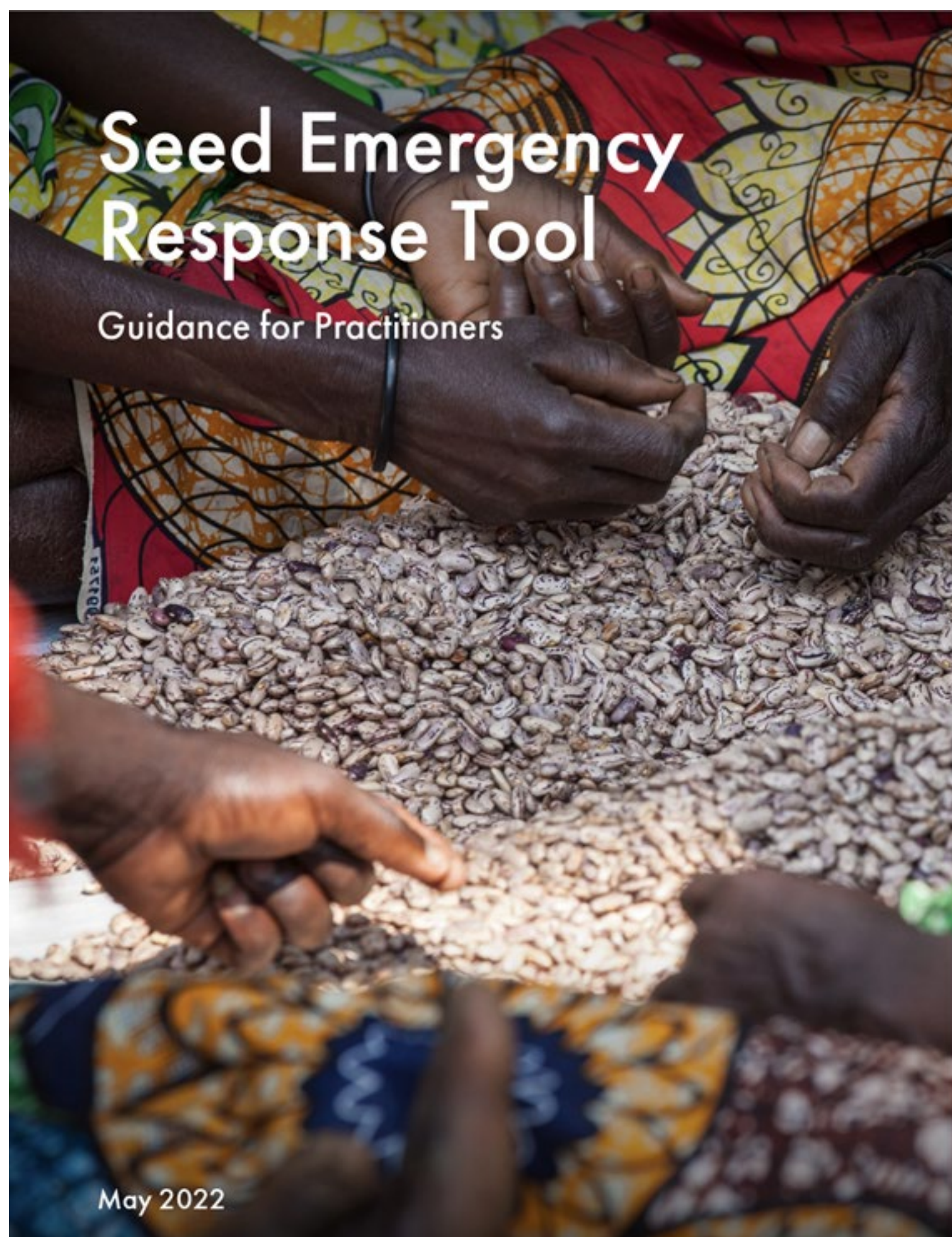
## Choice of response(s) should depend on:

- The seed security problem(s)
- The context- logistics
- The organization's capacity
- Institutional philosophy (Rights based?)
- ...





