**Concept Note for Grant Proposals**

**(Max 2000 words)**

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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **1. Grant Sponsoring Division:** | **2. Co-sponsoring Division(s):** | | **3. Title of the grant:** Strengthening the Supply of Improved Seeds in Central Africa (SISCA) | | | **4. Value of IFAD grant:** *(in US$) 3,000,000* | **5. Co-financing:** *(in US$)* | | **6. Implementation period:** *36 months* | **7. GRIPS ID**: | | **8. Selected Strategic Priority:** 5. Business opportunities and partnership with Private Sector | | | **9. Window:** Indicate Global/Regional Country | **10. Countries:** The Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Gabon | | **11. Recipient:** *Select one of the following options*   * Competitive selection at CN stage  and name of recipient * To be selected competitively at design stage * Direct selection  and name of recipient: International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) | | | **12. Rationale for recipient selection and recipient capacity:**  IITA is uniquely qualified to implement this grant given its strong presence in the Central Africa region, network of diverse partners and capacity in developing cassava and maize seed systems, technologies and innovations which are adapted into inclusive small holder farmer (SHF) business opportunities and private sector-led partnerships. Through various projects and the IITA Business Incubation Platform (BIP) it gained valuable knowledge and experience with challenge funds and technical assistance (TA) facilities to support the development of SMEs, including youth and women-based enterprises. | | | **13. Background/relevance:**  Cassava and maize are critically important food crops in Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Gabon. Access to cassava and maize quality seed remains a great challenge for smallholder farmers in the region, despite investment in breeding and extension. Relatively low adoption rates of improved varieties, low volumes of sales of quality seeds, and the low rate at which farmers report sourcing seed from regulated seed channels in Central Africa suggest that there is significant space for growth. In Cameroun the seed system was disrupted after the food crisis in 2008 when early generation and certified seed production collapsed. In addition, the seed control and certification services of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development are weak.  There has been very little analysis in CAR relative to seed sector development. Against a backdrop of humanitarian crisis and before that decades of under investment in agriculture, there is across the board need for a focus on the fundamentals in CAR: from expanding access to germplasm to improving the production of early generation seed and promoting entrepreneurship. In the Republic of Congo and Gabon, the main weakness is the lack of any functional regulatory framework and a low level of synergy in terms seed system development based on close collaboration between all actors. While Gabon is in the process of harmonizing seed policy and regulation with regional policies, institutional support in the two countries has been weak.  In DRC, the analysis indicates that the seed sector has many positive aspects and achievements including the existence of a variety catalogue which is comprised of all the varieties authorized for official seed production and a seed producer networks, “agri-multipliers”. The seed sector is lacking financial, human and material means at the research level in order to assure the upkeep of varieties and their maintenance in good condition according to an appropriate scheme of conservation and materials in order to assure the production of quality pre-basic and basic seeds in large quantity and the seed industry is at an introductory stage.  One of the main challenges facing agricultural development efforts in the region is how to sustainably improve access to quality seed, as part of improving agricultural sector functioning. SISCA as a strategic investment will contribute to the development a private-sector-led seed sector, in a farmer centric manner, contribute to the implementation of IFAD’s updated strategy, commitment 6, and enhance SHF productivity and income. | | | **14. Direct and indirect target group:**  The principal target groups are existing SMEs working in seed and new SMEs involving at least 400 youth and 400 women. The indirect target group is SHFs (50% women) linked to ongoing projects to create synergies and leverage through SISCA allowing access to seed at scale.  Main intermediary target groups are: (1.) public research institutes, seed inspectorates, NGOs, agricultural extension; (2) public institutes involved in seed policy; and (3) projects with maize and cassava seed activities. SISCA will strengthen the capacity of the intermediary groups to fulfil their mandates. | | | **15. Goal, objectives and expected outcomes:**  Goal: Enhance access in a sustainable way of SHF, female and male, to quality seeds through the expansion of inclusive private sector-led seed sector. SISCA’s theory of change is that the increased use of quality seeds of maize and cassava by SHF will promote the development of the seed industry in Central Africa.  SISCA has three main objectives:   1. Strengthen seed production and distribution systems; 2. Expand and strengthen private-led seed sector, including youth and women-owned seed enterprises; 3. Support the operationalisation of policies and regulations.   The expected resulted are:   * At least 40% increase in the utilization of improved varieties of cassava and maize; * Release of high yielding and market-demand varieties of cassava and maize; * Operationalized strong PPP in the seed sector; * Capacity of private seed enterprises developed through business and technical development services; * 50% of seed enterprises will be owned by youth, men and women; * Improved seed regulation and certification standards.   The potential partners will include, but not limited to, the following:   1. Relevant departments/units of the Ministry of Agriculture and other ministries, with respect to provide an enabling environment for seed sector; 2. Institutions forming the national agricultural research and extension systems (NARES); 3. Investment projects; 4. The private sector (seed companies, contract seed farmers, agro-dealers, women and youth organizations and farmers’ organizations; and 5. NGOs providing business development services.   Considering the lessons of past experiences, the following principles emerged as key elements for successful implementation of SISCA:   1. Programmatic approach: The systemic nature of the challenges and their interdependence suggest a programmatic approach to give priority to the establishment of effective mechanisms. 2. Impact-based management: The implementation approach of interventions will be flexible and adaptive. Interventions will be accompanied by capacity development to ensure their sustainability and scaling-up of their effects. 