

CHAPTER 6

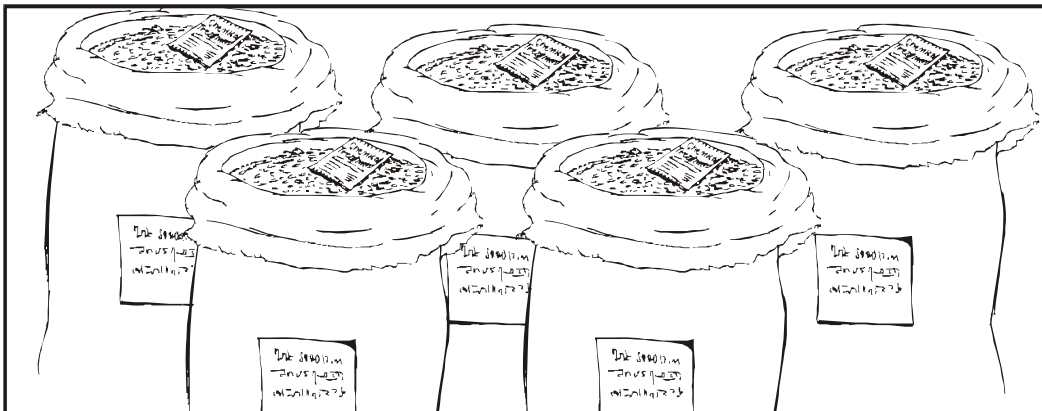
Cleaning, treating, packaging and storing your seed

Cleaning is an important operation that upgrades the physical quality of your seed.

Pre-clean your seed on the farm to remove large unwanted materials such as straw, large stones, etc.



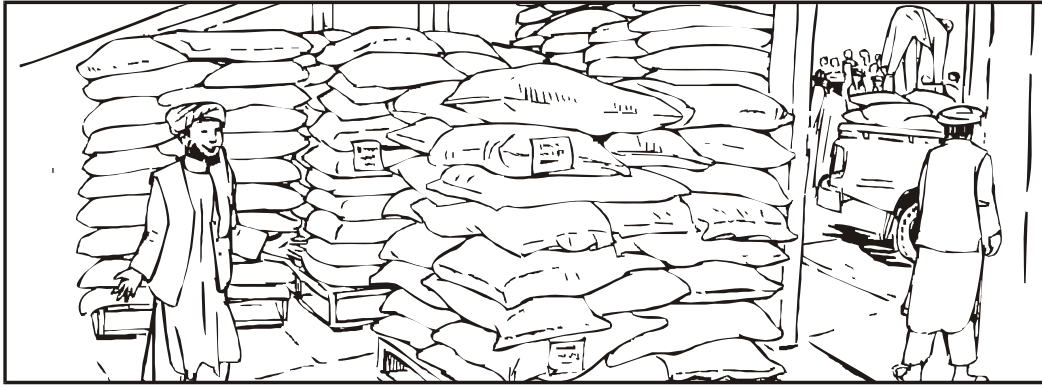
Put the cleaned raw seed into new bags bearing details about the crop and variety.



Transport your raw seed to the seed cleaning centre for final cleaning. Use the processing machine to clean your seed to make it physically pure by removing all unwanted materials like seed of other crops, weed seeds, chaff, stones broken seeds and shriveled grains, etc.

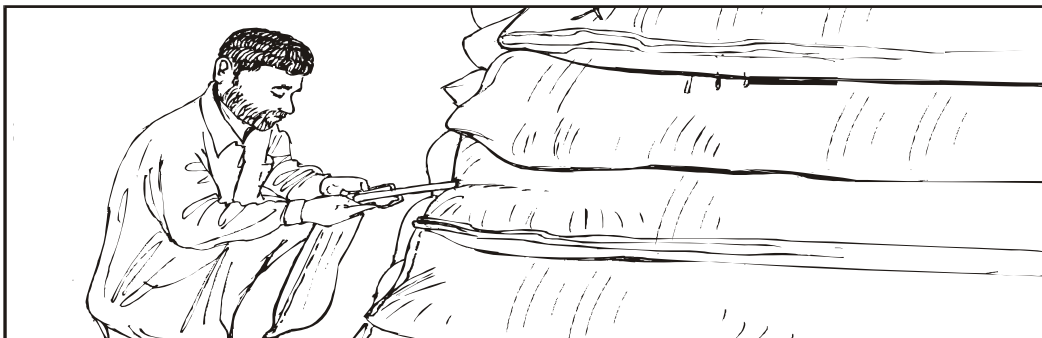


Use suitable chemical treatment against seed-borne diseases and pests. Seal the bags and label them with full details about the seed and put the same information inside each bag for a particular seed lot.



Place your sack in small batches suitable for sampling and fumigation.

