



APSA and SIPI Convene National Seed Associations to Tackle Illegal Seed Practices in APAC

1. INTRODUCTION

The Asia and Pacific Seed Association (APSA), in collaboration with the Seed Innovation and Protection Initiative (SIPI), successfully convened the **APSA Seed Associations Meeting on 24 April, 2026** under the theme *“Protecting Innovation: Tackling Illegal Seed Practices in APAC.”* The hybrid event brought together national seed associations, industry leaders, policymakers, and experts from across the Asia-Pacific region to address the growing challenge of illegal seed practices and strengthen regional cooperation.

The meeting provided a strategic platform to address the rising challenge of illegal seed practices (ISPs), which continue to threaten innovation, farmer livelihoods, and the integrity of the agricultural sector.

2. BACKGROUND

APSA represents 23 national seed associations across the region and plays a vital role in promoting regulatory harmonization, innovation, and access to quality seed. Building on previous engagements, the 2026 meeting focused specifically on illegal seed practices, a critical issue affecting intellectual property protection, market integrity, and farmer trust.

3. STRENGTHENING REGIONAL ACTION AGAINST ILLEGAL SEED PRACTICES

With participation from APSA’s network of **23 national seed associations**, the meeting highlighted the critical role these organizations play in advocacy, regulatory alignment, and collaboration with public sector institutions.

Illegal seed practices including counterfeiting, unauthorized multiplication, fraudulent labelling, and theft of proprietary genetic material were recognized as a growing, cross-border issue requiring urgent and coordinated attention.

“Protecting innovation is fundamental to ensuring a sustainable and competitive seed industry,” said **Mr. Teck Wah Koh, APSA President**. “National seed associations are key partners in strengthening enforcement and ensuring farmer confidence in seed systems.”

Ms. Francine Sayoc, APSA Executive Director presented objectives of the meeting emphasizing a practical, experience-driven approach. She encouraged national seed associations to actively share insights and country experiences to address illegal seed practices in the APAC region.

She highlighted that illegal seed practices are a complex, cross-border issue requiring stronger regional coordination, closer industry–government collaboration, and aligned regulatory frameworks. Reaffirming APSA’s commitment, she underscored the importance of policy advocacy, capacity building, and knowledge sharing, as well as the value of APSA–SIPI collaboration in driving coordinated action forward.

4. APSA REGULATORY AND POLICY ADVOCACY OVERVIEW

Dr. Shivendra Bajaj's presentation provided a comprehensive overview of APSA's ongoing work in **regulatory and policy advocacy across the Asia-Pacific region**, emphasizing the importance of creating a predictable and enabling environment for seed innovation, trade, and industry growth. His presentation highlighted APSA's strategic role in supporting national seed associations and engaging with governments to promote harmonized, science-based regulatory systems.

Role of APSA in Regulatory Advocacy

Dr. Bajaj began by outlining APSA's role as a regional platform that connects the seed industry with policymakers and regulatory authorities. APSA works closely with national seed associations and other stakeholders to advocate for policies that support innovation, facilitate trade, and ensure access to high-quality seed.

He emphasized that APSA's approach is based on **collaboration, alignment, and evidence-based advocacy**, with a focus on ensuring that regulatory frameworks are practical, transparent, and consistent across countries. This role is particularly important in the Asia-Pacific region, where diverse regulatory systems can create barriers to innovation and trade.

Key Areas of Policy Engagement

The presentation highlighted several critical areas where APSA is actively engaged in policy advocacy and regulatory dialogue.

One key area is **phytosanitary regulation**, where APSA works to promote science-based measures that ensure plant health while minimizing unnecessary trade restrictions. Dr. Bajaj noted that inconsistent or overly restrictive phytosanitary requirements can create inefficiencies and limit the movement of seeds across borders.

Another important focus is **plant breeding innovation**. APSA supports the adoption of policies that enable the development and deployment of new breeding technologies. This includes promoting regulatory clarity and encouraging governments to adopt approaches that support innovation while ensuring safety and compliance.

The presentation also addressed **intellectual property rights (IPR)** and **plant variety protection (PVP)**. Dr. Bajaj emphasized that strong IP systems are essential to encourage investment in research and development. At the same time, he noted that effective implementation and enforcement are equally important to ensure that these systems deliver their intended benefits.

