

Seeds for Change

Together we invest in food security.



NL

Netherlands



Through high-quality hybrid vegetable seeds, biological crop protection and backed by world-class training and expertise, Seeds 4 Change will work together with Nigerian farmers to ensure larger yields of higher quality.

Seeds for change in Nigeria: kick-starting a long-term solution

Nigeria is Africa's largest economy and one of the fastest growing countries in the world, with a population of almost 200 million, estimated to grow to 400 million in 2050. Smallholder farmers are the backbone of the agricultural production supplying 95% of all food in Nigeria. Vegetables are extremely important for human nutrition and development and because of the growing population there is a higher demand for nutritious food and diversity in fruit and vegetables. In addition, there is a need to preserve the health of producers, consumers and environment by applying a cropping system with more and more organic inputs.

Biological crop protection solutions and high-quality seeds, selected for tropical agronomic circumstances, and resistant to pests and diseases, are vital. In addition, there is a need for resilience in the face of erratic climatic conditions. But seeds alone are not enough. That is why we have set up the Seeds 4 Change Impact Cluster to collaborate with the horticulture sector in the Kano region and provide smallholder and medium-scale farmers with access to the best hybrid vegetable seeds and biological crop protection.

Why Seeds 4 Change?

Innovation and highly-efficient production have made the Netherlands worldwide #2 exporter in food. We create high quality products that are safe, reliable and affordable. Seeds 4 Change is a cluster of companies from the Netherlands that wants to work together to improve the livelihoods of small- and medium-scale farmers in Nigeria. First by enhancing their yields and increasing the quality of their products, so they can demand better prices. Secondly, by demonstrations, training and knowledge transfer for vegetable farmers on how to employ Good Agricultural Practices for hybrid seeds and biological crop

protection to maximize the benefits of these high-quality input materials. Empowering Nigerian farmers with the skills and know-how to produce robust and abundant harvests year after year.

Supported by the Dutch government in collaboration with NABC

The Seeds 4 Change Impact Cluster is an initiative supported by the government of the Netherlands and works in close collaboration with the Dutch Embassy office in Lagos. The Cluster is coordinated by the Netherlands-African Business Council (NABC), a Dutch membership organization with over 375 member companies, of which 35% in the agri-sector.

- Focus on 5 vegetables: tomato, onion, cabbage, watermelon and pepper;
- Provision of high-quality input materials (e.g. hybrid seeds and biological crop protection);
- Demonstrations & knowledge transfer via farmer-to-farmer training, farm field days and on-farm workshops;
- Connecting small and medium-scale farmers to off-takers and financiers.

Vegetable farming as a business

Vegetable cultivation is a profitable business with short crop cycles, short return on investment whilst only requiring a relatively small plot of land. Opportunities in this sector are driven by the private sector and the international seeds business. A key aspect for farmers in seizing opportunities is the use of improved seed varieties. These high-quality seeds and organic inputs have the following benefits:

- Higher yield per hectare
- Built-in resistance to pests and diseases
- They are adapted to the local climatic conditions
- Their organic inputs promote biodiversity and better plant health, which guarantee better productivity of improved seeds.

Need for improved farming practices

For farmers to reap the benefits of improved seeds, they need to have the knowledge and skills which enable them to apply good agricultural practices. Investments in the farmer's skills-set and transferring knowledge to farmers by way of demonstrations, farmer field days, 1-on-1 extension and training of trainers are key elements in the transition to vegetable farming as a profitable business - not only just for farmers and farmer-communities, but also for the international seed sector and Nigerian agro-industry.

What are quality seeds?

A hybrid seed is the combination of a male and female plant, resulting in a stronger variety. Because the male and female lines are pure, the hybrid seed is always the same quality. Although hybrid seeds are more expensive, they do give much higher yields which result in more income for the farmer. They are natural, and are also available as organic seeds. Sometimes, fake seeds are sold inside a branded package of a well-known high-quality variety. The original hybrid seeds come with a guaranteed quality (e.g. purity, germination, disease free) and some seed companies have scratch codes on their packages which can be used to check the origin of the seeds.

S4C Testimonial: Tomatoes in Karfi

Yusuf Inuwa (22) is a young farmer from Karfi. (Pictured in the middle) Yusuf has managed the tomato demonstration for S4C. He is currently managing his parents farm on which he plants maize, millet, sorghum, tomato, garden egg, cucumber, watermelon and pepper. Yusuf himself specializes in tomato and maize, as he has been farming these crops since he was little. The main challenge Yusuf faces are diseases and pests. S4C has introduced him to an integrated pest-management approach that has helped overcome his pest-problems. Yusuf says: "I had no idea that there was a more advanced way of farming until I joined S4C. I have learned how to raise seedlings using a seedling tray and how to stake a tomato plant. It was also my first time using hybrid seeds and I am very impressed by

the outcome: the yield was more than what we usually get when using local varieties, the fruits were much bigger and last much longer before perishing. Also, I had no difficulty selling them. A basket of tomatoes is usually sold at 3,500 but this time I sold it for 5,500." Yusuf also mentions: "A farmer's dream is to see his crops doing well without much spending and also getting more than what you expected in terms of profit." The other farmers in his community could clearly differentiate between local varieties and the hybrid ones, and showed interest in learning more about this method of farming. Yusuf is currently training them on the use of the seedling tray, agricultural practice and safe use of pesticides.



Cluster members

Syngenta is an international company specializing in seeds and crop protection. They will run seed variety trials, provide training on cultivation techniques and using agro-chemicals, and give demos of selected varieties.

Enza Zaden breeds and develops vegetable varieties in international and local crops. They will run tomato and onion demonstrations and provide farmer training in areas including extending growing seasons and minimizing post-harvest losses.

Bakker Brothers is an international vegetable seed breeding company. They will run demonstrations and focus on training and practical demos in areas like soil preparation, crop maintenance and pesticides, water management, and irrigation techniques.

Rijk Zwaan specializes in hybrid vegetable seeds. They will run variety trials, demonstrations and provide marketing skills training for farmers to enable them and their produce to connect to the market.

Koppert specializes in biological protection and soil enhancing products. They will provide training and demonstrations on using microorganisms, the relationship between plant roots, and soil and integrated crop management.

East West Seed is a seed breeding company specialized in tropical vegetable seeds. From their Kaduna office, they are pioneering a train-the-trainers programme in pre-commercial knowledge transfer that initially aims to benefit 25,000 small-holder farmers in Kano and Kaduna State.

Project partners

WUR, Wageningen University and Research is a Dutch university and research centre with food and food production as one of the core domains. WUR and the S4C program will capacitate and establish a team of 30 Super Trainers in Vegetable Cultivation Practices and a knowledge base to support horticultural sector development in Kano.

2SCALE is a large Dutch agribusiness incubator program specialized in agribusiness partnerships. They will support the S4C program by facilitating and establishing partnerships with off-takers and innovative finance providers.

Afri Agri Products Ltd. is a Nigerian based supplier for the agricultural and horticultural industry. (conducting variety trials for S4C)

Bayero University Kano (BUK) is a university situated in Kano in Kano State. BUK is one of the demonstration partners hosting S4C demo's.

Want to know more?

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