



In Ethiopia, an SSE system is known to be promoting such seed production, as well as the distribution and use by farmers of quality seeds of vegetable crops (Mulatu *et al.*, 2005), and this system could also be applied to other agricultural commodities such as rice, sorghum and maize.

Getinet *et al.* (2001) stated that the availability of breeder seed and reasonably good varieties, pre-basic and basic seed production do not cover economically important crops such as cotton, sorghum, groundnut and sesame. Therefore, priority crops should be identified, breeder seed multiplied and distributed to users by the respective institutions. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to review the role of small scale Seed Producing Cooperatives for commercial seed production.

## II. THE SMALL-SCALE SEED COOPERATIVES

The role of agricultural cooperatives in the lives of agricultural households covers cooperative membership, the use of cooperative services, the role of cooperatives in agricultural marketing, and their role in providing credit, both in cash and in kind (Nicholas Minot and Daniel Ayalew, 2012). Farmers in Ethiopia acquire seeds for their crops from two different sources: The “formal” or commercial seed sector “Improved seeds” (seeds with better characteristics such as yield higher than normal seeds) are sold to farmers through farmer cooperatives, input suppliers, and other venues. The “traditional” or “informal” seed sector – These are seeds that farmers either save from their crops and use in subsequent planting seasons or trade/buy informally.

Holloway *et al.* (2000) suggest that producer cooperatives are useful in overcoming access barriers to assets, information, services and markets for high-value products. The cooperatives are expected to serve as hubs for farmers to receive advisory services and information, training, and demonstrations on improved and sustainable farm management practices (IFPRI, 2010). In Ethiopia, limited extension is conducted by NGOs and the private sector, usually working through the woreda-level BOARDS (Davis *et al.*, 2009). Bernard *et al.*, (2007) found that a greater percent of households in the Tigray region participate in cooperatives than is the case in the three other leading regions (Amhara, Oromia and SNNPR).

Cooperatives and unions provide a wide variety of services, including input supply management, grain marketing, and the supply of consumer goods to members at prices that compete with local traders (Spielman *et al.*, 2006). Some cooperatives are also involved in seed multiplication and distribution schemes, grain milling (Rahmato, 2002). Cooperatives are becoming an increasingly important agricultural institution in Ethiopia, with the recent strong attention paid by the government to cooperatives as a key vehicle for advancing the government’s agricultural and rural development agenda. Cooperatives have both the function of rural “user organizations” and of service providers (Mogues *et al.*, 2009).

## III. MAJOR CONSTRAINTS IN THE SMALL SCALE SEED SECTORS

**Lack of varieties and inadequate breeder and basic seed supply:** For effective seed production, all activities that involve variety development, maintenance, and seed production should be properly linked as any single weakness would result in poor performance of the seed system. Thus, the agricultural research system should be strengthened for continuous development of varieties and supply of breeder seed of strategic crops

**Limited technical and managerial experience and material resource:** There should be sustained invest in human resource development and essential facilities for enhancing capability in germplasm conservation, utilization and crop improvement as well as seed production, processing, marketing and quality control.

**Absence of specialized seed farms:** For efficient, economic and sustainable seed supply, seed production should be decentralized into major crop production zones with active participation of both public and private sectors. At the same time, the local seed supply should be organized using both local and improved varieties through secondary seed multiplication scheme.

## IV. HOW TO SUPPORT AND PROMOTE SUCCESSFUL SMALL SCALE PRODUCERS COOPERATIVE

Integrating organization with empowerment through flexible capacity building is key to successful support. That can be translated into 3 basic orientations for governments, NGOs and the private sectors.

### *Taking on board the diversity of organization*

It is now widely recognized that provision of outside support should be aimed at supporting small farmers in implementing their own strategies. Different types of training and capacity building may be required to strengthen the small scale seed producing cooperatives according to their different needs and opportunities. This note is designed to improve understanding of different types of community-based financial organizations and the support structures they need to best serve remote rural communities, and in particular poor rural households (Matthew Pritchard, 2014).

### *Building the capacity of small scale farmers*

This is the basic component of promoting successful small scale producers cooperative facilitating and follow-up of their activities; Support to the improvement of communication between members of cooperatives and technical support unit; Training of leaders (strategic training-reflection, leadership training, etc) (Mercoiret, 2001).

## V. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE LOCAL/INFORMAL SEED SYSTEM

The quality of informal sector seed used by small-scale farmers can be improved in several ways as indicated by Setimela *et al.*, 2004:

- Train farmers in better selection, treatment, and storage of seed from their own farms. Own-saved seed is often the most appropriate, certainly for farmers who cannot afford to purchase seed. The training will help them increase production through better use of their own saved seed.

- Encourage farmers to make their own selection of traditional varieties, to multiply and store seed of such varieties, and to sell this quality seed of traditional varieties to other farmers. This strategy is best suited to farmers capable of some experimentation and who are potential users of modern varieties. Initially they should be encouraged to stabilize varieties they themselves have selected. These are farmers with limited resources, but living in medium to high potential areas.
- Develop modern varieties at research stations, and produce good quality seed of these varieties through either formal or informal channels whichever provides good (or acceptable) quality seed at affordable prices. This strategy will work best for farmers who can be persuaded to buy inputs, provided seed is available at prices considered worth the risk by those farmers.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The role of seed producing cooperatives have a vital role in Seed production and Multiplication strategies and approaches, this paper has critically review the contribution of the seed producing cooperatives as sources of seed for farmers. Core interventions and enabling actions can holistically strengthen the small scale seed producing cooperatives to improve farmers' productivity and livelihoods through an increasingly open and competitive seed production system that provides an affordable and diversified choice of seeds.

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