

## SEED TRADE CRUCIAL TO CURB GLOBAL FOOD INSECURITY

Nyon, Switzerland - With tensions in the Black Sea and the COVID-19 pandemic having disrupted food and fertilizer trade – exacerbating hunger in many parts of the world – seed trade is now on the spotlight as the next crucial element to ease global food insecurity.

The International Seed Federation (ISF) gave its support to the World Trade Organization (WTO)'s calls for securing seed trade and highlighted its role in protecting the food supply chain in the long-term through:

- Increased access by growers to seed as the essential first input in farming
- Higher yield and greater food diversification via improved crop varieties adapted to local conditions
- Mitigating climate change impacts through the development of climate resilient and resource-efficient crops

Representatives of the private seed sector will join the [WTO Trade Dialogue on Food](#) on Thursday, 22 September, led by UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) chief economist Maximo Torero. This dialogue comes on the heels of the WTO's 12th Ministerial Conference where commitments were made to facilitate trade and improve the functioning and resilience of global markets.

“We know the devastating impacts of trade disruptions to agriculture and food supply,” said Michael Keller, ISF Secretary General. “ISF, which represents the private seed sector at the international level and whose members account for 96% of global seed trade, calls for a concerted emergency response to the unfolding global food crisis. We seek urgent and critical discussions with our partners in the food supply chain to achieve Zero Hunger targets outlined in the 2030 Agenda.”

Food prices have been escalating worldwide, with some 25 countries reacting to higher food prices by adopting export restrictions affecting over 8 percent of global food trade<sup>1</sup>. Complicating the food supply response is the doubling of fertilizer prices<sup>2</sup> over the last 12 months due to record-high costs of inputs like natural gas. The World Food Programme reports<sup>3</sup> that the number of acute food insecure people has increased to 345 million in 82 countries. Beyond the short term, climate change is structurally affecting agriculture productivity and threatening food supply.

On a global level, approximately 7 million metric tons of seed are imported every year. ISF notes that the price of seed has remained rather stable compared to other agricultural inputs. Innovation within the sector is a consistent priority: seed companies invest as much as 30% of profits in R&D to develop resource-efficient and low-input new varieties that require less water, tolerate drought and extreme weather, improve soil health by boosting natural nutrients, capture carbon through enhanced root systems, and others. These crop varieties provide significant yield increases for farmers, helping improve farm productivity and food supply without increasing land use and other inputs.

In July, the WTO, FAO, WFP, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank Group released a [joint statement](#) calling for urgent action to address the global food crisis. [ISF outlines its contributions](#) in the areas of sustainable food production, efficient trade, seed choice for farmers, and plant breeding innovation to set the path in the short and medium term in the four key areas outlined by the signatories of the joint statement. This response is based on the [Seed Sector Declaration](#) signed in 2021 by more than 200 private seed companies and national seed associations to demonstrate the industry's commitments and contributions to the UN SDGs. #

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the WTO, Global Trade Alert and World Bank monitoring of trade policy changes since February 2022 <sup>2</sup> Source: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/commodity-markets>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.wfp.org/publications/wfp-global-operational-response-plan-update-5-june-2022> June 2022



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## About ISF

ISF is the voice of the global seed sector. Since 1924, it has represented the interests of its members who make up 96% of international seed trade today. Its global reach extends to seed associations and seed companies around the world and it has official observer status in key intergovernmental and international organizations.

[www.worldseed.org](http://www.worldseed.org)

