

# Guidelines to seed companies in response to COVID-19 pandemic

Effects of COVID-19 are being felt in every corner of the world thus paralyzing many sectors. Agriculture has not been spared either and this is bound to exacerbate the situation since we already have 250 million people in Africa without food. Various interventions are being put in place and governments are taking a lead in this by imposing shutdowns, social distancing, encouraging citizens to keep in doors and practice regular hand washing with soap. Country teams are requested to encourage partners and farmers to stay safe by observing government guidelines.

Amidst the pandemic, most governments have classified food and agriculture as “Essential Service” to allow the continued movement of agricultural inputs so as not to disrupt agricultural supply chain. In some of our countries farmers are either about to plant or are planting and it is therefore important they access inputs uninterrupted.



The following guidelines could be helpful to seed companies plus input distributors to better serve the farmers without endangering them:



### 1. At Seed Company Level

- All project staff should be provided with protective gear notably masks, gloves and sanitizers. Seed company grantees could use budget line on activities which can't be carried out like training, with the approval of the relevant AGRA Program Officer.
- All company premises like factories, stores, shops should have water, soap and hand sanitizers for staff. Hand washing should be done before entering and after entering these premises.



### 2. Engagement with partners

Seed company clients fall in 3 broad categories (i) contract out-growers: should be facilitated early enough with inputs (seed, fertilizer and pesticides) and where possible prepare for them land in order to plant on time (ii) distributors like hub and agro-dealers: be facilitated to deliver inputs or encourage early pick up (iii) VBAs: once seed companies receive lists of requirements compiled by VBAs, seed companies should arrange delivery to the VBAs who in turn will deliver to farmers (iv) governments/NGOs: establish their needs early enough for either delivery or pick up.



### 3. Communication and Messaging

- Seed companies are encouraged to communicate using phones and other ICT based platforms with various clients and farmers to minimize contact
- Take advantage of radios to communicate information to farmers and input suppliers, NGOs and government about your products (performance, positioning, use, availability and accessibility).

Governments, NGOs and farmers are going to come in droves to buy seed as they are being advised about rains not lasting long. It is therefore important for the seed companies to ensure those concerned are advised correctly to avoid taking/planting varieties in wrong ecologies.

- Use ICT to promote cashless payments, keep track of sales and get feedback from various clients



### 4. Other considerations

Meteorologists are forecasting that rains will not last long therefore seed companies should prioritize selling/distributing seeds of early maturing varieties, consider putting some production under irrigation.

**THANKS FOR YOUR WORK AND STAY SAFE**