Business Seed Partnership (BSP)

Year 1 Implementation Report

September 2025 – June 2026



PREPARED BY:

The Ghana Netherlands Business & Culture Council (GNBCC)

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Executive Summary

The Business Seed Partnership (BSP) was initiated under the name Ghana Seed Partnership (GSP) in September 2025 to strengthen Ghana's vegetable seed sector through coordinated action under four interrelated Work Packages: Enabling Environment (Work Package 1), Commercial Seedling Production (Work Package 2), Variety Testing (Work Package 3) and Market Development (Work Package 4). The first year of the project, which ran from September 2025 to June 2026 was collaboratively implemented by 12 organizations, including GNBCC (project manager), Advance Consulting, Truvalu, Simba Grow Ltd, Bakker Brothers, IWAD, Profyta, Wageningen University & Research (WUR), SeedNL, East West Seeds, Enza Zaden and Rijk Zwaan with support from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN).

The ultimate objective of the Business Seed Partnership is to improve the performance, sustainability and resilience of Ghana's commercial vegetable seed sector by building synergies, seizing market opportunities, developing skills and supporting variety introduction. Its approach is to address productivity, knowledge and investment constraints through collaboration with growers, government, agricultural colleges, research institutes, seed companies, distributors and other private-sector actors. During the reporting period, the four interrelated Work Packages were implemented to reinforce one another and to complement initiatives under the wider Horticulture in Ghana portfolio. The first year therefore served not only as an implementation period, but also as an inception and learning year in which the implementing partners tested assumptions, clarified institutional roles and identified where the project could add the greatest value without duplicating existing structures.

Throughout Year 1, the project converted its four-work-package design into practical evidence. Work Package 1 designed and validated the roadmap light, and expanded it into a National Horticulture Seed Roadmap; Work Package 2 tested nursery production at Anloga, producing and selling 253,762 tomato seedlings to 31 farmers; Work Package 3 generated variety-performance evidence and strengthened partner capacity through field trials, training and the assessment of the Peki site; and Work Package 4 completed market research involving 400 farmers, 50 agro-input retail shops and major seed importers and distributors in addition to the feasibility of a Dutch-branded social-media campaign to increase farmer awareness and adoption of quality seed. These outputs provided a stronger basis for regulatory engagement, investment decisions, farmer outreach and the design of activities for Years 2-4 of the project.

The lessons and evidence generated during Year 1 have informed the strategy for Years 2-4, covering July 2026 to June 2029. That phase of the project will refine partner responsibilities, expand private-sector interventions and align delivery with HortiFuture and other sector programmes.

Project Context and Overview

The Business Seed Partnership (BSP) is a public-private partnership designed to improve the performance, sustainability and resilience of Ghana's horticultural farming system through skills and market development, variety testing, and a stronger enabling environment for the vegetable seed sector. To achieve this, the project takes a holistic approach to address the productivity, regulatory, knowledge and investment challenges by involving all relevant stakeholders, including growers, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, agricultural colleges, agricultural research institutes, seed companies, seedling companies and distributors.

BSP responds to a connected set of constraints in Ghana's vegetable seed system. Limited farmer awareness and weak distribution suppress demand for improved seed and professional seedlings; uncertain demand reduces companies' willingness to invest in trials, nursery infrastructure and market development; and gaps in coordination, sector data and the enabling environment make investment decisions more difficult. The four work packages are therefore designed as a mutually reinforcing system in which stronger coordination supports investment, trials and demonstration generate evidence, professional seedling production improves access to quality planting material, and market-development activities translate evidence into farmer and distributor demand.

This report summarizes Year 1 implementation progress, results and lessons, and explains how the evidence generated will shape partnership arrangements, priorities and delivery during the next phase of the Business Seed Partnership.

