

# Seed trade crucial to curb global food insecurity

**T**he 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 September 22, 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," says Michael Keller, ISF Secretary General. "ISF, which represents the private seed sector at the international level and whose members account for 96 percent 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 eight percent of global food trade. Complicating the food supply response is the doubling of fertiliser prices over the last 12 months due to record-high costs of inputs like natural gas.

The World Food Programme reports 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 seven 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 percent 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.