

## QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Seeds Act will be revised to regulate the sale, import and export of seeds and planting materials of agriculture crops including fodder, green manure and horticulture and supply of quality seeds and planting materials to farmers throughout the country.

The National Seeds Board (NSB) will be established in place of existing Central Seed Committee and Central Seed Certification Board. The NSB will have permanent existence with the responsibility of executing and implementing the provisions of the Seeds Act and advising the Government on all matters relating to seed planning and development. The NSB will function as the apex body in the seed sector.

All varieties, both domestic and imported varieties, that are placed on the market for sale and distribution of seeds and planting materials will be registered under the Seeds Act. However, for vegetable and ornamental crops a simple system of varietal registration based on "breeders declaration" will be adopted.

The Board will undertake registration of kinds/varieties of seeds that are to be offered for sale in the market, on the basis of identified parameters for establishing value for cultivation and usage (VCU) through testing/trialling.

Registration of varieties will be granted for a fixed period on the basis of multilocational trials to determine VCU over a minimum period of three seasons, or as otherwise prescribed as in the case of long duration crops and horticultural crops. Samples of the material for registration will be sent to the NBPGR for retention in the National Gene Bank.

Varieties that are in the market at the time of coming into force of the revised Seeds Act, will have to be registered within a fixed time period, and subjected to such testing as will be notified.

The NSB will accredit ICAR, SAUs, public/private organisations to conduct VCU trials of all varieties for the purpose of registration as per prescribed standards.

The NSB will maintain the National Seeds Register containing details of varieties that are registered. This will help the Board to coordinate and assist activities of the States in their efforts to provide quality seeds to farmers.

The NSB will prescribe minimum standards (of germination, genetic characteristics, physical purity, seed health, etc.) as well as suitable guidelines for registration of seed and planting materials.

Provisional registration would be granted on the basis of information filed by the applicant relating to trials over one season to tide over the stipulation of testing over three seasons

before the grant of registration.

Government will have the right to exclude certain kinds or varieties from registration to protect public order or human, animal and plant life and health, or to avoid serious prejudice to the environment.

The NSB will have the power to cancel the registration granted to a variety if the registration has been obtained by misrepresentation or concealment of essential data, the variety is obsolete and has outlived its utility and if the prevention of commercial exploitation of such variety is necessary in the public interest.

Registration of Seed Processing Units will be required if such Units meet the prescribed minimum standards for processing the seed.

Seed Certification will continue to be voluntary. The Certification tag/label will provide an assurance of quality to the farmer.

The Board will accredit individuals or organisations to carry out seed certification including self-certification on fulfillment of criteria as prescribed.

To meet quality assurance requirements for export of seeds, Seed Testing facilities will be established in conformity with ISTA and OECD seed certification programmes.

The State Government, in conformity with guidelines and standards specified by the Board, will establish one or more State Seed Testing Laboratories or declare any Seed Testing Laboratory in the Government or non-Government Sector as a State Seed Testing Laboratory where analysis of seeds will be carried out in the prescribed manner.

Farmers will be encouraged to use certified seeds to ensure improved performance and output.

Farmers will retain their right to save, use, exchange, share or sell their farm seeds and planting materials without any restriction. They will be free to sell their seed on their own premises or in the local market without any hindrance provided that the seed is not branded. Farmers' right to continue using the varieties of their choice will not be infringed by the system of compulsory registration.

Stringent measures would be taken to ensure the availability of high quality of seeds and check the sale of spurious or misbranded seeds.