

Regulatory Perspective of Seed Certification: Focus on OECD Seed Schemes

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Global context

- Triple challenge in Agriculture
- Seed production and trade are increasingly international.
- Seed multiplication frequently occurs across multiple countries and hemispheres.
- Farmers, seed companies, regulators and import authorities require confidence that seed is true to the declared variety.
- International trade depends on harmonised and trusted certification systems.





The importance of Seed Certification for Agriculture and Trade

→ Ensuring Seed Quality

Certification guarantees seed quality, varietal purity and identity, boosting yield and crop resilience for farmers.

→ Facilitating International Trade

Certification provides reliable documentation enabling smooth trade between exporting and importing countries worldwide.

→ Supporting Food Security

Use of certified seeds promotes stable agricultural production, protecting food security and farmers' investments.

→ Market Integrity and Trust

Seed certification protects against mislabeling and poor-quality seed, maintaining trust in national and global markets.

The OECD Seed Schemes: Regulatory Foundations for International Seed Movement

Quality seeds for world needs

The OECD Seed Schemes is a seed varietal certification programme which provide an international framework for the certification of **varietal identity and purity** of agricultural seed moving in international trade.





Overview of the International Framework





Brief overview of the OECD Seed Schemes

Established

1961

(OECC - 1958)

64

Participating
countries in 2026

8

Schemes

204

Species

4

applicants

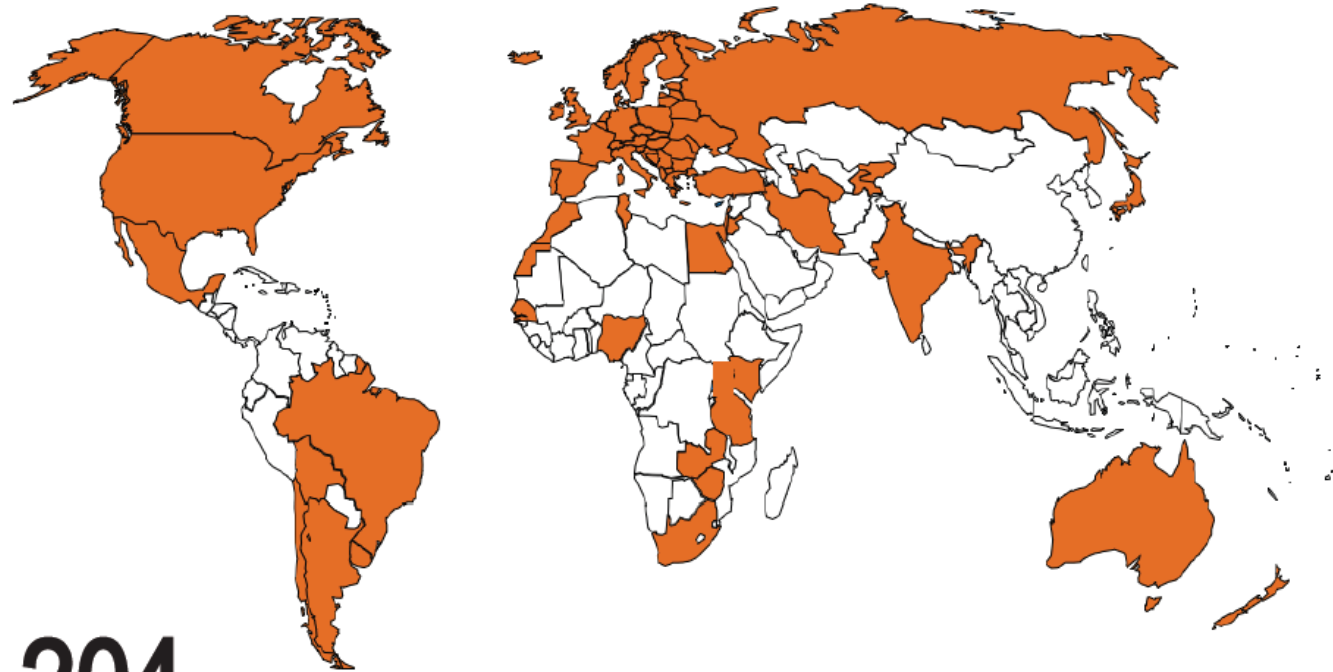
77.352

varieties eligible
for OECD certification

1.3 billion kg

of OECD certified seed per
year

1/3 of the total international trade





OECD Certification Standards

The OECD Schemes provide agreed common standard for:

- Varietal identity and purity
- Isolation of seed crop
- Generation system
- Secure sealing
- Labelling





Keystones of OECD Seed Varietal Certification

➤ Varietal certification:

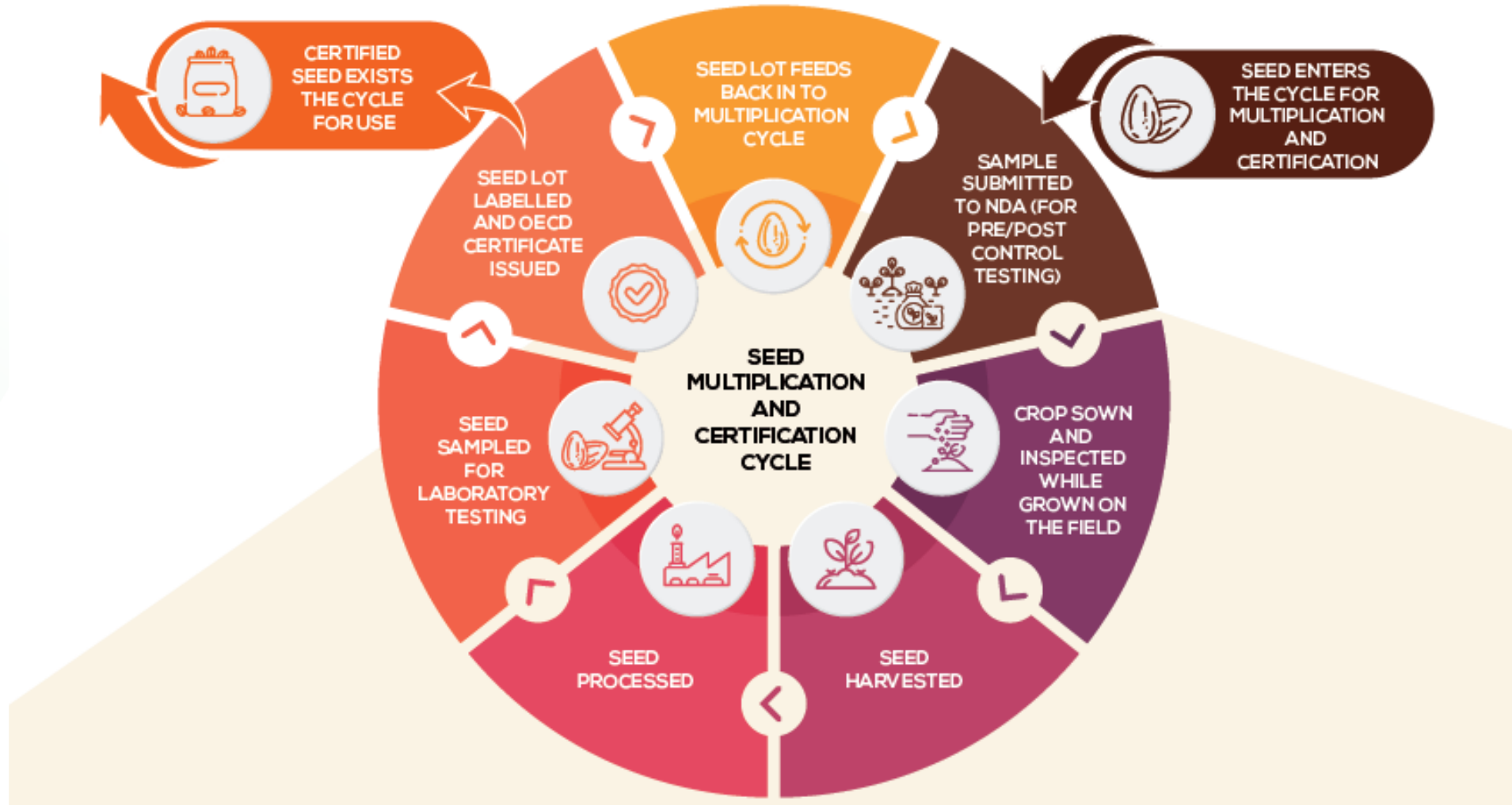
1. Registration of variety eligible for certification (variety description, standard sample, DUS test & VCU)
2. Control of seed production