# Response: Many recent developments



Specialized advice





# Range of Response Interventions from SERT

Approach	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b><i>Direct distribution</i></b>		
Direct Seed Distribution (DSD)		
Local procurement and distribution of seed		
Provision of modern varieties		
Food aid to serve as 'Seed protection ration'		
<b><i>Market-based approaches focused on clients (demand)</i></b>		
Seed fairs, combined with vouchers		
Cash		
Vouchers		
<b><i>Market-based approaches focused on suppliers</i></b>		
Market-based support to supply side (agrodealers/traders)		



# Guiding Principles of Good Practice (SERT)

## Themes

1. Seed System Security Assessment (SSSA)
2. Response type
3. Goal of the intervention
4. Context
5. Timeliness
6. Market-based assistance
7. Crop and variety choice
8. Seed quality
9. Farmers' choice
10. Feedback at multiple key stages





# Principle Example: #7 Crop and Variety Choice

**The crops and varieties selected for the intervention should suit the context and user needs**

## Technical notes

1. Seed and intervention goal
2. Traditional versus modern varieties
3. Varietal preferences, including those related to gender
4. Crop preferences, including those related to gender
5. Realistic management conditions
6. Self- and open-pollinated varieties
7. Genetically modified organisms (GMOs)
8. No suitability, no intervention





## Key: Distinguishing short-term versus longer-term seed security problems

Parameter	Acute (short-term)	Chronic (long-term)
Unavailability of seed	Direct distribution of seed	Rarely happens: except for new varieties
Farmers do not have access to seed	Vouchers and cash  (w/seed fairs)	Income generation activity;  Agro-enterprise development: value chains



## Activity 2: Response Options *drawing on your expertise*

- 10 minutes in breakout groups. Assign note taker!
- Go to the **Google Doc and find your Group's box.**
- Each group will receive one seed security problem (acute or chronic)
- Discuss as a team which of the response options listed are appropriate/possible to respond to this problem.
  - Which could work? Under what circumstances?
  - Which would not address the seed security problem?
- Mark YES or NO for each response.
- For the ones you mark YES, discuss the advantages and limitations (disadvantages) of that response.
- Record your ideas in the table below.
- Assign one note taker and someone to report back when we come back together



## Activity 2: Three common seed security problems. How should you respond?

- **Acute Problem 1:** Farmers need more seed but cannot access (buy)
- **Acute Problem 2:** Seed/planting material (vines/cuttings) is not available
- **Chronic Problem 3:** The seed that farmers use is of poor quality



# Group Work Feedback

**What did you discuss?**





## Correct Response Options

**Acute Problem 1:** Farmers need more seed but cannot access (buy)

- **Vouchers tied to agro-dealers (if correct crops on offer)**
- **Vouchers tied to seed or input fairs (includes local seed)**
- **Cash grants**



## Correct Response Options

**Acute Problem 2:** Seed/planting material (vines/cuttings) is not available

- **Direct Seed Distribution (DSD) - \*in limited quantity and with care\***

*(better not to do fairs as VPC planting material needs to be carefully screened !!)*



## Correct Response Options

**Chronic Problem 3:** The seed that farmers use is of poor quality

- 1. Work with farmers on seed selection, management and storage**
- 1. Work with traders (local and regional markets) on seed storage and management**
- 1. Work with seed companies and agro-dealers on seed storage and management**

*(better not to do DSD as too small coverage for extent of problem!)*



**Questions?**



# Resources



# Overview guide



## When Disaster Strikes

A GUIDE TO ASSESSING SEED SYSTEM SECURITY



# E-learning course

Seed System Security Assessment e-Course

Seed System Security Assessments + Response

### Welcome

This course focuses on a new assessment method called Seed System Security Assessment (SSSA). It presents the rationale and history for the SSSA and provides the needed seed system basics for rural development professionals.

You'll be guided through key essential steps for carrying out the fieldwork assessment and determining the 'better' seed security response.

Let's go! >

Watch on

This e-Learning course walks participants through the Seed System Security Assessment (SSSA) process and then focuses on targeted responses, depending on the key constraints identified.