Project	Business Seed Partnership (BSP)
Project Manager	Ghana Netherlands Business and Culture Council (GNBCC)
Funding Framework	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
Country	Ghana
Reporting Period	September 2025 - June 2026
Implementing Partners	GNBCC, Advance Consulting, Truvalu, Simba Grow Ltd, Bakker Brothers, IWAD, Profyta, Wageningen University & Research, SeedNL, East West Seeds, Enza Zaden and Rijk Zwaan

Work Package 1: Enabling Environment Support

1. Activity Update

Work Package 1 focused on strengthening Ghana's policy and regulatory environment for the vegetable seed sector while building the knowledge base and communication channels needed to sustain engagement between Dutch and Ghanaian private-sector actors. During Year 1, Wageningen University & Research (WUR) and SeedNL engaged closely with key stakeholders, including the Technical Working Group on Seeds under the Agricultural Working Group, to translate the findings of the Ghana Seed Sector Assessment into actionable recommendations. WUR also collaborated with a team from the West Africa Horticulture Innovation Hub at the University of Ghana to gather input from a broad range of stakeholders. This engagement informed a National Vegetable Roadmap light. This Road Map Light, which outlines priority pathways for improving the regulatory and institutional environment for vegetable seeds was validated in May 2026. At EKN's request, WUR subsequently expanded the document into a full National Horticulture Seed Roadmap, scheduled for formal presentation to the Ministry of Food and Agriculture in September 2026.

The Year 1 outputs therefore provide both a technical evidence base and an institutional pathway for future policy engagement. In the continuation phase, BSP can use the roadmap and established coordination platforms to represent private-sector priorities while transferring broader enabling-environment work to HortiFuture.

2. Lessons Learned & Recommendations for the Next Phase

The following lessons are drawn from Work Package 1 activities and explain how they will inform BSP implementation in the next phase.

- The first year of the project showed that the Government of Ghana is becoming increasingly interested and active in horticulture and seed-sector development. This creates a more favorable environment for the Business Seed Partnership, provided the project remains closely aligned with national priorities and policy dialogue. Participation in platforms such as GROW24 and the bilateral Technical Working Group on Seeds under the Agricultural Working Group enabled the project to contribute practical private-sector insights to policy discussions while remaining connected to wider government and donor-led developments. In the next phase, BSP will continue engaging through these platforms so that implementation remains aligned with national priorities and responsive to regulatory developments.

- Year 1 also confirmed that the National Seed Trade Association of Ghana (NASTAG) already provides a functioning platform for private-sector actors across the seed value chain. Although its current offer to international vegetable seed companies is limited, NASTAG provides an established structure through which sector dialogue, coordination and advocacy can be strengthened. BSP implementation in the subsequent years will therefore support NASTAG to improve its value proposition to international vegetable seed companies rather than establish a parallel platform.
- WUR and SeedNL demonstrated similar and complementary expertise, and their collaboration helped translate sector analysis into practical recommendations. As enabling-environment activities will increasingly be taken forward under the HortiFuture project, BSP will consolidate its remaining support under SeedNL. This will maintain the project's participation in key policy and coordination platforms, clarify institutional roles and avoid overlap with HortiFuture during implementation of the next phase.

Work Package 2: Commercial Seedling Production

1. Implementation Update

Work Package 2 focused on researching and piloting the first commercial vegetable seedling nursery in Ghana. Simba Grow Ltd., in partnership with Truvalu through the GrowPact Global initiative, began piloting two low-tech nurseries. These pilots are designed to test the technical and commercial viability of commercial seedling production in Ghana. The initial production cycles focused on tomato seedlings at Anloga in the Volta Region. During the first production cycle, 253,762 hybrid tomato seedlings were produced and sold to 31 farmers. A business plan is also under development for the establishment of the first commercial vegetable seedling nursery. This plan is to attract long-term investment to ensure operational sustainability.

The Anloga production cycle provides initial evidence of farmer demand and local operating requirements. However, the experience also confirms that future scale-up depends on a validated business model, dependable offtake commitments, appropriate technical support and financing structured around production and sales assumptions.

2. Lessons Learned & Recommendations for the Next Phase

The following lessons are drawn from Work Package 2 activities and will inform future BSP implementation.

- Year 1 activities showed that establishing a high-tech commercial nursery takes longer than initially anticipated because the business model must be validated, investment secured and reliable offtake arrangements established. It also showed that smaller, lower-

tech nurseries have commercial potential. The next phase of BSP implementation will therefore place greater emphasis on piloting and supporting lower-tech nurseries through agricultural colleges and youth-led models, while continuing to support the establishment of Ghana's first commercial vegetable seedling producer.