Promoting Regulatory Harmonization

A central theme of the presentation was the need for **greater harmonization of seed regulations across the region**. Dr. Bajaj highlighted that differences in national regulations often create challenges for seed companies, particularly those operating across multiple markets.

He explained that APSA works to align regulatory approaches by facilitating dialogue among countries and promoting the adoption of internationally recognized standards. Harmonization efforts help reduce duplication, improve efficiency, and create a more predictable regulatory environment.



This, in turn, supports innovation by enabling quicker introduction of new varieties and improving access to high-quality seeds for farmers.

Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing

Dr. Bajaj also emphasized APSA's role in **capacity building and knowledge exchange**. Recognizing that regulatory systems vary in maturity across the region, APSA supports training and information-sharing initiatives to strengthen institutional capacity.

These efforts include providing technical guidance, organizing workshops, and facilitating exchange of best practices among national associations and regulatory authorities. By strengthening local capacity, APSA helps ensure that regulations are not only well-designed but also effectively implemented.

Importance of Predictable and Science-Based Frameworks

Throughout the presentation, Dr. Bajaj stressed the importance of **predictable, transparent, and science-based regulatory frameworks**. Such frameworks are critical for fostering trust among stakeholders and enabling long-term investment in the seed sector.

He noted that inconsistent or unclear regulations can discourage innovation and create uncertainty for both local and international companies. In contrast, well-defined and harmonized policies provide a stable foundation for industry growth and collaboration.

Linkages with Illegal Seed Practices

Although the presentation focused broadly on regulatory advocacy, Dr. Bajaj also connected these efforts to the issue of illegal seed practices. He highlighted that weak or fragmented regulatory systems can create gaps that are exploited by illegal operators.

Strengthening regulatory clarity, improving enforcement capacity, and enhancing coordination among authorities are therefore essential not only for facilitating trade but also for **preventing illegal seed practices and protecting market integrity**.

Regional Collaboration as a Key Enabler

Dr. Bajaj concluded by reiterating that addressing regulatory and enforcement challenges requires **strong regional collaboration**. APSA serves as a key platform for bringing together stakeholders, aligning priorities, and promoting cooperation across countries.

He emphasized that national seed associations play a vital role as intermediaries between industry and government, and that their active engagement is critical to achieving meaningful progress.

Dr. Shivendra Bajaj's presentation underscored the importance of **coherent regulatory systems, harmonized policies, and collaborative engagement** in strengthening the seed sector across the Asia-Pacific region.

By promoting science-based regulations, supporting capacity building, and facilitating regional coordination, APSA continues to play a central role in creating an enabling environment for innovation while addressing challenges such as illegal seed practices.

5. REGIONAL SCAN OF IP CHALLENGES IN THE SEED SECTOR

The keynote address **Dr. Rajani Jaiswal, Executive Director of SIPI**, provided a comprehensive regional overview of intellectual property (IP) challenges in the seed sector. The presentation highlighted the increasing sophistication of illegal seed networks, including the use of digital platforms and cross-border operations. The presentation combined a **regional diagnostic of the problem**, analysis of its underlying drivers, and a **structured roadmap for collective action**, emphasizing the need to protect innovation through strengthened intellectual property (IP) systems. She emphasized that illegal seed practices not only undermine research and development investments but also pose risks to **seed quality, biosecurity, and food security**.

Dr. Rajani explained that illegal seed practices discourage investment in research and development, create unfair competition for compliant companies, and pose serious risks to breeders, farmers, and biosecurity. She highlighted that such practices ultimately erode trust across the agricultural value chain, making it essential to strengthen intellectual property (IP) protection.

Understanding Illegal Seed Practices (ISPs)

Illegal seed practices were defined as both intellectual property violations and regulatory offenses. These include counterfeiting, where substandard seeds are sold as high-quality hybrids, and fraudulent labelling, where false brand names or trademarks are used to mislead farmers.

Another critical issue highlighted was the theft of proprietary genetic material, such as parental lines, from research facilities. These practices are often interconnected, making detection and enforcement more difficult.

Mechanisms of Illegal Practices

Dr. Rajani explained that illegal seed practices occur through several mechanisms. These include unauthorized multiplication and sale of protected varieties, counterfeit packaging and labelling, misuse of trademarks, cross-border smuggling without proper certification, and tampering with official labels or traceability systems.

These activities are increasingly organized and operate across multiple countries, involving different stages such as production, repackaging, and distribution.

