



## Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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# Making the Most of a Good Thing: A Public-Private Partnership to Increase Drought Resilience for Smallholder Farmers



WEMA

Comparison of existing and potential hybrids under moderate drought (left) and well watered (right) conditions.

To help smallholders become more resilient to drought and other hardships while increasing crop productivity, the [Feed the Future Research Strategy](#) places a strong emphasis on developing high-yielding, climate-resilient cereals. But development is only one part of the equation. Success will also depend on the effective commercialization of these improved seeds. The [Water Efficient Maize for Africa](#) (WEMA) project aims to do both.

A unique public-private partnership focused on developing drought-tolerant and pest-resistant tropical maize for Eastern and Southern Africa, WEMA is a joint effort between the Nairobi-based [African Agricultural Technology Foundation](#) (AATF), the [International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center](#) (CIMMYT), the [Monsanto Company](#), and national agricultural research systems (NARS) in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique, and South Africa. In addition to support from USAID, the project receives additional support from the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#), the [Howard G. Buffett Foundation](#), and the Monsanto Company.

The WEMA project takes a four-pronged approach to helping farmers fight drought, disease and pests. First, the project will capitalize on the scientific excellence of participating research institutions and utilize the best existing materials from CIMMYT, Monsanto and NARS to develop new hybrids. These hybrids yield 25 percent more than existing hybrids under moderate drought conditions.

Second, the project partners are screening these same drought-tolerant maize populations for resistance to harmful maize diseases, such as the maize lethal necrosis disease.

Third, partners are introducing insect-resistant “Bt” genes into these maize varieties, the same Bt genes that have revolutionized maize production in the developed world over the past two decades.

Lastly, WEMA partners are working to coordinate a private sector-led strategy of licensing the new, improved varieties to local small- and medium-sized seed companies, royalty-free, in order to facilitate the dissemination of these beneficial options to smallholder farmers.

The first WEMA hybrid is expected to be available this fall in Kenya and next year in Uganda, pending final varietal registration. This first hybrid has already seen a high level of demand – nine seed companies have asked to license the more resilient seeds for transfer to African farmers. Additional releases are planned for the next two years.