

**EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY
EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**



Concept Note:

**COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, TOURISM AND NATURAL
RESOURCES**

**PUBLIC HEARINGS ON THE EAC SEED AND PLANT VARIETIES BILL,
2025**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The East African Community has made considerable efforts towards harmonising agricultural policies through the EAC Treaty, the Protocol on the Establishment of the East African Community Customs Union, the Common Market Protocol, the EAC Agriculture and Rural Development Policy, and various regional strategies aimed at promoting agricultural transformation. These instruments recognise the importance of harmonised standards and coordinated regulatory systems in facilitating regional trade and enhancing food security.

One of the critical determinants of agricultural productivity is farmers' access to quality seed and improved plant varieties. High-quality seed has the potential to increase crop yields, improve resilience to pests and diseases, adapt agricultural production to climate change and enhance household incomes. However, despite significant progress made by Partner States in strengthening national seed systems, considerable disparities continue to exist in seed certification standards, variety release procedures, registration requirements, quality assurance mechanisms and seed trade regulations.

These regulatory differences create technical barriers to trade, increase the cost of seed production and certification, limit investment by private seed companies and reduce farmers' access to improved planting materials across the region. Plant breeders are often required to undertake multiple testing and registration processes in different Partner States before a single variety can be marketed regionally. Such duplication delays the introduction of improved varieties while increasing costs for both public and private sector actors.

In accordance with Articles 59 and 60 of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community and the Rules of Procedure of the East African Legislative Assembly, public participation forms an integral part of the legislative process. Public hearings provide an opportunity for citizens and stakeholders to scrutinise proposed legislation, submit views, identify implementation challenges and make recommendations before enactment.

To further advance these objectives, the East African Legislative Assembly has initiated the East African Community Seed and Plant Varieties Bill, 2025. The proposed Bill seeks to establish a harmonised legal framework governing seed production, variety evaluation, registration, certification, quality assurance, marketing and movement of seed within the Community. The Bill also seeks to strengthen cooperation among national regulatory authorities, promote innovation in plant breeding and facilitate regional investment in the seed sector.

The Committee on Agriculture, Tourism and Natural Resources therefore intends to conduct regional public hearings on the East African Community Seed and Plant Varieties Bill, 2025, from the 24th to 28th August 2026 across Partner States, to ensure that the proposed legislation reflects the aspirations, practical experiences and priorities of all stakeholders within the Community.

2.0 Problem Statement

The agricultural sector within the East African Community continues to experience challenges arising from fragmented seed regulatory systems. Differences in national legislation governing seed

certification, testing, registration and marketing have limited the free movement of quality seed across Partner States, thereby constraining regional agricultural productivity and competitiveness.

Farmers continue to face inadequate access to certified seed, particularly climate-resilient and high-yielding varieties capable of addressing emerging challenges associated with climate change, pests and diseases. The lengthy and expensive procedures required to register plant varieties in multiple Partner States discourage innovation and investment while delaying the dissemination of improved technologies to farmers.

Seed companies and plant breeders are further constrained by inconsistent regulatory requirements, resulting in duplication of variety testing, increased compliance costs and restricted regional market access. Small and medium-sized enterprises within the seed sector are particularly affected by these regulatory barriers.

The absence of a harmonised regional legal framework also creates enforcement challenges, including the circulation of counterfeit and substandard seed, weak quality assurance systems and limited cross-border regulatory cooperation. These challenges undermine farmer confidence, reduce agricultural productivity and threaten regional food security.

Although the proposed East African Community Seed and Plant Varieties Bill seeks to address these challenges, its effectiveness will largely depend on the extent to which it reflects the views, experiences and expectations of those directly affected by its implementation. There is therefore a need to undertake comprehensive public hearings across the Community to ensure inclusivity, transparency and stakeholder ownership of the legislative process.

3.0 Justification

The proposed public hearings will provide an inclusive platform through which relevant stakeholders from all Partner States can participate meaningfully in the legislative process. Public participation is a fundamental principle of democratic governance and contributes to the legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness of legislation.

The hearings will enable the Committee to obtain practical perspectives from farmers, seed producers, policymakers, researchers, regulatory authorities, academia, private sector actors and civil society organisations regarding the anticipated impact of the proposed Bill. Their contributions will enrich parliamentary deliberations and improve the quality of the legislation.