Regional Risk Drivers in APAC

The APAC region is particularly vulnerable due to several structural and market-related factors. These include high price sensitivity among farmers, fragmented regulatory frameworks, and inconsistent enforcement capacity across countries.

Additionally, the presence of large informal agricultural markets and significant cross-border seed movement increases the risk. The growing use of digital platforms and e-commerce has further accelerated illegal seed trade.

Emerging Trends

The presentation highlighted a shift from small-scale, local illegal activities to organized networks operating across borders. Digital platforms and messaging applications are increasingly being used to promote and sell illegal seeds.

High-value hybrid crops, particularly vegetables such as tomato, chili, and cucumber, are primary targets because of their high demand and short growing cycles. Another emerging challenge is the confusion between farm-saved seeds and commercial seed activities due to a lack of awareness among farmers.

Persistence of Illegal Seed Practices

Dr. Rajani explained that illegal seed practices continue due to several factors. A significant price gap between legal and illegal seeds encourages farmers to choose cheaper alternatives. Limited awareness about seed quality and intellectual property risks also plays a role.

Weak enforcement systems, low detection rates, and inadequate traceability further contribute to the problem. Supply shortages during peak planting periods also drive farmers toward informal and illegal markets.

Enforcement Challenges

The presentation outlined multiple enforcement challenges. Institutional issues include overlapping responsibilities among agencies, limited technical capacity to verify seeds, and lengthy legal procedures.

From a rights holder perspective, challenges include high legal costs, difficulty in proving infringement, and challenges in addressing cases across different jurisdictions. Enforcement efforts are often complicated by competing priorities, such as ensuring sufficient food supply.

Impact of Illegal Seed Practices

Illegal seed practices have significant consequences. They reduce incentives for innovation by undermining returns on research investments and causing revenue losses.

For farmers, the use of low-quality seeds leads to poor yields, financial losses, and reduced trust in the seed market. Additionally, the movement of illegal seeds increases the risk of spreading pests and diseases, affecting agricultural sustainability and food security.

Need for a Regional Approach

Dr. Rajani emphasized that illegal seed practices cannot be effectively addressed at the national level alone. Activities often span multiple countries, with production, repackaging, and distribution occurring in different locations.

This interconnected nature requires a coordinated regional approach that includes information sharing, regulatory alignment, and joint enforcement strategies.

Strategic Response and Way Forward

The presentation outlined a multi-pronged approach to address illegal seed practices. Strengthening legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms is essential to deter violations.

At the same time, awareness and education efforts are needed to inform farmers and stakeholders about intellectual property rights and the risks associated with illegal seeds.

Collaboration between governments, industry, and regional organizations is critical to ensure coordinated action.

Dr. Rajani also presented a phased roadmap. In the short term, digital tools such as incident reporting systems should be deployed. In the medium term, regulatory processes and variety lists should be harmonized. Over the long term, stronger legal provisions, including criminal penalties for organized seed fraud, should be established.

The keynote concluded by emphasizing that illegal seed practices represent a complex and evolving challenge that threatens innovation, farmer livelihoods, and market integrity.

Addressing this issue requires a coordinated, multi-dimensional approach that combines enforcement, awareness, technology, and collaboration. The presentation set a clear direction for regional cooperation and reinforced the importance of protecting innovation to ensure a sustainable and resilient seed sector in the Asia-Pacific region.

6. KEY INSIGHTS FROM REGIONAL EXPERTS/COUNTRY PERSPECTIVES AND BEST PRACTICES

The country presentations from India, China, Thailand, and Indonesia offered comprehensive insights into the diverse approaches being adopted across the Asia-Pacific region to address illegal seed practices (ISPs). While each country operates within its own regulatory, institutional, and market context, the discussions revealed common challenges, shared priorities, and evolving strategies to strengthen enforcement and protect innovation. These country experiences underscored the importance of combining **policy reform, enforcement, technology, and awareness-building** to effectively combat ISPs.

India: Legislative Reform and Digital Traceability

India's presentation by **Raghavan Sampathkumar (FSII)** highlighted that the country is currently undergoing a significant transition in its regulatory and enforcement landscape. A central focus is the proposed Seed Bill 2025, which is expected to strengthen oversight of seed quality, certification, and distribution. While intellectual property protection continues to be governed under the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FRA) Act, the new bill aims to increase accountability across the supply chain, particularly among seed producers, dealers, and intermediaries.