The 8 modules are highly interactive: participants explore how to: collect key data, decide if farming households are stressed (the demand side); and assess if seed markets are adequately functioning (the supply side). Throughout, hands-on exercises and frequent



# Standards

## Towards effective and sustainable seed relief activities



ISSN 0259-2517

FAO  
PLANT  
PRODUCTION  
AND PROTECTION  
PAPER

181



# Seed quality

FAO PLANT PRODUCTION AND PROTECTION PAPER **202**

ISSN 0259-2517

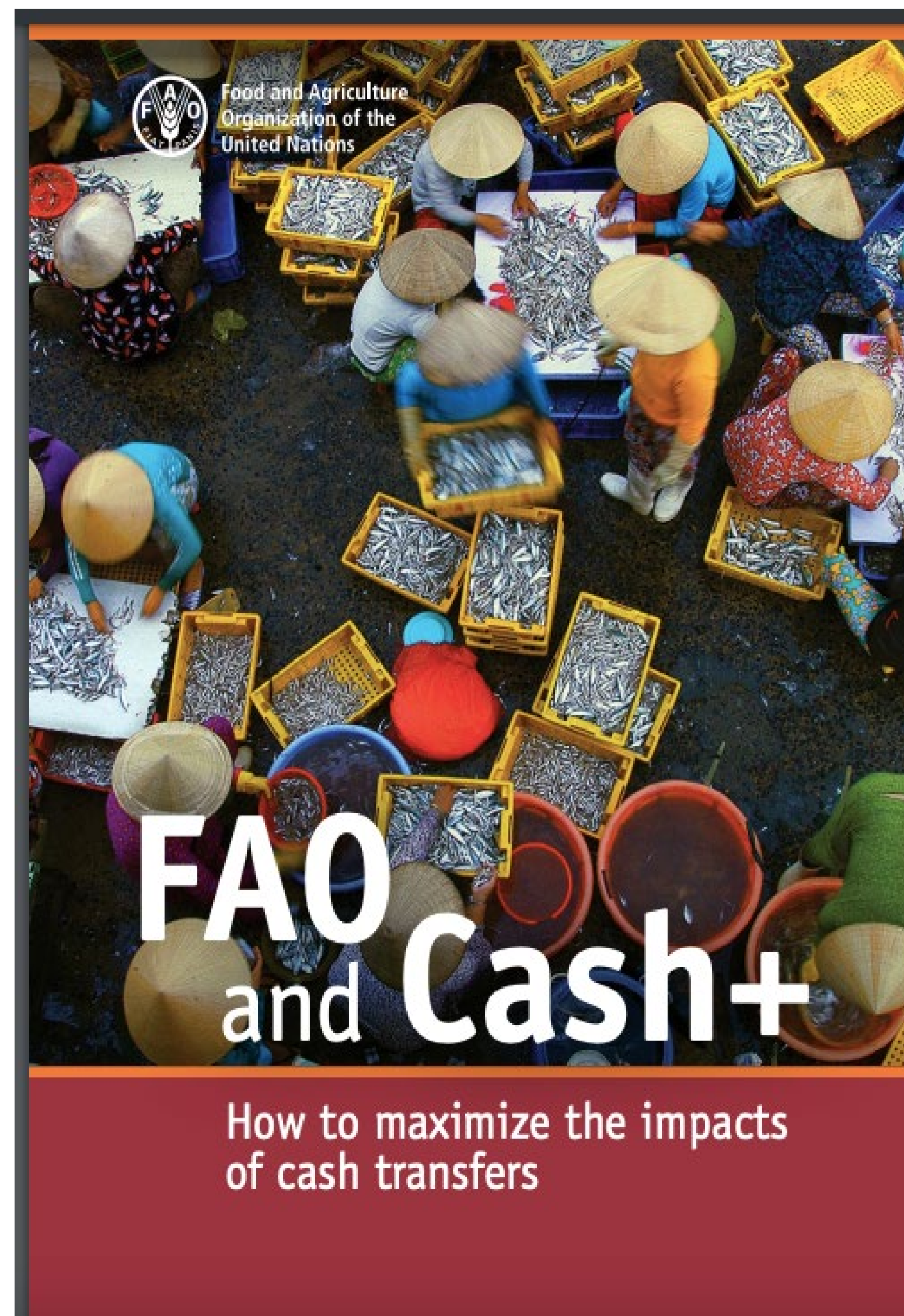
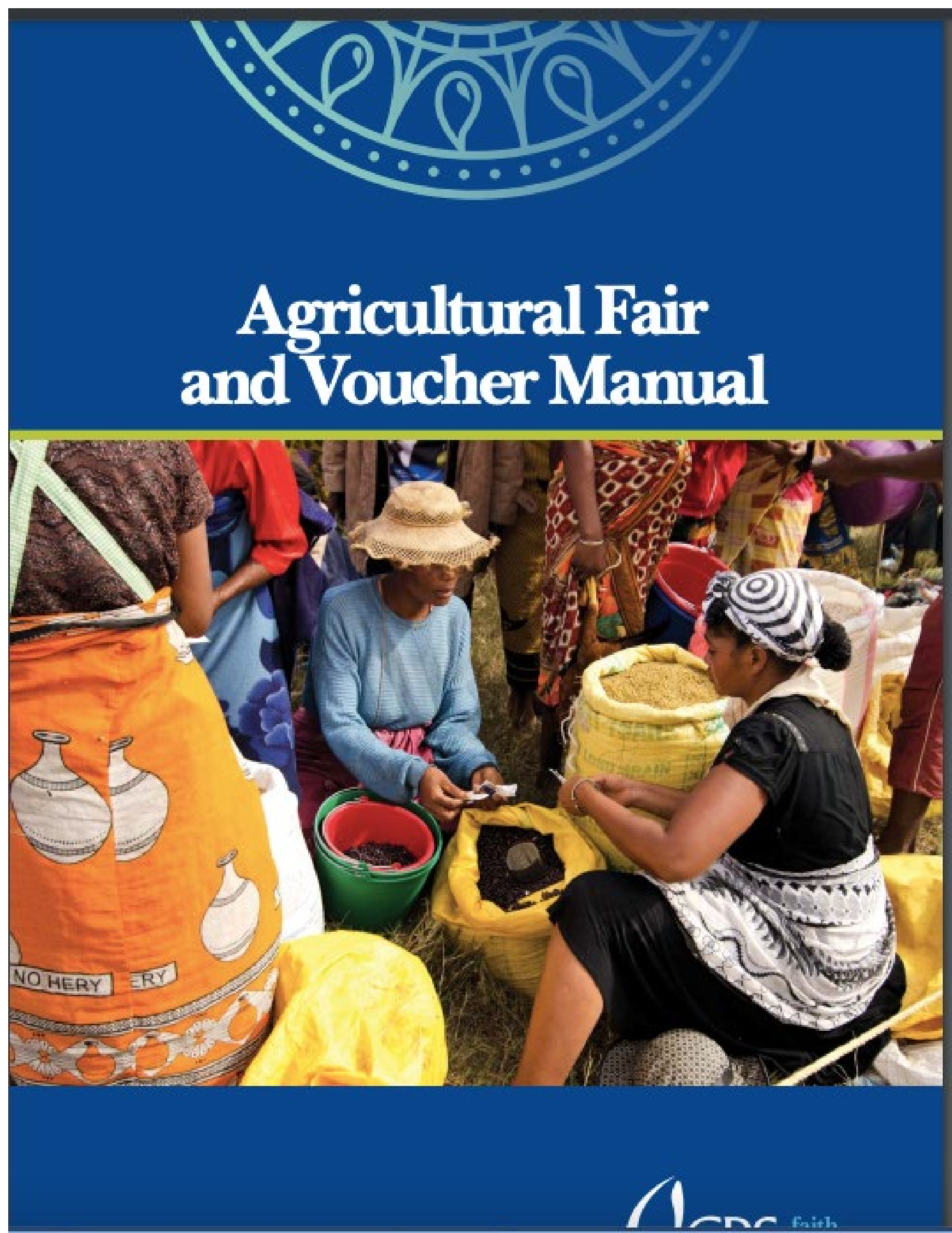
## Seeds in Emergencies:

A technical handbook





## Resources: diverse approaches







# Specific programming

seedbrief11 print (page 1 of 6)

Previous Next Zoom Move Text Select Annotate Sidebar

**PRACTICE BRIEF**

## Seed Aid for Seed Security

ADVICE FOR PRACTITIONERS

### When and How to Respond with Vegetable Seed Programming

**I**nterest in relief activities focusing on vegetable seeds is growing due to the unique role they can play in supporting both nutrition and income. This brief will inform and guide the interest in vegetables and highlight distinct features of vegetable seed response, compared with staple crop seed response.<sup>1</sup>

In many settings and situations, vegetables can help in special ways due to their inherent position in agriculture, commerce, and culture. These are summarized in Table I through three key lenses: cropping strategies, marketing strategies, and nutrition, with more detail offered later in the brief.

