

Pioneer is growing its hybrid corn seed scheme further into Africa

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Dupont's Pioneer unit hopes to expand its hybrid corn seed partnership with African governments and aid groups, to Tanzania, after setting up programmes for farmers to use its seed in Ethiopia and Zambia.



Picture: [Reuters/Ilya Naymushin](#)

In Ethiopia in 2013, Pioneer, the biggest supplier of hybrid corn seeds in Africa, partnered with the government and the US Agency for International Development, and there are now 300,000ha growing corn using the seed.

In February, the programme was rolled out in Zambia and the company hopes to complete talks with Tanzania this year and launch the programme next year, Prabdeep Bajwa, the African regional business director for Pioneer, said in an interview in Bloomberg's Johannesburg office last Friday. The programme includes training and financing for farmers.

"We have to work very closely with governments," he said. "It's programmes like Amsap for example, that are proof points" for the use of hybrid seed.

Dupont, through its Pioneer and Pannar units, is trying to expand its seed business in Africa, where there are about 35-million hectares of land under corn with an average yield of less than two tonnes per hectare, he said. That was less than third of the average productivity of US corn farms.

"We have had conversation(s) in Ghana about the same deal," Bajwa said. The governments are becoming more receptive."

While genetically modified corn seed is used in SA, it is not permitted elsewhere on the continent, boosting the potential for hybrid seed, Bajwa said.

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Source: Business Day

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