

## SENDING SAFE AID WITHOUT HARMFUL PESTS AND DISEASES

### FACTSHEET 02

# For donors sending seeds for planting

Please help us to safeguard our vulnerable environment and communities by ensuring that any humanitarian aid that is sent does not inadvertently introduce harmful pests and diseases

### Why is it important to us?

The movement of food and other humanitarian aid is a known pathway for the introduction of harmful pests and diseases. Unless appropriate and timely risk management is applied, these new pests and diseases may become established and continue to cause long-term damage to our economy, environment and communities long after we have recovered from the emergency situation.

The introduction of new pests and diseases can affect the quality and yield of agricultural produce which can jeopardise food security. Pest introductions can also damage the sanitary and phytosanitary status of a country, making it more difficult to trade with other countries and build back the economy.

During crisis situations, we are temporarily constrained in our ability to implement our normal phytosanitary activities on donated goods at the border. This is because our treatment and processing infrastructure may be damaged or inaccessible, water, electricity and other services may be cut and staff may be unable to travel to work or may be diverted to emergency tasks. Additionally, other government agencies and officials may require the immediate release goods to people in need without going through our normal process.

To ensure that our staff can focus effort on other priority activities such as food and shelter distribution, please help us by taking steps to mitigate the pest risk of donated goods **prior to export**. For seeds, this may include virus and disease testing, inspection for weed seeds and/or treatment.

### What can you do to help us?

Before sending any aid, please work with your department of agriculture or relevant quarantine authority to ensure that:

- The goods are permitted into the country receiving aid.
- Any import requirements of the aid receiving country are met.
- Required treatments are applied before export.
- The appropriate documentation and clearances are sent with the aid shipment.

The above processes are performed by your department of agriculture or relevant quarantine authority as part of normal trade/export practices. Please contact them if you have any queries on what to do.

### Pest risk considerations of seeds for planting

Seeds intended for planting carry a particular quarantine risk because seeds can harbour viruses and other diseases which may spread into the wider environment and affect other crops and plants, when planted in a new country.

Seed lots can also be contaminated with weed seeds which can germinate when planted with donated species and become invasive in the new environment, competing with crops and native endemic species for water and nutrients and subsequently reduce crop productivity and damage ecosystems. Seeds can also harbour storage pests such as khapra beetle, which infest stored seed and grain, making them unsafe for human consumption and unable to germinate. Storage pests are a serious concern for food security.

Due to the particular risk posed by seeds intended for planting when compared to seeds for consumption, it is important that the intended use of the seeds is clearly labelled and can be understood by the on-ground staff in the aid receiving country.

Please note that seed quality, as described in different standards such as International Seed Testing Association (ISTA), International Seed Health Initiative (ISHI), Association of Official Seed Analysis (AOSA), National Seed Health System (NSHS) and International Seed Federation (ISF), is not the same as and does not directly correlate to the phytosanitary status of seeds for planting.



Granary weevil infesting stored wheat seeds (Clemson University, Bugwood.org).

## Help us mitigate the pest risk prior to export by:

- Where possible, ensuring seeds are sourced from areas free of quarantine pests and diseases.
- All seeds from fleshy fruits (including pods) must have all traces of flesh removed.
- Assume that any seed treatment that is required to kill surface pathogens and storage pests (e.g. hot water immersion, fungicide treatment or fumigation) will not be possible on arrival and should be carried out before sending the seeds for planting.
- Seed consignments should be free of weed seeds, as well as other unidentified seeds, fungal mycelia, animal faecal matter, plant material and debris and soil.
- To further assist in mitigation of potential risks caused by seed aid, assessment through a Seed Analysis Certificate (SAC), with the following criteria could be considered:
  - be issued by an ISTA or AOSA accredited seed testing station, or an accredited laboratory that follows the ISTA or AOSA methodology
  - state the actual weight of the sample examined
  - state the seed lot number and align with traceability information on the phytosanitary certificate (for seeds where phytosanitary certificate is presented)
  - state the botanical name of each identified species of seed or nematode gall found in the sample (any unidentified genera or species are to be recorded as such)
  - give the percentage of soil particles present in the samples.

If no import requirements exist for a seed species contact your local quarantine authority to enquire on past or equivalent regional import requirements and consider using those as a basis.



*Inspecting stored grain for contaminants (C. Dale).*

## To ensure that the products sent are of greatest help, please re-consider sending the following items:

- old seeds with low viability and low quality.
- contaminated seeds.
- seeds sourced from sick or diseased plants.
- unlabelled seeds.
- seeds of species not suited to the destination country planting conditions.

If packaging or packing is used, it should be new, clean and free of pests and other contaminants. Any freight containers that are used for storage or transport should also be cleaned and be pest free (see [IPPC best practice guide on measures to minimise pest contamination](#) for more information)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) recommendation on the safe provision of food and other humanitarian aid: <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/89786/>