- Request the quality control department to collect samples from your seed lots and submit for testing. Do not distribute your seed until the test results are available.
- The laboratory or certification agency will issue official tags for those lots that meet minimum quality standards after seed testing.
- Attach official certification tags to each bag of all certified seed lots. The tags should bear details about the seed including name of crop, variety, lot number, class of seed, and date of certification.

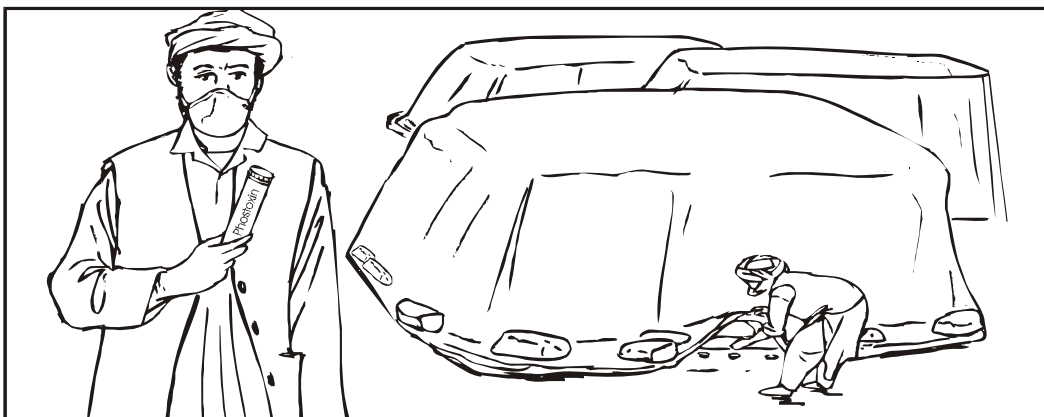


Store your seed properly and under good conditions until it finally reaches the farmer for sowing. Use proper techniques, for example:

- Use wooden pallets to keep the seed from direct contact with the floor.
- Keep your seed away from the walls and the roof to allow easy inspection and control.
- Do not store seed and fertilizer in close proximity with each other.



Inspect your seed lots periodically and fumigate against storage pests when necessary.



Exercises and discussion points

1. Which seed cleaning method would you prefer for your enterprise? What advantages has this method over others?
2. How would you ensure your seed lots are sampled and tested in time for marketing to farmers? What would you do in sampling your seed lots to make sure that a smaller lot size (e.g. 5 tonnes) and a larger lot size (e.g. 10 tonnes) both give equally reliable and representative samples for seed testing?
3. Which would you prefer: treating all seed at the processing point or dispatching the seed with separate packs of chemical for the farmer to treat the seed himself? Give reasons for your answer.
4. What internal quality assurance methods do you use to ensure your fields and seeds meet the minimum quality standards?