The hearings will provide an opportunity for participants to understand the objectives of the proposed Bill and the benefits of harmonised regional seed systems. Public hearings harmonize national positions before the final debate in the House.

Furthermore, the public hearings will enable the Committee to identify potential legal, institutional, financial, and operational challenges that may arise during implementation of the proposed legislation and to recommend to the Assembly appropriate mitigation measures to be considered before enactment of this legislation.

The activity aligns with the objectives of the EAC Treaty, the Vision 2050, the Agriculture and Rural Development Policy, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), Agenda 2063 of the African Union, and Sustainable Development Goal 2 on ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture.

4.0 Methodology

The public hearings will be conducted using a participatory and consultative approach that promotes transparency, inclusiveness and stakeholder ownership of the legislative process.

The Committee will invite written memoranda from interested stakeholders prior to the hearings and conduct physical consultations in all Partner States. During the hearings, stakeholders will be given an opportunity to make oral presentations, submit written comments and engage in discussions on the provisions of the Bill.

In addition, the Committee will hold consultative meetings with relevant government ministries, seed regulatory authorities, research institutions and development partners to obtain technical input. All submissions received will be analysed and consolidated into a comprehensive report containing recommendations for consideration by the East African Legislative Assembly.

5.0 Overall Objective

To facilitate inclusive stakeholder participation in the legislative process of the East African Community Seed and Plant Varieties Bill, 2025, through regional public hearings that generate evidence-based recommendations for consideration by the East African Legislative Assembly.

6.0 Specific Objectives

The activity seeks to:

- i. Obtain stakeholder views on the provisions of the East African Community Seed and Plant Varieties Bill, 2025.
- ii. Assess the potential impact of the proposed Bill on farmers, seed companies, plant breeders, research institutions and regulatory agencies.
- iii. Identify gaps, implementation challenges and opportunities for strengthening the proposed legislation.
- iv. Promote public awareness and understanding of the objectives and expected benefits of the proposed Bill.
- v. Enhance transparency, accountability and inclusiveness in the legislative process of the East African Legislative Assembly.
- vi. Generate practical recommendations to support parliamentary consideration and eventual implementation of the proposed legislation.

7.0 Expected Outputs

The implementation of the activity is expected to produce the following outputs:

- i. Comprehensive stakeholder submissions from all Partner States.
- ii. Increased public awareness of the proposed East African Community Seed and Plant Varieties Bill, 2025.
- iii. Consolidated regional recommendations for consideration by the Committee.
- iv. Inform the final debate in the House after tabling of the Committee report.
- v. Improved stakeholder ownership and acceptance of the proposed legislation.
- vi. Strengthened collaboration among governments, research institutions, seed companies and development partners in advancing regional seed sector reforms.

8.0 Participants

The public hearings will bring together a wide range of stakeholders drawn from across the East African Community, including:

1. Members of the EALA Committee on Agriculture, Tourism and Natural Resources
2. Ministries in charge of EAC Affairs
3. Ministries in charge of Agriculture
4. Seed and plant breeders
5. Seed companies
6. Farmers Associations
7. Chambers of Commerce
8. Certification and regulatory authorities
9. Ministries of Trade and Industry
10. Agrotech Companies
11. National Parliament Committees in charge of Agriculture
12. National Parliament Committees in charge of regional integration
13. Ministries of Justice/Attorneys General
14. Civil Society organizations
15. Traders Associations
16. Ministries in charge of Environment
17. Youth & Women in Agribusiness
18. Officials from the EAC Secretariat
19. Research and Academia Institutes
20. Media

9.0 Expected Outcomes

Upon completion of the public hearings, the following outcomes are expected:

- i. Increased stakeholder participation in the legislative process.
- ii. Enhanced public understanding of the proposed East African Community Seed and Plant Varieties Bill, 2025.
- iii. Practical recommendations to strengthen the Bill before its consideration by the Assembly.
- iv. Greater harmonisation of regional approaches to seed regulation.
- v. Improved collaboration among Partner States in the development and regulation of the seed sector.
- vi. Enhanced access to quality, certified and climate-resilient seed by farmers across the region.
- vii. Increased confidence among investors and private sector actors in the regional seed market.
- viii. A comprehensive Committee Report incorporating stakeholder views and recommendations