By the **National Designated Authority** (NDA) or under its responsibility





Control of seed production overview





Biochemical and Molecular Techniques framework

- Advisory Group on Biochemical and Molecular Techniques established in 2022 → **Advisory Group on Techniques for Varietal Identity and Purity Assessment (2026)**
- **OECD List of internationally recognized Biochemical and Molecular Techniques in use by NDAs**
- **Collaboration with ISTA and UPOV (alignment of terminologies + international common marker sets)**
- **Defined listing principles and procedures**
- **Continuous update process**





OECD Seed Schemes Rules and Regulations

The OECD Rules and Regulations provide the **technical and legal** foundation for internationally recognised seed certification:

OECD Seed Schemes

RULES AND REGULATIONS
2026



- **Ensure consistency in varietal certification systems**
- **Cover all stages of seed production and certification**
 - Variety registration and listing (variety description, standard sample, DUS test & VCU)
 - Field inspection and control of seed crops
 - Seed sampling (ISTA), labelling and sealing of lots
- **Define key technical requirements**
 - Varietal identity and purity standards
 - Generation system (Pre-basic, Basic, Certified)
 - Isolation distances and crop management practices



OECD Seed Schemes Rules and Regulations

- **Ensure traceability and integrity of seed lots**
 - Standardised labelling and documentation
 - Record-keeping throughout the seed supply chain
- **Regularly updated through international consensus**
 - Agreed by participating countries and stakeholders
 - Adapted to evolving agricultural and trade conditions





Main instruments of the Schemes

- OECD Seed Schemes Rules and Regulations 2026
- OECD List of Varieties Eligible for Certification (online)
- Guidelines for Control Plot Tests & Field Inspection of Seed Crops
- Guideline for authorization of certain certification activities

All of them are available from the official website:

<https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/seeds.html>





Regulatory Impact

These elements ensure compliance, prevent fraud, and enable international seed lot acceptance:

- ✓ Ensures compliance with harmonised international standards
 - Common international rules for varietal identity, purity and traceability
- ✓ Prevents fraud and misidentification
 - Control systems (field inspections, post-control tests, labelling)
 - Full traceability across the seed supply chain
- ✓ Enables mutual recognition between countries
 - OECD certification accepted across participating countries
 - Avoids duplication of certification procedures





Integration into National Legislation

❖ **Implemented by National Designated Authorities (NDAs)**

- OECD standards applied through official certification authorities and procedures
- Legal basis for field inspections, certification and labelling

❖ **From voluntary standard to legal obligation**

- OECD Schemes are voluntary internationally
- Become legally binding once applied under OECD certification

❖ **Widely integrated into national seed laws and regulations**

- OECD Rules and Regulations used as reference framework/international benchmark
- Alignment of national certification systems – systems compulsory for agricultural seeds at national level (+ vegetables seeds sometimes).

❖ **Adopted by countries and regional systems (pre-requisite in the EU and basis for ECOWAS, MERCOSUR etc.)**

- Supports regulatory convergence across jurisdictions
- Provides a harmonised basis for varietal certification worldwide



Technical requirements for accessing to the OECD Seed Schemes

- ✓ Seed certification system in accordance with the OECD Seed Schemes
- ✓ Organised and functional certification structure
- ✓ Training of crop inspectors and control plot assessors
- ✓ Records of field inspections
- ✓ Quality control of crop inspectors activities
- ✓ Results from three years of post control testing
- ✓ Use of standard samples in post control plots
- ✓ Seed lot Identification process and records
- ✓ Seed lot sealing/fastening systems for OECD certification
- ✓ Conduct DUS and VCU tests
- ✓ National List of registered varieties
- ✓ Maintain stock of definitive variety samples
- ✓ Operate an approved seed sampling (and testing) system



Accessing to the OECD Seed Schemes

1. A member of the UN/FAO or WTO
2. Official application letter addressed to the Secretary General of OECD
3. Background technical documents on the national seed certification system to be sent to the OECD Secretariat
4. Evaluation mission to the applicant country by an evaluation team
5. Evaluation report prepared and presented to the Annual Meeting of the OECD Seed Schemes
6. Approval of the report by the Annual Meeting
7. Internal adoption process:
 - Endorsement by the Committee for Agriculture
 - Adoption by the OECD Council
8. Become adherent to the OECD Seed Schemes



Capacity building in the OECD Seed Schemes

Goal: Help with developing the seed sector and national certification schemes

➔ Capacity building is a key strategic element of the OECD Seed Schemes and it ensures that technical knowledge and assistance is provided to countries to advance and implement seed varietal certification systems that meet OECD global standards, ultimately ensuring the high-quality of seeds traded internationally.