- The project also learned that ACHI is a suitable partner for BSP. ACHI is widely recognized in Ghana's horticulture sector, and its work with agricultural colleges has created infrastructure, curricula and networks on which BSP can build. Working through ACHI-linked colleges will enable future activities to be implemented more efficiently, reduce duplication and strengthen employment prospects for ACHI students and graduates.

Work Package 3: Variety Trials

1. Implementation Update

In Year 1 of the project, the first series of vegetable variety trials were implemented under Work Package 3. Bakker Brothers, in collaboration with IWAD, conducted trials in Northern Ghana to identify onion, carrot and other vegetable varieties suited to challenging conditions, including high temperatures, water stress and pest pressure. In May 2026, a training session was organized for tutors and students of Damongo Agricultural College, with IWAD/ITFC staff also attending. Participants subsequently prepared a commercial vegetable-production proposal combining practical training, income generation, local testing and promotion of Bakker Brothers varieties. A follow-up session was held in June to reinforce practical knowledge of hybrid production and trial management.

Under this same Work Package, Profyta, working with IWAD, identified the Peki site in the Volta Region for trials of chilli, habanero, pepper and tomato varieties. A technical assessment by Profyta confirmed the site's suitability subject to the identified water-quality, disease-management and infrastructure measures. The related RVO Impact Cluster financing proposal remained under review at the close of Year 1 activities.

Together, the field trials, partner training and Peki site assessment created a foundation for a more systematic multi-location trial programme. The next implementation phase will apply common minimum protocols for data, photographs and yield measurement while allowing each seed company to protect commercially sensitive information and pursue its own market strategy.

2. Lessons Learned & Recommendations for the Next Phase

The following lessons are drawn from progress under Work Package 3 and will inform the next phase of the project.

- Support to Bakker Brothers and Profyta in Year 1 generated strong interest from other seed companies, including the newly participating EasiSeeds. Year 1 also revealed practical sensitivities: several companies are hesitant to conduct trials through national research institutes because of bureaucratic processes, limited commercial orientation and constrained institutional resources, while companies may be reluctant to trial varieties alongside competitors because comparative results are commercially sensitive. Future BSP implementation will therefore use a standardized framework and common deliverables for each of the six participating international seed companies, while allowing each company to conduct trials in a manner consistent with its commercial strategy and contribute to the project's shared learning and demonstration objectives.
- Another lesson is the value in working with proven local private-sector actors. Defarmercist emerged as a relevant horticulture stakeholder with a strong partner reputation and a demonstrated ability to deliver practical results. Future BSP implementation will build on and strengthen its existing Centre of Excellence to expand training, demonstration and private-sector engagement.

Work Package 4: Market Development

1. Implementation Update

Advance Consulting led Work Package 4 to strengthen market development for hybrid and improved vegetable seed by improving the evidence available on distribution systems and promotion strategies. Two studies were undertaken during Year 1. The first, 'Demand, Distribution and Supply in Ghana's Vegetable Seed System: A Farmer, Dealer and Importer Survey', examined the structure, performance and bottlenecks of Ghana's vegetable seed distribution network. The second assessed the feasibility of a Dutch-branded social-media campaign to increase farmer awareness and adoption of quality seed. The research included interviews with 400 farmers and 50 agro-input retail shops, alongside consultations with major vegetable seed importers and distributors. Participatory Development Associates, a Ghanaian research firm, facilitated field data collection. Findings were shared with EKN and project partners, and the vegetable seed-system study has been published online.

Online publication:
https://www.agroberichtenbuitenland.nl/documenten/2026/07/15/demand-distribution-and-supply-in-ghanas-vegetable-seed-system

Two Private Sector Advisory Committee (PSAC) meetings were convened in January and June 2026 to strengthen partner engagement. Representatives of Rijk Zwaan, East West Seeds, Enza Zaden, Bakker Brothers, Profyta and IWAD participated actively in the meetings. These partners also provided substantial input into the two studies conducted under this work package.

The project's M&E plan was finalized, with learning questions formulated and validated with implementing partners. Three learning sessions were delivered against an original target of two, and participation was strong. Overall project management was maintained through weekly check-ins with the Project Manager, while administrative support included outreach to Dutch companies and guidance on tax-residency requirements.

