

# Gender Mainstreaming in Seed Companies in Uganda: A summary brief

## Introduction

Seed companies in Uganda play an integral role in raising farmers' agricultural productivity, income, and food and nutrition security through the production and distribution of high-quality seed. They provide an array of seed varieties in different packet sizes and prices to cater for the needs and preferences of their diverse customers. Maize is considered the most important crop, as it dominates the production and sales of seed companies in Uganda.

Seed companies are driven mainly by profit-maximizing objectives; however, a more gender-responsive environment relating to production, marketing, and human resource management could potentially scale up profits and adoption levels.

This study was primarily undertaken to gain insights into three main research objectives:



Assessing the extent to which the promotional approaches employed by seed companies are gender-responsive;



Identifying the constraints and opportunities facing women in the seed multiplication business;



Assessing the leadership and full-time vs part-time positions within seed companies.

## Methodology

This study was conducted in 2019 with 13 registered seed companies in Uganda that represent 80% of the market share. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the seed companies' owners and managers who had a wide range of knowledge in maize seed production, marketing and human resources. The three themes of the interviews are discussed in the findings of the study.

## Findings

### Theme 1: Gender considerations in the promotion and marketing of certified seed



Seed companies in Uganda employ and invest in a range of promotional approaches to create farmer awareness and adoption of improved maize varieties. These promotional strategies include demonstration plots (demos), field days, radio, agricultural shows, print materials, etc.

Radio was considered by the seed companies to be the most effective mode of promoting seed. Despite the business and social arguments for the necessity and benefit of targeting women farmers, the majority of the seed companies interviewed have yet to make deliberate efforts to translate this into action. They employ a "one-size-fits-all" marketing approach to reach a highly diverse clientele. Only five of the thirteen seed companies have specific promotional strategies to effectively target men and women with their varieties.

These strategies include:

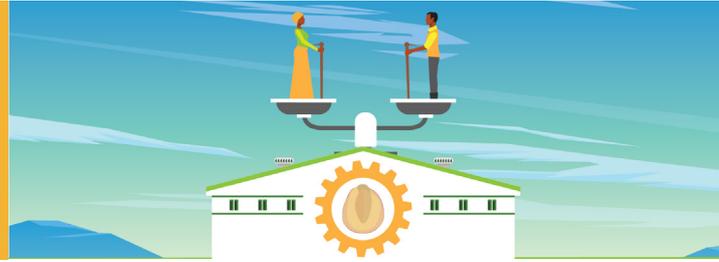


Working with women lead farmers and women's associations, co-operatives and groups, and organizing women-led demos, to share knowledge and reveal the advantages of adopting improved maize varieties with other women farmers.



The use of door-to-door approaches by some seed companies to talk to men farmers, because of men's work schedule.

## Theme 2: Gender and seed production capacities within seed companies



More men outgrowers than women engaged in seed multiplication



1247 male



750 female

Seed companies provide seed-multiplication opportunities for small-scale farmers. They provide outgrowers with technical and financial support: for example, training in seed multiplication, providing credit, and post-harvest support through the provision of storage space, among others.

The results showed that more men outgrowers than women (1247 male and 750 female) engaged in seed multiplication in all the following five categories: early generation seed (EGS), certified seed (CS); cooperative CS; group CS; and outgrowers under an irrigation scheme (Figure 1).

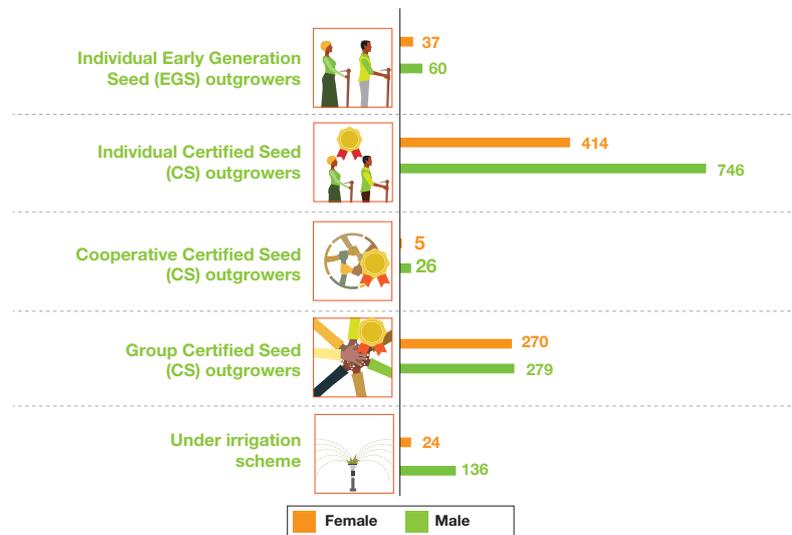


Figure 1. Number of male and female seed outgrowers

The requirements set by seed companies in Uganda to select contract farmers to multiply seed include access to adequate, isolated maize fields situated a considerable distance away from other maize fields to ensure that high-quality seed is produced; and access to capital and labor. Regrettably, women outgrowers are particularly disadvantaged because they have smaller plots of land and less secure land ownership in Uganda than men. In some cases, women outgrowers rent plots of land to increase their opportunities for seed multiplication.

