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AGRA's digital catalogue to bridge the seed access gap

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AGRA has unveiled Africa's first-ever digital crop variety catalogue—a sweeping innovation poised to revolutionise how farmers, breeders, and policymakers access improved seeds.

Launched in partnership with Ministries of Agriculture, National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS), and regulatory authorities across six countries—Ethiopia,

Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda—the catalogue offers a centralised, interactive, and searchable database of officially released crop varieties. For a continent where seed systems have long been fragmented and opaque, this digital leap is nothing short of historic.

“This platform is not just a digital catalogue—it is a game-changer for seed sector transparency, equity,

and growth,” said Dr Jane Ininda, Interim Director of AGRA's Centre of Excellence for Seed Systems in Africa (CESSA).

AGRA has been at the forefront of strengthening Africa's seed systems for over two decades. Its efforts have led to the release of 688 crop varieties and the development of 114 seed companies, empowering 38,000 agro-dealers and enabling 33 million farmers to access high-



yielding, nutrient-dense seeds. The new digital catalogue builds on this legacy, offering a modern solution to a persistent problem: the lack of accessible, up-to-date information on crop varieties.

“In many African countries, vital data on crop varieties is incomplete, inaccessible, or absent altogether,” noted AGRA President Alice Ruhweza. “This has hindered farmers from accessing resilient, climate-smart, and nutrient-dense crop varieties. The Africa Digital Crop Variety Catalogue fills this critical gap by offering a centralised and transparent digital resource.”

The platform is powered by CESSA, AGRA’s one-stop hub for advancing seed systems. CESSA integrates tools, training, data, and digital solutions to ensure equitable access to high-quality seed. Anchored by AGRA’s Seed Systems Assessment Tool (SeedSAT), the Seed Investment Plan, and the Seed System Performance Index (SSPI)—now adopted by the African Union as a continental benchmark—the catalogue reflects a commitment to data-driven reform and agricultural transformation.

Beyond its technical prowess, the catalogue is a tool for inclusion. By democratising access to seed information, it empowers underserved groups—especially women and youth—who have historically lacked the networks and resources to engage in seed systems. It also strengthens grassroots participation by engaging local and national stakeholders in a shared digital ecosystem.

“The digital seed catalogue is an important milestone to strengthen the seed market and therefore further scale high-yielding and nutrient-dense



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seed access by smallholder farmers,” said Jonathan Said, AGRA’s Vice President of the Centre for Technical Expertise.

The absence of such a platform has long stifled compliance, certification, and investment in seed systems, resulting in low adoption rates and a persistent seed gap. With the launch of the Africa Digital Crop Variety Catalogue, AGRA is not only solving a logistical challenge—it’s laying the foundation for a more resilient, transparent, and inclusive agricultural future.

The Africa Digital Crop Variety Catalogue significantly improves agriculture and seed systems across Africa by providing an up-to-date, comprehensive list of officially released crop varieties from multiple countries. Its searchable, user-friendly interface serves breeders, regulators, seed companies, and policymakers, enabling quick access to detailed data that supports commercialisation and better decision-making in variety choices, seed production, selection, and marketing.