In parallel, India is making notable progress in digital traceability. The government has introduced the SATHI portal, launched in 2023, which enables farmers and stakeholders to verify seed origin and quality. Additionally, private sector initiatives, such as QR-code-based systems and tamper-proof packaging, are being adopted to enhance supply chain transparency.

Despite these advancements, several challenges remain. A key concern is the lack of awareness and understanding of intellectual property issues within parts of the judiciary, where misconceptions sometimes exist regarding the role of IP in agriculture. There is also a continued need to strengthen enforcement capacity at both institutional and field levels. Importantly, the presentation emphasized that long-term success will depend on reducing demand for illegal seeds through sustained farmer education and awareness initiatives.

China: Strong Legal Systems and Advanced Enforcement Mechanisms

China's presentation by **Ms. Weihong Tian (CNSTA)** demonstrated a highly developed and structured framework for intellectual property protection in the seed sector. The country has built a comprehensive legal system that integrates plant variety protection regulations, seed laws, patent and trademark provisions, and criminal enforcement measures. The introduction of the Essentially Derived Variety (EDV) system has further strengthened protection for breeders by ensuring that derivative varieties are also covered under IP laws.

A defining strength of China's approach is its dual enforcement mechanism. Administrative enforcement is led by agricultural authorities, while judicial enforcement is conducted through specialized intellectual property courts located in key cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, and Hainan. This system enables both regulatory action and legal recourse to be pursued effectively.

The presentation highlighted landmark cases that illustrate the strength of China's enforcement system, including a maize variety infringement case that resulted in compensation exceeding 53 million RMB. These cases demonstrate the increasing role of punitive damages and strong deterrence mechanisms.

China also relies heavily on technical tools, such as DNA fingerprinting and molecular marker testing, to establish varietal identity in legal cases. The presentation emphasized that liability extends across the entire value chain, from production to downstream distribution. Another important legal principle is the separation of civil and administrative liability, which ensures that private settlements do not exempt offenders from administrative penalties when public interest is affected.

Overall, China's approach reflects a mature system that combines strong legislation, technical sophistication, and effective institutional coordination.

Thailand: Preventive Approach and Farmer Awareness

Dr. Boonyanath Nathwong (THASTA), Thailand presented a compliance-oriented and preventive model for addressing illegal seed practices. The country's regulatory framework is based on three key laws governing seed quality, plant quarantine, and plant variety protection.

Enforcement is supported by a collaborative structure known as the "Three Musketeers," which brings together the Department of Agriculture, the Office of the Consumer Protection Board, and the Consumer Protection Police. This coordination allows for more comprehensive enforcement across different regulatory domains.

Rather than relying primarily on punitive measures, Thailand has focused on preventive strategies and market incentives. One of the key initiatives is the Q-Factory Certification system, which recognizes high-quality seed producers and allows them to display certified logos on their packaging. This helps farmers distinguish genuine products from counterfeit seeds.

Another significant aspect of Thailand's approach is farmer education. The industry actively conducts awareness campaigns to demonstrate the economic impact of using illegal seeds. These campaigns show that while counterfeit seeds may appear cheaper initially, they result in lower yields and higher overall losses, making them economically unviable in the long term.

Thailand is also addressing the growing challenge of online seed sales by engaging with e-commerce platforms and proposing stricter registration requirements for sellers. The country's strategy highlights the importance of combining enforcement with awareness and incentives to achieve sustainable impact.

Indonesia: Addressing Digital Trade and Market Fragmentation

Mr. Eko Hadi Afandi (Hortindo, Indonesia) and Mr. Nana Laksana Ranu (ASBENINDO, Indonesia) presented Indonesia's case studies, providing a comprehensive overview of the country's experience in addressing illegal seed practices. Their presentation covered key aspects, including the major market challenges associated with illegal seed practices, particularly those arising from price sensitivity, informal markets, and the growing role of e-commerce. They also shared enforcement experiences, highlighting ongoing efforts to monitor markets, regulate online platforms, and address violations despite constraints related to geography and enforcement capacity.

Indonesia's presentation focused on the challenges posed by rapid digitalization and the increasing role of e-commerce in illegal seed trade. The regulatory framework requires all seeds to be certified, labelled, and registered to be legally sold. However, enforcement remains challenging due to the country's vast geography, fragmented market structure, and large population of smallholder farmers.

