

ISF VIRTUAL CONGRESS 2021: “OUR JOURNEY TO RESILIENCE STARTS WITH SEED”

Congress program

- Overview of the event

This year, more than 200 seed companies and national seed associations – representing thousands of associations, small- and medium-sized businesses, family-owned companies, cooperatives, and multinational companies – have signed a [Seed Sector Declaration](#) committing to the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and demonstrating their diverse contributions towards sustainable food systems.

Some weeks ahead of the pre-summit of the UN Food Systems Summit 2021, the ISF Virtual Congress is our additional contribution to the ongoing dialogue. Seed is widely recognized as a key contributor to agricultural production and food systems. The role of seed has gained more recognition during the COVID-19 pandemic, where food supply and ensuring the harvests of tomorrow are even more under stress than usual.

The ISF Virtual Congress 2021 is a unique platform for reflecting together on the role of seed in building resilient local and regional food systems and promoting sustainable agriculture: the need for thriving seed systems, efficient seed trade and supply, crop diversification, plant breeding innovation, accessibility for smallholder farmers, and a healthy interrelation between formal and informal seed systems.

The event brings together industry leaders and external partners in a dynamic setup of international panels, keynote speeches, showcase of innovations, and live interactions – open to all via an online platform.

- Audiences

This 3-day virtual event welcomes all seed professionals, ISF partners, media, and all those interested in the topic of food and agriculture – and more particularly, seed. Participation is at no cost.

DAY 1

OPENING CEREMONY 5 JULY, MON, 13:00-14:00

- Objectives of the session

1. Providing an update on ISF engagement to continue the movement of seed and to reinforce the role of seed as a crucial input to food production
2. Opening the debate with opinion leaders on the future of food systems after COVID-19

“UN FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT AND THE MANY ROLES OF SEED”

PANEL SESSION I – 5 JULY, MON, 14:00-15:00

- Overview of the topic

At the beginning of 2021, the seed sector actors including family-owned, small and medium size companies, cooperatives, multinationals, as well as national and regional seed associations from all around the world signed a joint Declaration as part of its engagement in the UN Food Systems Summit 2021. Over its long history, the seed sector has helped unlocked enormous advances in food production since the domestication of food crops. Yet today, still too few of the world's farmers can access improved, quality and diversified seeds, which corresponds best to local diets and to improve the diversity of diets. In an ideal world, they would be able to make informed seed choices and build strong functioning seed systems that link formal and informal markets to have access to diversified crop for environmental, health and socio economic reasons.

- Key focus

1. The role of improved seed varieties and how to build the conditions to achieve crop diversification
2. The engagement of the seed sector through the Declaration
3. A review of the current state of farmers' access to innovation and technology and the opportunities for public-private collaboration

DAY 2

“INTERNATIONAL SEED TRADE AND COVID-19: KEY LEARNINGS FOR THE FUTURE”

PANEL SESSION II – 6 JULY, TUE, 11:00-12:30

- Overview of the topic

Like many other sectors the global seed sector had an unprecedented year with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. But the seed sector did not stop. In fact, ISF members around the world remained very active in producing, breeding, and trading quality seeds.

In an effort to get a detailed picture of the impact of COVID-19, the OECD, in cooperation with the Japan Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and with assistance from the International Seed Federation (ISF) and Asian Pacific Seed Association (APSA), carried out an analysis of such impact on the seed supply chain on the Asian continent. This roundtable aims to provide a better understanding of the global seed production chain and to spark a discussion on the current challenges and what policy responses can be carried out to safeguard the seed supply chain.

- Key focus

1. Seed supply chain disruptions caused by COVID-19
2. Possible consequences of a disrupted seed production chain to the global seed and food supply chain
3. The key benefits of a global seed production and supply chain and positive impacts on resilient food systems; Policy considerations - what kind of responses could be given from governments to ensure the seamless seed supply chain even in times of crisis

“ADDRESSING EMERGING PLANT DISEASES TO ACHIEVE RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS”

PANEL SESSION III – 6 JULY, TUE, 13:00-14:30

- Overview of the topic

Predictable international movement of seed is critical to ensure food security. This predictability is under threat due to the number of emerging diseases affecting plant health. International organizations (I.e. WTO and IPPC), national governments and the private sector are committed to reduce the impact of these emerging threats on food production and ultimately food security. Emerging diseases reveals the weakness on a debilitate food systems by calling attention for greater resilience. Seed health is an integral part to food production, because healthy seeds are a prerequisite for a sustainable and resilient food systems. The seed sector wants to work closely with other actors on food production and governments to promote multi-sectoral responses on how to reduce these risks. The main topic of discussion will be the current challenges on restrictive regulation on the movement of seeds in the international arena, the impact of emerging pests and how emerging diseases play a part on the current challenges facing the seed industry.

A Keynote Speaker representing WTO will be responsible to set the tone for the discussions that will follow bringing the overall aim forward. The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations.

- Key focus

1. Perspectives from seed industry, government and research
2. Impact of emerging pests and how emerging diseases play a part on the current challenges facing the seed industry
3. Current challenges facing the seed industry due to restrictive regulation on the movement of seeds in the international arena

DAY 3

“THE FUTURE OF THE SEED BUSINESS – OUR CONTRIBUTION TO RESILIENCE”

PANEL SESSION IV – 7 JULY, WED, 13:00-14:30

- Overview of the topic

Amid the global pandemic, the seed sector proved its critical role and was more than ever engaged in its mission to make high quality seed accessible to all farmers while meeting the challenges of a changing world. At the same time, the sector understands that the mounting pressure of climate change renders the work of farmers harder. Beyond the pandemic, environmental sustainability continues to be a task for all. From nature positive agriculture to regenerative agriculture, many concepts are under review in high level policy discussions, on top of this later this year the COP 26 will further tackle the discussions around climate change. Business leaders will share their vision on their efforts of engagement on the upcoming challenges.

- Key focus

1. Vision of seed business leaders on the engagement of their company related to environmental sustainability, for example the decrease of carbon foot print.

2. Engagement with all the stakeholders to increase the development of a sustainable value chain.
3. Exchange on the role of the seed sector in the international discussions related to climate change

EVENT SET-UP: HOW DOES IT WORK?

The ISF Virtual Congress will be available via <http://congress.worldseed.org/2021/>. Registration is open to all participants beginning on 25th May 2021. Participation is at no cost.

Attendees will have access to the broadcast of the international panels and sponsored content and will be able to participate in the live discussions. Other elements of the virtual platform include a live chat, forum wall, resource centre, and an area to create a profile.

Information for speakers

The sessions will be broadcast live from a studio in Switzerland.

Speakers have the option to be in the studio or to connect online during the day and hour of their session to deliver their presentation, followed by a live Q&A with our audiences.

Please make sure internet connection is stable.

A rehearsal will be scheduled, and we will send your log-in details to connect.