According to seed companies, engaging with cooperatives and farmers' groups helps increase men's and women's participation in seed multiplication opportunities. This is because cooperatives and farmers' groups:



Secure more land and land-use rights;



Increase farmers' access to capital;



Help farmers improve their business skills and negotiate better terms for engagement in contract farming;



Minimize and spread the costs of agricultural inputs such as seed, fertilizer, equipment, labor and transport.

The majority of the seed companies follow gender-blind targeting approaches that may lead to the exclusion of women seed outgrowers. However, to support seed multiplication opportunities for women, a few seed companies have allowed outgrowers to grow seed on company land and provided women small-scale outgrowers with seed on credit to be repaid after the harvest.

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# Theme 3: Gender and human resource management in seed companies



Seed companies provide employment opportunities to skilled and trained staff in different seed business operations. One important issue faced by seed companies is the high turnover of skilled and trained staff. To retain and motivate staff, all the interviewed seed companies financially support their staff in participating in external trainings, to build their employees' capacities with regard to the different aspects of seed operations. They also support staff who enroll in school to enhance their careers.

## 3.1) Leadership in seed companies:

When taking stock of the leadership positions within seed companies, the data showed that women are underrepresented in the influential managerial roles of seed companies (Figure 2). Men hold key leadership roles and managerial positions in seed production and processing, product development, and sales and marketing, while women hold managerial positions in finance, accounting and quality control.

## 3.2) Employment in seed companies:

The seed production department can be characterized as male-dominated, while seed processing is female-dominated (Figure 3). Men make up the majority of the breeders, technicians, and production assistants/officers; these positions are mainly full-time, while seed processing operations are characterized as seasonal.

The data also revealed that more men work in the sales and marketing department because of the cultural norms and household dynamics that play a key role in women's career choice. As a sales and marketing officer, frequent field visits to interact with farmers in different areas is a prerequisite, which can be a challenge for women who may prioritize their household role and accept norms that limit women going into the field alone. This is a missed opportunity, because sales and field officers are well-positioned to interact with farmers, especially women farmers, and help them access inputs (seed) and agronomic advice and information that they often lack.

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Figure 2. Number of male and female department heads in seed companies

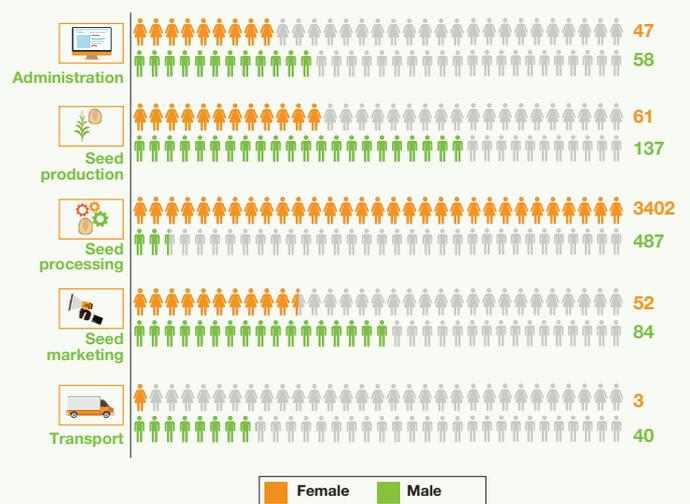


Figure 3. Number of males and females employed in different departments of seed companies

# Conclusion



## Action 1:

Gender-neutral marketing approaches are likely to have a positive impact for youth, women and marginalized farmers in accessing and adopting improved maize varieties. Gender-responsive seed marketing and deliberate targeting approaches have the potential to increase the clientele base and maximize profits for seed companies.



## Action 2:

Seed companies can aim to be more accountable and committed to understanding the constraints and opportunities facing men and women who register as seed producers; this will require specific targeting approaches and investment.



## Action 3:

Gender-inclusive seed companies are better positioned to advocate for more women in leadership positions, and to deliberately mentor young women interested in seed breeding careers, to scale-up the impact of seed companies. Increased participation of women in managerial roles in seed companies would potentially increase the focus on the needs of women farmers and company employees.

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