A major concern identified is the rise of "digital piracy," where illegal seeds are sold through online platforms such as Shopee and Tokopedia. The government has taken proactive steps to address this issue, including removing nearly 4,000 illegal online listings and coordinating enforcement efforts across multiple ministries.

To strengthen traceability, Indonesia has introduced QR-coded labelling systems, allowing farmers to verify seed authenticity through mobile applications such as Checkbenih. These digital tools are helping to improve transparency at the point of purchase.

The presentation also highlighted efforts to promote inclusive business models, encouraging farmers to participate in formal seed production systems. This approach aims to reduce reliance on informal markets and unauthorized seed multiplication.

Despite these initiatives, enforcement remains an ongoing challenge. Illegal sellers frequently reappear on digital platforms using new identities, and resource constraints make consistent monitoring difficult. The situation underscores the need for continuous adaptation and stronger coordination.

Cross-Country Insights

Across all four countries, several common themes emerged. There is a clear shift toward the use of digital tools for both illegal activities and enforcement responses. Traceability systems, such as QR codes and digital platforms, are becoming essential components of modern seed regulation.

Farmer awareness consistently emerged as a critical factor, as demand for illegal seeds is often driven by price sensitivity and lack of knowledge. Effective enforcement also depends on strong institutional coordination and the ability to operate across jurisdictions.

The country-specific presentations highlighted that while approaches differ, all countries are moving toward integrated strategies that combine regulatory reform, technology, enforcement, and awareness. China’s strong legal enforcement, Thailand’s preventive and awareness-driven approach, India’s regulatory evolution, and Indonesia’s focus on digital monitoring together illustrate the diversity of responses within the region.

These insights reinforce the importance of regional collaboration and knowledge sharing. Addressing illegal seed practices effectively will require sustained efforts, coordinated strategies, and collective action across the Asia-Pacific region.

The country-specific presentations demonstrated that while approaches vary from China’s strong legal enforcement to Thailand’s preventive model all countries are increasingly adopting **integrated strategies combining regulation, technology, and awareness**.

These insights reinforced the need for **regional collaboration**, knowledge sharing, and harmonized approaches to effectively combat illegal seed practices across the APAC region.

7. INTERACTIVE DISCUSSIONS AND SHARED PRIORITIES

The interactive discussion session played a central role in the APSA–SIPI Seed Associations Meeting, fostering open dialogue among national seed associations and enabling participants to exchange practical experiences in addressing illegal seed practices (ISPs). The session moved beyond formal presentations to focus on real-world challenges, lessons learned, and actionable strategies across the Asia-Pacific region.

Participants emphasized the need for **practical enforcement approaches, continuous stakeholder engagement, and improved regional coordination**.

Exchange of Country-Level Experiences

During the discussions, participants provided detailed insights into the types of illegal seed practices most commonly observed in their respective countries. Across the region, similar patterns emerged, demonstrating that the issue is widespread and increasingly complex.

Participants described a range of challenges, including the sale of counterfeit and substandard seeds that are falsely marketed as high-quality hybrids. Unauthorized multiplication and informal “brown bag” sales of protected varieties were identified as persistent concerns, particularly in regions with large informal agricultural markets. In addition, fraudulent labelling and misuse of trademarks were highlighted as common tactics used to mislead farmers.

An important trend discussed was the rapid shift of illegal seed trade to digital platforms. Participants observed that online marketplaces and messaging applications have become key channels for distributing counterfeit seeds, making detection more difficult and expanding the reach of illegal activities.

Importance of Evidence and Market Intelligence

A recurring theme in the discussion was the need for stronger evidence-based approaches to identifying and addressing illegal seed practices. Participants emphasized that enforcement efforts must be supported by reliable data, field observations, and market intelligence.

Seed associations shared practical indicators used to detect illegal activities, such as unusual price variations in the market, recurring farmer complaints about poor crop performance, and



inconsistencies in labelling and packaging. Patterns in unauthorized distribution channels were also identified as useful signals.

There was broad agreement that systematic collection, documentation, and sharing of such evidence are essential for both enforcement and policy advocacy. Strengthening these processes would enable more targeted interventions and improve the effectiveness of regulatory responses.

Assessment of Enforcement Mechanisms

Participants engaged in a critical assessment of existing enforcement systems across countries. While some progress has been made, particularly in strengthening legal frameworks and regulatory oversight, a number of persistent challenges were identified.

