



# Seed Sector Framework Iraq: An Exploration on Seed Regulations, Compliance and Stakeholder Experiences

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# Context and project objectives

Over the past years the **exports of vegetable seed and seed potato to Iraq have grown exponentially.**

Nevertheless, Iraq still depends strongly on import of certain seeds. E.g. The seed potato export to Iraq was 21,000 MT in 2019.

However, **experience in Iraq by Dutch companies has been mixed**, with some seed legislation atypical compared to other countries. There are also differences in regulation between Bagdad and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).

This project has set out to:

- Understand the seed law that is formally in place.
- Understand practices and seed trade experiences of Dutch and Iraqi stakeholders.
- Reflect on comparable situations in other countries.
- Reflect on findings and road forward through workshop discussion with a group of stakeholders.



(photo courtesy FAO)

# Key activities

Key activities of the project included:

- The report is based **literature research**, accessed from the internet and various documents provided by Dutch and Iraqi stakeholders, including a draft translation of the Iraqi seed law.
- **Interviews** were held with Dutch organizations including the Consulate of the Netherlands in Erbil (Iraq), private sector associations like Plantum and NAO, and vegetable seed and seed potato companies.
- The project organized a **validation workshop** together with the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (Iraq), Salahaddin University, and several other public and private stakeholders.



Validation meeting in Erbil,  
December 13th, 2022

# Implementing partners and key stakeholders involved

- Iraq's Ministry of Agriculture
- KRI's Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources
- Iraq's National Seed commission
- University of Kerbala and Salahaddin University
- Consulate General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in KRI
- ARD Unifert company in Iraq
- Debbane Agri company
- HZPC The Netherlands
- NAO and Plantum,
- Agrico
- Schaap Holland
- Agroplant
- Interseed
- Rijk Zwaan
- Bejo Bakker Brothers
- De Bolster

# Results

**Variety testing and registration in Iraq is markedly fast** with one season test at 2-3 locations in geographically diverse circumstances.

For Plant Variety Protection (PVP) **the aspect of novelty is not adopted** and appears to be synonymous with distinctness from other varieties and the need to add value for agriculture cultivation and/or industrial use. This opens the door for protecting varieties that have been earlier introduced, popularized, and marketed in Iraq.

Also, for **the duration of the protection Iraq differs from international standards**. Under UPOV the duration for plant breeder rights is a fixed period not less than 20 years. Whereas in Iraq the protection is 10 years (both for vegetable and potato varieties).

In addition, the **protection rights are granted to the agent** instead of the breeder. One stakeholder mentioned that it this specific article in the law is more about agent protection than variety protection.

In Iraq, about **90% of the total vegetable seed is imported by the Agricultural Supply Company (ASC)** and the private sector. The seed import is supervised and controlled by the State Board for Seed Testing and Certifications (SBSTC).

The SBSTC is responsible to coordinate the import, marketing and distribution of vegetable seed imported from abroad. The requirements are similar to other countries in terms of phytosanitary requirements, seed quality and variety registration.

# Insights & conclusions

There are legislation differences between KRI and Iraq/Bagdad. This leads to confusion. **Ideally a new seed law is developed** that replaces all current seed laws in Iraq and in KRI. The objective should be to bring it in line with other MENA and EU countries.

**The new seed law must address all seed registration and protection issues**, including seed certification, plant health and processing. Novelty should be explicitly included, while the PVP period would need to be increased to at least 20 years.

Iraq would benefit from **UPOV membership**. UPOV membership will give more credibility to foreign investors, while Iraq will also profit from more international knowledge sharing with UPOV members.

Seed potato production in the Netherlands is reaching its limits. As such **there are opportunities to produce seed potato in Iraq**, but local safeguards need to be in place first (in terms of seed quality and IP provisions).

In the same line, **the seed laboratories need to upgrade their capabilities to international standards**. This relates to seed germination, seed purity and seed health testing procedures. Also, investments in equipment are needed, and ISTA certification could be explored.

The study recommends to **initiate a long-term cooperation program** between the EU or the Netherlands and Iraq's MoA for capacity building and technical support.

# Opportunities for follow up

The study anticipates the following follow-up activities:

- The study paves the way for **an exchange visit** from the Ministries of Agriculture of Iraq and KRI to the Netherlands. The exchange visit can provide input for a new or amended Seed Law.
- Specific **capacity building activities** can be organized for **Iraq's seed testing capacity** and specifically that of its seed laboratories.





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