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NEWS RELEASE

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
for a world without hunger

FAO dedicated to supporting seed sector in South Sudan

March 8, 2018 – The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in South Sudan has been and continues to support interventions to improve the local supply of seeds in the country. Enhancing local seed production is one of the Organization's key priorities, as it is the essential to improve South Sudan's food security.

In response to issues raised by the media, FAO would like to highlight that seed assessments are conducted in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) to determine the availability of seeds locally and understand local market dynamics. The most recent assessment results showed that there was limited quantity of quality seeds available to meet the needs of FAO's 2018 distribution campaign.

Within the framework of the emergency response to prevailing food insecurity across the country, FAO supports vulnerable farmers by distributing crop seeds and tools for use in the main agricultural season. For this, there are two mechanisms – distributing seeds purchased by FAO, and distributing inputs through seed fairs, where FAO provides cash support to beneficiaries to buy seeds from the local market.

The seed available locally has been prioritized for distribution through seed fairs in order to enhance linkages between local suppliers and farmers, reduce the number of middlemen involved in seed distribution and address the limited capacity of local producers to match international standards when submitting bids. The seed fairs are starting in the coming weeks.

For the procurement of seed for the main agricultural season this year, FAO issued tenders inviting local suppliers registered with MAFS as well as companies from the region to bid. In this, FAO adheres to guidelines set by MAFS. For example, in September 2017, MAFS provided FAO a waiver for the importation of maize seeds for the 2018 planting season due to South Sudan's low production of seeds in the previous year and widespread displacement of producers.

FAO has noted the false allegation in the media and will address them directly with the concerned entities. The Organization cannot comment further as the procurement process is still ongoing.

Nevertheless, FAO would like to highlight the Organization's procurement processes are governed by its rules approved by its Member States, which are generally undertaken competitively, based on the fundamental principles of best value for money, fairness, transparency, economic and effectiveness and following public procurement best practices. FAO's first concern is to ensure the highest quality of seeds are provided to South Sudan's farmers, and to maximize the assistance provided to South Sudanese communities with funds received from resource partners.

To ensure the highest quality of seeds, FAO has teamed up with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and trained 12 seed inspection teams, promoting the enhancement of the regulatory capacity of MAFS to monitor and certify seed production and control the illegal importation of seed. FAO has supported over 3,200 progressive seeds producers in Yambio, Nzara, Yei, Aweil, Warrap, Linya, Morobo, Magwi, Torit, and Ikotos, to increase local production. Moreover, the Organization has trained 160 field extension staff to support smallholder farmers and over 3,000 tonnes of seeds have been produced due to these efforts.

In 2018, FAO will continue working closely with the smallholder producers of South Sudan to increase local food production, to win the fight against hunger.

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Additional information is available online at:

<http://www.fao.org/emergencies/countries/detail/en/c/147627/>

This news release was issued by the FAO South Sudan

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