Many participants noted that enforcement mechanisms often lack adequate coordination among different agencies, leading to gaps in implementation. Technical limitations, particularly in verifying seed authenticity and varietal identity, were also identified as barriers to effective enforcement. In addition, legal processes were frequently described as time-consuming and complex, reducing their deterrent effect.

Another key concern was the inconsistency of penalties, which in some cases are not strong enough to discourage repeated violations. Participants stressed that enforcement efforts are often reactive rather than preventive, highlighting the need for more proactive and coordinated strategies.

Best Practices in Promoting Compliance

The discussion highlighted several successful approaches that countries are adopting to promote compliance and reduce illegal seed practices. These approaches extend beyond enforcement and focus on addressing the root causes of the problem.

One of the most widely recognized strategies is farmer awareness and education. Participants shared experiences of conducting outreach campaigns to inform farmers about the risks associated with illegal seeds, including lower yields and higher long-term costs. Simplified economic comparisons have proven effective in helping farmers understand the benefits of using certified seeds.

Capacity building was also identified as a critical component. Training programs for inspectors, regulatory authorities, and judicial stakeholders are helping to improve understanding of intellectual property issues and strengthen enforcement capabilities. Enhancing technical expertise in seed testing and identification was recognized as particularly important.

Public–private partnerships emerged as another key success factor. Strong collaboration between seed associations and government authorities enables more effective monitoring, information sharing, and enforcement. Regular engagement platforms help build trust and ensure alignment between industry and regulators.

Identification of Key Gaps

Despite progress, participants acknowledged several gaps that continue to hinder efforts to combat illegal seed practices. These gaps exist across different levels of the system and require targeted interventions.



A major concern is the limited awareness among farmers, particularly smallholders, about seed quality, certification, and intellectual property rights. This lack of awareness contributes to demand for cheaper, illegal alternatives.

Participants also pointed to insufficient traceability mechanisms across the seed supply chain, making it difficult to track seed movement and identify sources of infringement. Regulatory fragmentation across countries creates additional challenges, as differences in policies and enforcement systems can be exploited by illegal operators.

Another significant gap is the lack of structured regional platforms for intelligence sharing. Limited exchange of information between countries reduces the ability to address cross-border activities effectively. Resource constraints at the field level further limit enforcement capacity in many countries.

Role of SIPI in Supporting Member Associations

The discussions clearly outlined the role of SIPI in addressing key challenges related to intellectual property protection. Participants identified SIPI as a valuable resource for strengthening technical and operational capabilities.

SIPI can contribute by providing specialized expertise on intellectual property issues, supporting capacity building initiatives, and developing practical tools for detecting and preventing infringements. It can also facilitate the sharing of best practices and help strengthen enforcement frameworks across the region.

By focusing on the technical aspects of IP protection, SIPI complements broader policy and advocacy efforts led by APSA.

Role of APSA in Regional Coordination

APSA's role was recognized as critical in driving regional cooperation and policy alignment. Participants emphasized that APSA serves as a platform for bringing together national seed associations and facilitating dialogue across countries.

Through its advocacy efforts, APSA can support the harmonization of regulatory frameworks, enabling more consistent enforcement and reducing opportunities for cross-border exploitation. It also plays a key role in promoting knowledge exchange and supporting engagement with governments and regional bodies.

Together, APSA and SIPI were seen as complementary partners, combining policy leadership with technical expertise.

Need for Strengthened Regional Collaboration

A central conclusion of the discussion was that illegal seed practices cannot be effectively addressed through isolated national efforts. The cross-border nature of these activities requires coordinated regional action.

Participants emphasized the need for stronger information sharing mechanisms, improved coordination among enforcement authorities, and alignment of regulatory frameworks across countries. Collaboration between public and private stakeholders was identified as essential to achieving meaningful progress.



There was a shared understanding that tackling ISPs requires a collective approach, with all stakeholders working together toward common objectives.

Focus on Practical and Action-Oriented Solutions

The discussions were strongly oriented toward practical solutions and implementation. Participants stressed the importance of translating knowledge and awareness into concrete actions.

Key priorities included strengthening on-ground enforcement, adopting technology-driven traceability systems, and clearly defining roles and responsibilities among stakeholders. Continuous engagement and follow-up actions were emphasized as critical to sustaining momentum and ensuring long-term impact.

The interactive discussions reinforced the complexity and urgency of addressing illegal seed practices in the APAC region. They highlighted the critical role of national seed associations as frontline actors, while also underscoring the importance of regional coordination and collaboration.