CAPACITY BUILDING

IN THE OECD SEED CERTIFICATION SCHEMES

Brochure

OECD SEED SCHEMES



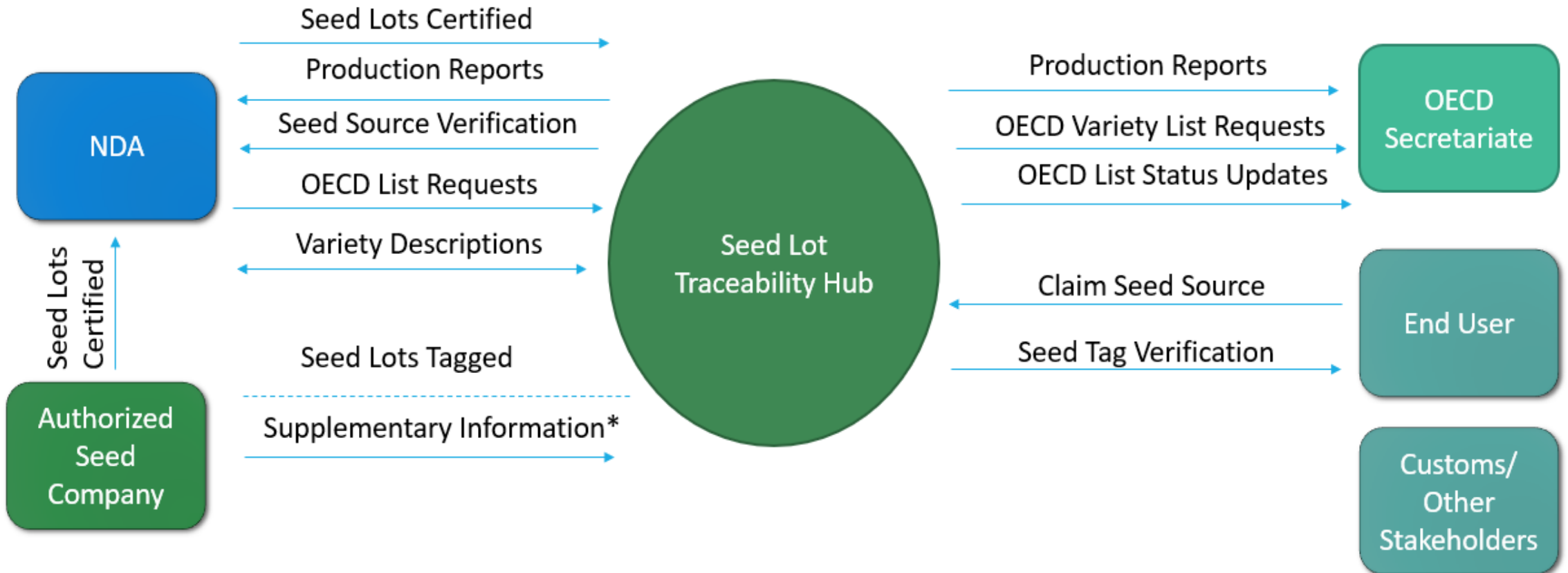
Recent capacity building activities





What's in for the future? THE OECD Seed Hub

Centralised Platform That Connects NDAs & Acts as an Enabling Foundation Technology



* Items Such as ISTA Certificates, ePhytos



Next steps: Digital OECD Seed Label

- Ability to verify label instantly
- Access to additional information on the certified seed lot
- QR Code, RFID, NFC, or Layered Approach
- Validations are Recorded For Extra Layer of Fraud Prevention
- Existing Security Layers Still Valid



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

Contact OECD Secretariat:
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<https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/seeds.html>

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12792589/>