3. Partnership: There are a need for a greater recognition of the plurality of the seed sector and consequently the need for a better coordination collaboration with all actors. 4. Alignment: Existing achievements, strategic frameworks and initiatives at local, national and regional level will be considered. 5. Stakeholders‟ participation and empowerment: At each level of implementation, targeted stakeholders will be involved in the planning and management of interventions. | | | **16. Key activities by component:**  At inception SISCA will have country-based stakeholder consultations, in collaboration with IFAD-funded projects, of key issues and opportunities and a country road map / implementation plan based on the three objectives describing the country situation for each objective. Regulatory assessment in each country will be part of this phase and include a review of existing seed acts, standards / process for sampling and testing, importation regulations, variety testing and registration regulations, status of national catalogue and extent to which country is signatory to regional seed schemes (COMESA, SADC, etc.) and international seed treaties (UPOV). This will enable for country specific and detailed measurable results. The following suite of activities are planned and will be adapted against each country context.  **Strengthen seed production and distribution systems**  National systems will have an enhanced capacity to conserve and avail superior maize and cassava germplasm including the EGS production and marketing company GoSeed linking into key activity (iii)   1. Build the capacity of the national systems guarding breeder and foundation seed in conservation and pipeline development of germplasm at national levels to improve their seed multiplication efforts 2. Build the capacity of extension services with additional training on seed-related aspects 3. Make high quality EGS available to seed businesses throughout the region - GoSeed Ltd. emerged from the IITA-BIP, produces and markets EGS from the CGIAR and other sources to produce high-quality certified seeds. SISCA will facilitate a GoSeed subsidiary based in Cameroon which will identify and support country PPPs to replicate the GoSeed approach and sustainably improve the availability of quality EGS 4. Train scientists and technicians to improve their seed multiplication efforts 5. Train in the management of FAW and MLND for maize and Cassava mosaic disease (CMD) and cassava brown streak disease (CBSD).   **Expand and strengthen private-led seed sector, including youth and women-owned seed enterprises**   1. Seed market forecasting, farmer demand analysis and marketing - Needs and market assessment and development will guide the production of improved seeds. 2. Develop the capacity of seed companies and seed multipliers to increase the production, processing, quality control and certification 3. Promote the establishment of youth and women-led start-ups in seed business 4. Build capacity of women-owned enterprises in seed production, processing and distribution 5. Build capacity of Youth-led enterprises in seed in seed production, processing and distribution 6. Provide on-site technical and business development services to seed companies 7. Promotion and awareness creation of improved varieties considered for scaling 8. Pilot seed input insurance program.   **Support the operationalisation of policies and regulations**   1. Conduct a thorough review of the seed laws to identify status of the seed regulations and issues relative to regional harmonization 2. Increase knowledge of seed policies and associated regulations and standards, for all actors in the seed value chain 3. Strengthen institutional capacity in seed inspection and certification 4. Operationalize seed regulatory functions in line with existing frameworks, particularly SADC and COMESA 5. Pilot operating procedures for field inspection (quality control protocol) for breeder, foundation, certified, or QDS of maize / cassava seed 6. Establish Traceable & transparent on-line documentation systems for EGS (Seed Tracker: [www.seedtracker.org](http://www.seedtracker.org) ). Seed TrackerTM (ST) is a WebApp which will be customized to ensure fit-for-purpose and offers a suite of applications for seed regulators, buyers, traders, research and extension services. | | | **17. Project cost:**  **Component Amount**  Seed Production & Distribution 800  Private Sector Development 800  Seed Policies and Regulations 800  **Sub-Total 2,400**  Management 600  **Total 3,000,000** | | | **18. Risks***:*  The main risk is to pre-determine country level investment areas without enough analysis and buy-in from country level partners and investment projects. This can be averted through a consultative start-up phase*.* | | | **19. Monitoring & Evaluation, KM and Learning:**  M&E will be primarily focused on the business performance and market development and scale of the SME and seed entrepreneurs supported by SISCA. A secondary focus will be on project activities aimed at enhancing the seed market and regulatory environment. Knowledge management and learning is a central theme of SISCA. A seed system learning network in Central Africa will be facilitated actively by IITA. All SME and public private partners will document their work, key innovations, illustrate their main seed business contributions with data, and discuss success and challenges. | | | **20. Supervision modalities:**  SISCA will be implemented by IITA Regional Office in Central Africa and will collaborate and provide backstopping and support to IFAD-funded projects and country level activities. IFAD Country Program Managers will be involved in the implementation in each country and will supervise its execution. | | | **21. Linkages**:  SISCA will work with seed sector stakeholders and existing agricultural programs with cassava and maize activities and National Agricultural Investment Programs: e.g. PREVES in Central Africa Republic; PAPAKIN in DR Congo; PDAR in Gabon, PDAR; PADEF in Republic of Congo, and other programs such as and the Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation Program (AfDB). | | | **22. Scaling up:** The effectivenessof seed business models, innovations and instruments will be documented and shared with stakeholders at country level and regionally. The information generated by SISCA will guide replication, scaling and design of improved strategies for increasing the availability of improved seeds in the region. | | | **23. Sustainability:**  Increasing the private sector role in seed systems enhances sustainability, SISCA will strengthen PPPs characterized by long-term multi-stakeholder partnerships integrated with seed system programs, enhancing domestic private sector seed development, other initiatives ensuring impact-influence after project end. | | | **24. Other aspects:** | | |