This combination of market intelligence, partner engagement, monitoring and structured learning provides a clearer basis for sequencing interventions in the next phase of the project. In particular, campaign design and dealer training can now be tailored to farmer segments, preferred communication channels, distribution bottlenecks and the practical information needs identified in the studies.

2. Lessons Learned & Recommendations for the Next Phase

The following lessons from Work Package 4 explain how Year 1 findings will inform the next phase:

- The study conducted in Year 1 confirmed the strategic role of agro-input dealers in the last-mile distribution of vegetable seeds. As the primary interface between many farmers and seed companies, dealers influence the adoption of hybrid and improved varieties, yet their knowledge of seed handling, storage, crop selection and farmer advisory practices is often limited. Future BSP implementation will therefore include technical and commercial training for agro-input dealers to improve the quality of advice provided to farmers and support wider adoption of quality seeds.
- The project also learned that the seed sector is evolving quickly and that new companies, technologies and partnership opportunities will continue to emerge during implementation. Recognizing that not all relevant interventions can be defined at the start of a multiannual programme, future BSP implementation will include an innovation fund that can respond to emerging opportunities, technologies and private-sector ideas aligned with the project's objectives. A need for this flexibility is illustrated by Iribov. The company is a significant tissue-culture producer in Ghana, but the scale and export orientation of its operations have so far made it difficult to define an activity that would directly benefit Ghanaian farmers. The next phase of the project will retain the flexibility to engage Iribov or similar companies when concrete opportunities arise that support private-sector development, local value creation and farmer benefit.

- Finally, work done in Year 1 highlighted the importance of balancing BSP's focus on hybrid and improved seed with attention to Ghana's agrobiodiversity and genetic resources, which remain important for resilience, nutrition and seed sovereignty. Existing EKN-supported initiatives are helping to establish community seed banks, but their commercial foundations remain weak. Future BSP implementation will complement this work by supporting viable business models, value addition and SME linkages around neglected and underutilized species.

Conclusion

Taken together, the results from Year 1 implementation confirmed that the comparative advantage of BSP lies in connecting commercial seed-sector expertise with effective Ghanaian institutions, delivery platforms and private-sector actors. The next phase will therefore reinforce - rather than duplicate - NASTAG, the Technical Working Group on Seeds, the GROW24 Seed System Task Force, ACHI-linked colleges and other existing structures, while maintaining a clear distinction between BSP and HortiFuture activities to avoid overlaps.

In the next phase of the project, Work Package 1 will move from broad enabling-environment support towards private-sector representation and coordination. Priorities include convening the Private Sector Advisory Committee, supporting the Technical Working Group on Seeds and GROW24 Seed System Task Force, contributing to SeedLINK, developing targeted knowledge products and strengthening NASTAG's value proposition to international vegetable seed companies. Work Package 2 will prioritize financing, offtake arrangements and operationalization of the commercial nursery; initiate a youth-led, low-tech nursery model through an ACHI-linked agricultural college; and combine nursery development with farmer and student capacity-building. Work Package 3 will expand company-led, multi-location trials under common deliverables and minimum data standards, strengthen the Vegetable Hub of Excellence for trials, demonstration and training, and use field days to connect variety evidence with farmer and distributor demand.

Work Package 4 will translate the completed market research into a phased campaign promoting quality seed, initiate capacity-building for agro-input dealers, assess tissue-culture business opportunities, operationalize the vegetable seed-sector Innovation Fund, prepare business plans for two community seed banks, and support 15 SMEs to develop and commercialize products based on neglected and underutilized species.

Success in the next phase of the BSP should be assessed not only through activity completion, but through evidence of adoption and sustainability. Key indicators should include secured financing and offtake for nursery models; comparable trial data used by companies, farmers and distributors; stronger dealer knowledge and last-mile availability of quality seed; co-investment in supported innovations; viable revenue and governance arrangements for community seed banks; and measurable benefits for farmers, students and participating SMEs. Tracking these outcomes will allow BSP to adapt implementation while maintaining accountability and demonstrating its contribution to a more competitive, resilient and inclusive vegetable seed sector in Ghana.