

352 Kiepersol Road
Lynnwood
0081 Pretoria
South Africa



Private Bag x10 Suite 89
Menlo Park, 0102
Pretoria, South Africa

Tel: +27 12 472 9500
E-mail: accounts@sansor.co.za
Website: www.sansor.org

SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL SEED ORGANIZATION

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Guidelines for researchers and companies regarding research projects that affect the seed industry or for the request of seed.

1. Introduction

The South African National Seed Organization (SANSOR) promotes good research practices that encourage good relationships among research institutes and agricultural industry partners. The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines to researchers for requesting seeds from seed companies for research as well as for companies working with researchers on seed industry-related projects.

Continued research and development in agriculture is of utmost importance to ensure food security in South Africa. Basic research, breeding, seed production and trade are important to ensure South Africa is a competitive seed industry and that the South African seed industry can provide quality seed to farmers in SA and around the world.

2. How SANSOR can help:

SANSOR IS ABLE TO:

- SANSOR is able to provide names of seed companies that could be contacted with regard to seed queries.
More info on SANSOR members and the crops they work with can be seen here: <https://www.sansor.org/members/>
- SANSOR can assist with the process to link up researchers and seed companies.
- SANSOR is able to advise companies how to protect their Intellectual Property when partnering with a research institute.

IS NOT ABLE TO:

- SANSOR is not able to give away sensitive business information of seed companies.
- SANSOR is not able to force any company to provide seed to researchers.

3. Requesting seed for research

DIRECTORS:

MM Ramokgopa (Chairman), NJB Goble (Vice-Chairman), CR Volbrecht, B Lever, JJ Meintjes, RH Roselt, L Chetty



3.1 Vegetable seed, Pasture Seed, and Field Crops excluding GMO Maize, Soybean and Cotton

Seed sold commercially in South Africa can be viewed on the [variety list](#) however, some crop types do not have a variety list and if you want to work on those crops, we suggest that you refer to our members section to see who works on those crops. <https://www.sansor.org/members/>

Plant Breeders' Rights – A protected variety has Plant Breeders' Rights on the variety. Once a year, a list is produced that has all the varieties on with PBR. Every quarter a circular is sent with the varieties that received PBR in that quarter. If you are unsure if the variety, you are working on is protected please contact. The PBR Protected Variety Lists can be found here: <https://www.sansor.org/legislation/>

- Seed of crops mentioned above can be used freely for private planting, and experimental research. Seed can be bought or donated from/by seed companies.

However, where a variety is protected SANSOR strongly advises:

- To alert the variety owners (company) of the planned research and outcome(s) as this will facilitate a good working relationship for future projects.
- Sign a Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) with the seed company and the researcher to ensure both parties understand the mutually agreed terms. ([Example MTA](#))
- Share the data with the seed company before publishing. A seed company will not restrict publication, but it is important that they verify results, this will also allow them to be able to use results of the research constructively and improve their offering to public and farmers.
- *See comment on open-pollinated crops (wheat, soybean, lupins, oats, barley).

3.2 Requesting genetically modified (GM) seed for research

In South Africa, we currently have three GMO Crops namely, Maize, Soybean and Cotton. Permission is required to use GMO crops in your research.

Variety owner vs trait owner

A variety owner is not necessarily the trait (GM-trait) owner. In this regard, the variety owner will be referred to as the licensee. The licensee will have a clause in their license agreement with the trait owner indicating whether they need permission from the trait owner to allow research on a specific trait.

If researchers require seed of a GMO crop, the following guidelines are suggested:

- To get permission from the variety owner and if needed the trait owner to do planned research.
- Sign a Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) with the variety owner and trait owner if needed to ensure both parties understand the mutually agreed terms. ([Example MTA](#))

- Share the data with the seed company before publishing. A seed company will not restrict publication, but it is important that they verify results, this will also allow them to be able to use results of the research constructively and improve their offering to public and farmers.
- *See comment on open-pollinated crops (wheat, soybean, lupins, oats, barley).

***Open Pollinated Crops:**

When researching open-pollinated crops it is important to ensure whether you need to use farm-saved seed or “new” seed. It is also important to always indicate the type of seed you used whether it's new or farm-saved seed as farm-saved seed does not adhere to all the quality requirements as prescribed in the Plant Improvement Act of South Africa.

4. Guidelines for MTAs/contracts for research between universities and seed companies

MTAs and contracts between seed companies and Universities for research should take note of the following:

- Intellectual property (IP) rights and how they must be protected (handling of cultivar names, handling of germplasm).
- Confidentiality in relation to sensitive information,
- The type of research that will be done with the seed (e.g., trials, lab or field experiments).
- The handling of the outcome(s) of the research (e.g., scientific publications).
- The time frame for the seed company to review results.
- Stewardship Guidelines that need to be followed with regards to the planting of GMO seed.

5. Identification of new diseases that have not been found to occur in South Africa before

If you identify a new pest or disease in South Africa that hasn't been identified in South Africa before, then the correct procedure should be followed (after confirmation of results, before publication) to inform the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development. SANSOR would advise as far as possible to also inform the industry associated with the crop you are working on. The identification of new diseases can hamper trade however knowing in advance what diseases were identified and the threat thereof can help the country and industry mitigate any trade-related issues. This can take place in confidence so it will not cause problems for the researcher in publishing the data.

Contact details to report first incidences of pests and diseases:

DALRRD: PhytoMatters@dalrrd.gov.za

SANSOR: Magdeleen Cilliers, Policy and Research Officer, policy@sansor.co.za

For more information, please contact Dr Magdeleen Cilliers: policy@sansor.co.za