



**Mr. Chairman and distinguished participants**

**One of the most direct ways to enhance agricultural productivity across the ECO region is through increased access to high-quality seeds, tailored to regional conditions and supported by strong collaboration within the seed industry.**

**Given our shared geography and close socio-cultural ties, ECOSA firmly believes that regional collaboration in the seed sector can deliver substantial economic and social benefits to all ECO Member States.**

**Please allow me to briefly outline a few initial steps that could help strengthen regional cooperation in this essential sector:**

**1. Reduction of Customs Tariffs in Seed Trade**

**Seed production covers a wide spectrum, including seeds, saplings, seedlings, and ornamental plants. Reducing customs duties on the trade of these products will increase cross-border availability, and improve farmers' access to higher-quality seeds and planting materials. Moreover, in**



**line with today's agenda, it will further stimulate trade within the ECO region.**

**Such a measure would not only increase agricultural productivity and household income but also contribute to food security and support intra-ECO trade liberalization in synergy with the revision process of the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA).**

**It is considered beneficial to remove customs duties on important species for ECO Member States. Therefore, we recommend the identification of priority seed species for tariff reduction in consultation with Trade and Agriculture Ministries of ECO Member States, aligned with ongoing work led by the ECO Secretariat on ECOTA and tariff-related studies.**

## **2. Harmonization of Seed Legislation Between ECO Member States**

**Harmonizing national seed laws with each other and with international standards will:**

- . Eliminate technical barriers to trade.**



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- **Ensure mutual recognition of testing and certification procedures.**
- **Enable long-term sustainability of our seed markets.**

**Accordingly, ECOSA kindly recommends ECO Member States the following actions:**

- **Further promote and expand membership frameworks for OECD Seed Schemes and ISTA (International Seed Testing Association).**
- **Develop a joint roadmap for adopting common testing methods, protocols, and certification systems. This will facilitate reliable seed trade and ensure long-term sustainability.**
- **Facilitate seed multiplication, investment, and technology transfer among ECO Member States.**

**These actions will add value to the economies of ECO Member States, enhance the experience-sharing mechanisms, improve qualifications of technical personnel of ECO Member States in the production areas, and strengthen the potential of seed exporters in the ECO region.**

### **3. Development of an ECO Common Variety Catalogue**



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**As practiced in the European Union and OECD Seed Schemes, formulating common ECO legislation, and ECO Common Variety Catalogue would:**

- **Accelerate circulation of high-quality seeds.**
- **Reduce duplication of testing efforts.**
- **Facilitate trade and increase opportunities for joint investment among ECO Member States.**

**This ECO catalogue should be built and regularly updated through joint efforts of national seed authorities of ECO Member States, under agreed conditions.**

**Under this system, once a plant variety is registered and published in one Member State, it could be marketed across the ECO region without additional testing or re-registration. This shall promote trust, transparency, and efficiency in cross-border seed trade.**

### **Proposed Next Steps**

**To advance this agenda, we, as the ECOSA kindly recommend**



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- **integrating seed products into the implementation roadmap of the revised ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA), for instance, in the form of an annex and/or protocol to ECOTA, and**
- **strengthening the ECOTA Implementation Fund to encourage capacity building projects, for example, in the form of technical and legal drafting work, trainings, experience-sharing workshops, to formulate and implement a common ECO legislation and ECO Common Variety Catalogue.**

**Importantly, we kindly recommend these actions to be formulated and implemented in consultation with the Trade Ministries and Agriculture Ministries of ECO Member States.**

### **As a Conclusion**

**The seed sector holds the key to advancing productivity, sustainability, and integration within ECO. With aligned product regulations, reduced tariffs / non-tariff barriers, and shared investment in innovation, ECO can build a more resilient and competitive regional agricultural economy.**



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**ECOSA stands ready to support the ECO Secretariat and Member States in implementing these proposals and translating them into concrete actions.**