By emphasizing practical solutions, shared responsibilities, and coordinated action, the session laid a strong foundation for advancing collective efforts to protect innovation and enhance the integrity of the seed sector across the region.

8. KEY TAKEAWAYS

The APSA–SIPI Seed Associations Meeting highlighted that illegal seed practices continue to pose a serious and evolving challenge across the Asia-Pacific region. These practices are no longer isolated incidents but have developed into organized, cross-border activities that undermine innovation, distort markets, and reduce farmer confidence.

A major takeaway from the discussions was the critical role of national seed associations as frontline actors. These associations serve as the primary link between industry and government, playing a key role in awareness creation, policy advocacy, and enforcement facilitation. Their engagement is essential in identifying issues on the ground and driving practical solutions.

The meeting also reinforced the importance of strengthening intellectual property protection systems. Effective IP enforcement is fundamental to safeguarding innovation and ensuring continued investment in research and development. At the same time, participants recognized that enforcement alone is not sufficient. Awareness among farmers and stakeholders, coupled with improved traceability systems, is equally important to reduce the demand for illegal seeds.

Another key insight was the growing influence of digital platforms in enabling illegal seed trade. This shift requires new approaches, including digital monitoring, enhanced supply chain traceability, and stronger collaboration with e-commerce platforms.

Finally, the discussions emphasized that illegal seed practices are inherently cross-border and cannot be addressed by countries acting in isolation. Regional coordination, information sharing, and harmonization of regulatory approaches are essential for an effective response.

9. WAY FORWARD

The meeting concluded with a strong emphasis on the need for coordinated and sustained action across multiple fronts. Participants agreed that strengthening enforcement mechanisms should remain a priority, with a focus on improving institutional coordination, enhancing technical capacity, and ensuring that penalties act as effective deterrents.

At the same time, there was a clear recognition of the need to expand awareness efforts. Educating farmers on the risks associated with illegal seeds and the benefits of certified products is essential to reducing demand. Capacity building will also be critical, particularly for regulators, inspectors, and judicial stakeholders, to ensure a deeper understanding of intellectual property issues in the seed sector.

Technology-driven solutions were identified as a key area for future development. Expanding traceability systems, such as QR codes and digital verification platforms, can significantly improve transparency and help track seed movement across the supply chain.

Participants also emphasized the importance of strengthening public–private partnerships. Collaboration between industry, government authorities, and regional organizations such as APSA and SIPI will be essential to design and implement effective interventions.

National seed associations were encouraged to continue their engagement at the country level, while also leveraging APSA and SIPI platforms for technical support, knowledge exchange, and capacity building. Sharing best practices across countries will be vital to scaling successful approaches and addressing common challenges.

10. CONCLUSION

The APSA–SIPI Seed Associations Meeting underscored the importance of collective action in tackling illegal seed practices across the Asia-Pacific region. The discussions clearly demonstrated that while the challenges are complex and multifaceted, there is a strong foundation for progress through collaboration, policy alignment, and stakeholder engagement.

The complementary roles of APSA and SIPI were particularly evident. APSA continues to lead in regional advocacy, regulatory harmonization, and coordination among stakeholders, while SIPI provides technical expertise in intellectual property protection and enforcement. Together, they form a powerful platform for advancing a secure and innovative seed ecosystem.

The meeting also highlighted the importance of maintaining a strong feedback loop between national associations and regional bodies. This ensures that regional strategies remain grounded in local realities and that practical challenges faced by stakeholders are effectively addressed.

11. LOOKING AHEAD

Looking ahead, the pathway to addressing illegal seed practices will require a more integrated, data-driven, and collaborative approach. As the seed sector continues to evolve, new challenges particularly those driven by digitalization and cross-border trade will require continuous adaptation of strategies.



There is a growing opportunity to leverage technology, enhance intelligence sharing, and build more resilient regulatory systems. Strengthening regional partnerships will be critical to bridging gaps in enforcement and aligning policies across countries.

At the same time, empowering farmers through education and awareness will remain central to long-term success. Reducing demand for illegal seeds is as important as strengthening supply-side controls.

Ultimately, the future response to illegal seed practices in APAC will depend on sustained commitment, coordinated action, and shared responsibility among all stakeholders. By combining policy, enforcement, technology, and awareness, APSA, SIPI, and national seed associations are well positioned to drive meaningful progress toward a more transparent, innovative, and sustainable seed sector.