

Opening remarks of Mr. Tekleab Misghena

Director General, Regulatory Services Department, Ministry of Agriculture At Draft Seed Legislation Discussion Workshop

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Dear friends, Colleagues, Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

To begin with, it is my pleasure to welcome you all to this important workshop and on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture I am honored to say few remarks on the opening occasion of this workshop.

We all understood that production and productivity of agricultural crops greatly depend on seed quality. This is of course without forgetting inputs such as fertilizer and others. The issue becomes so important to us where existing production and productivity of agricultural crops are low and at the same time substantial efforts are being made for ensuring a significance contribution of the agricultural sector to national food security.

The availability of quality seed begins in research, where Eritrea's agricultural research institutions are making relentless efforts in developing new varieties field and vegetable crops. So far more than 40 varieties of field crops, mostly wheat and sorghum, have been developed by NARI. A number of these varieties are now being used in seed multiplication programs through contractual farmers. Seed multiplying farmers are being organized in clusters, which simplifies the distribution of inputs and seed inspection services.

For the seed sub-sector to be sustainably managed it has to be supported by some legal means. Issues such as varietal development, seed multiplication, and marketing and regulatory

inspection services should be legally supported. But we should also understand that our seed legal system should serve the real issues on the ground and not becoming too ambitious which cannot be implemented. Among others, the conservation of local varieties, which could be eroded with the development and introduction of new varieties, and the uncontrolled export of germ plasma are some of the issues we need to remind ourselves while reviewing the draft legislation.

Just to give you some brief background information about the present draft seed legislation, which we believe can serve as the basis for our discussion. The draft legislation was prepared in 2005, which was the result of a seed technical evaluation conducted by a consultant supported by the European Union. A brief consultative process was conducted at that time, which is now 13 years. In view of the limited consultations made then and the time which has elapsed so far, there is a need to look at it again. In its present form the draft seed legislation has a separate set of implementing regulations. In our discussions we may wish to endorse this approach or instead we may decide to have one piece of seed legislation only. This is open for discussion. A seasoned person, Dr. Miti from Zambia, has been recruited by the Ministry of Agriculture as a consultant to guide us in the process to review the draft legislation.

Before I conclude, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the European Union for providing the necessary financial and technical support to undertake the review process. I would like to wish you fruitful deliberations today and tomorrow.

I thank you for your attention and have a nice day.