**TABLE I**  
**Why Vegetable Seed May Be Helpful in a Crisis**

	Cropping	Marketing/ Livelihood	Nutrition
Vegetable	Decreases	Spreads risk that	Can increase

Vegetable seeds can help spur nutrition and income gains.

116 items

## 5 PRACTICE BRIEF

### Seed Aid for Seed Security

ADVICE FOR PRACTITIONERS

#### Using Seed Aid to Give Farmers Access to Seed of New Varieties

**F**armers are keen to obtain and evaluate new crop varieties. This process of experimentation and subsequent introduction of adapted and accepted varieties can potentially strengthen farmers' cropping systems by increasing yields, improving drought resilience, boosting resistance to pests and diseases and also by capturing new market opportunities.

Introducing new varieties can also play a role in restoring food security at times of crisis. Crises may alter preferences, for instance when populations relocate, or crisis may even be caused by crop and variety breakdowns (for example spurred by plant disease or sharply declining soil fertility). Both situations leave farmers in want of appropriate planting material. Crises may also be seen as an opportunity to introduce new varieties, via the extensive seed aid channels, in order to promote what are considered more 'modern' practices and thus to strengthen systems plagued by low production.

Regardless of the potential for improving smallholder productivity through the introduction of new varieties, it is important to start by questioning the legitimacy of such introductions during crises. In periods of emergency and prolonged stress, small farmers are already at levels of increased risk. They are generally poorer, having lost household assets, livestock or crops in the field, and they cannot afford to waste further often scarce land or labor resources. Further, they need to have some confidence that the next planting season will yield better than the present, stressed, one. Outside aid, minimally, should put on offer products or processes at least as good as those already in farmers' hands. While formal sector varieties are referred to as 'improved' and the quality of the seed is certified, these varieties often yield poorly in many smallholder cropping systems. Such new varieties may not be adapted to the local agro-ecological conditions and farmers may not possess the management inputs (for example fertilizers and pesticides) crucial for their growth. So an 'improved variety' does not mean that performance is guaranteed.

This brief suggests 'better practice' for introducing (or not) new varieties in situations of acute and chronic stress. It presents a series of technical guidelines that need to be considered prior to any variety introductions. The brief is also framed by a set of precautionary notes: if humanitarian assistance involves crop or variety introductions, even 'emergency' short-term interventions should be programmed within a longer-term plan of action.

#### Introducing Varieties in Acute Stress Periods

Seed aid that is considering the possible introduction of crops or varieties has to be programmed to embrace a well-planned set of steps. These are summarized in Box 1 and elaborated in the text that follows.

New varieties can increase food security in the wake of disasters, but only if practitioners work with farm communities and other informed personnel to minimize risk. Introducing new crops and varieties, especially after crisis, also requires a multi-year vision and commitment.



## Summary of Session 2

- History of SSA
- SSA websites
- SSA Content (demand & supply side)
- Responses
- Resources





## Questions?

- What future needs do you have related to what we discussed today?
- Do you have any recommendations to improve practice?
- Reminder: you can always use the shared Google document to add questions, recommendations, etc.



## After Session Task 2

- Review Minimum Standards for seed system assessments. One document is the broad outline of themes. The other is the full set of minimum standards.
  - Look at the **headers**
  - Look at the **details**
- For each, write down one thing you would **remove**
- For each, write down one thing you would **add**



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

**Minimum Technical Standards for Seed System Assessment (SSA) in Emergencies**  
USAID/OFDA, SeedSystem and UN/FAO consultations



# Next week: Pitfalls & Minimum Standards





# Session 2 Evaluation: Jamboard!