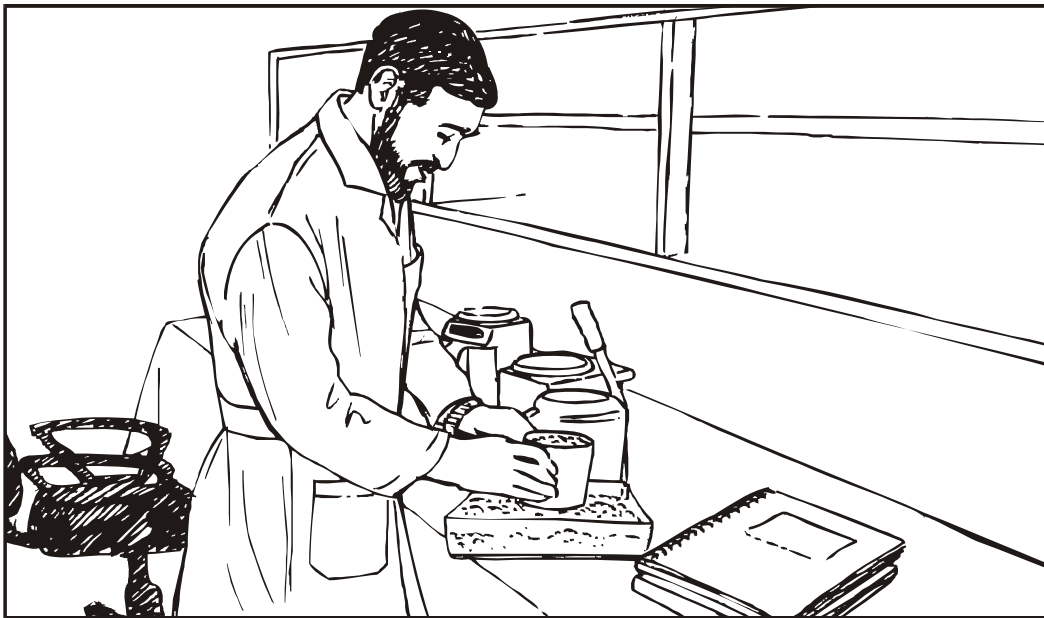
CHAPTER 7

Testing the quality of your seed

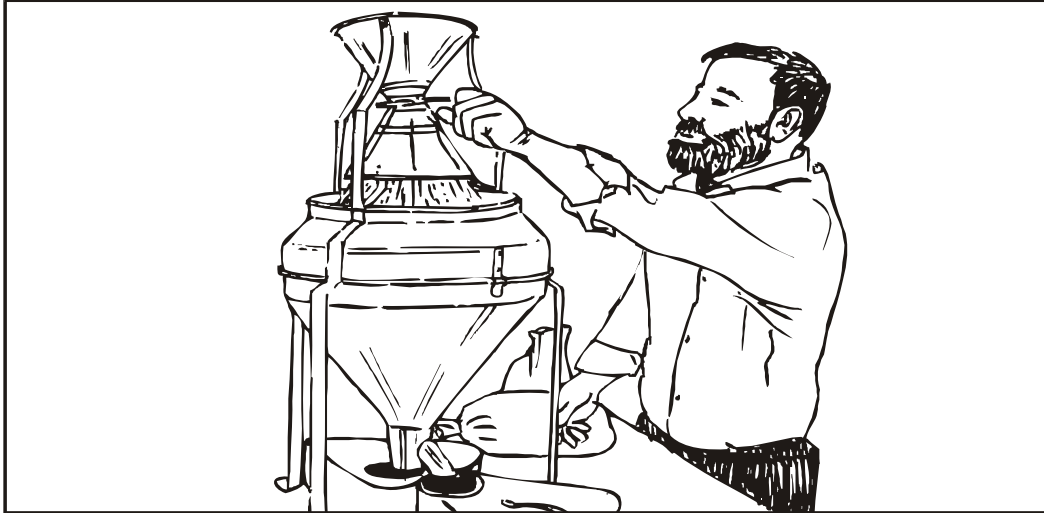
Certain important tests are carried out once the seed samples reach the laboratory. The tests will last about ten days before the results are made available.

Testing the seed for moisture content.

The seed is first tested to ensure it has the right moisture content. The correct moisture content is important for storability of the seed. The optimum moisture content for wheat seed should be in the range of 10-12%. High moisture content can cause rapid deterioration of the seed, while too low moisture content can result in mechanical damage to the seed.



The seed sample is then randomly divided into a working sample for the various quality tests. The working sample must be representative of the lot it comes from.



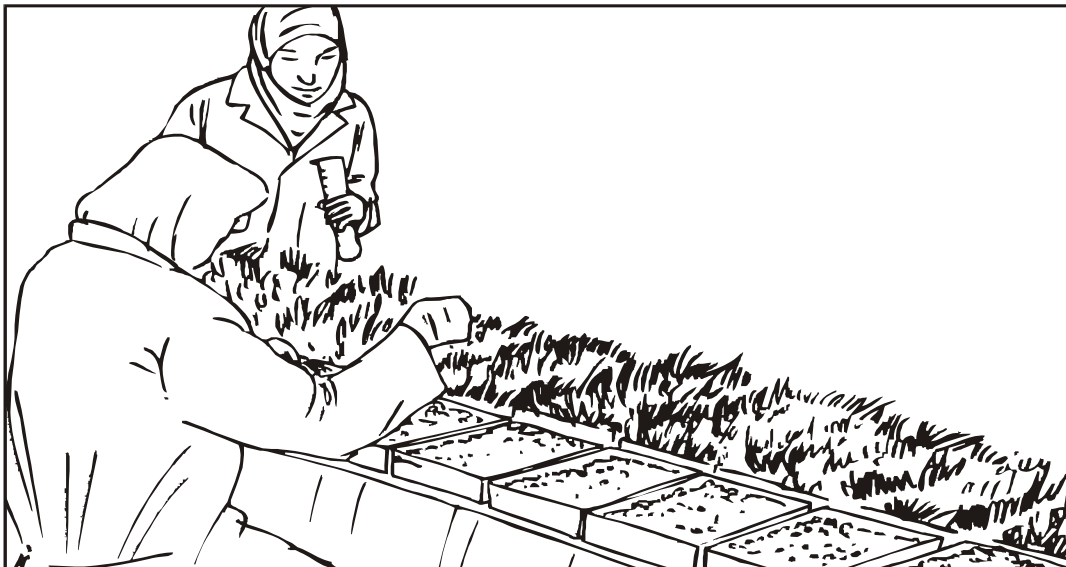
Testing the seed to ensure it is well cleaned and is true-to-type or pure seed of the same crop and variety.



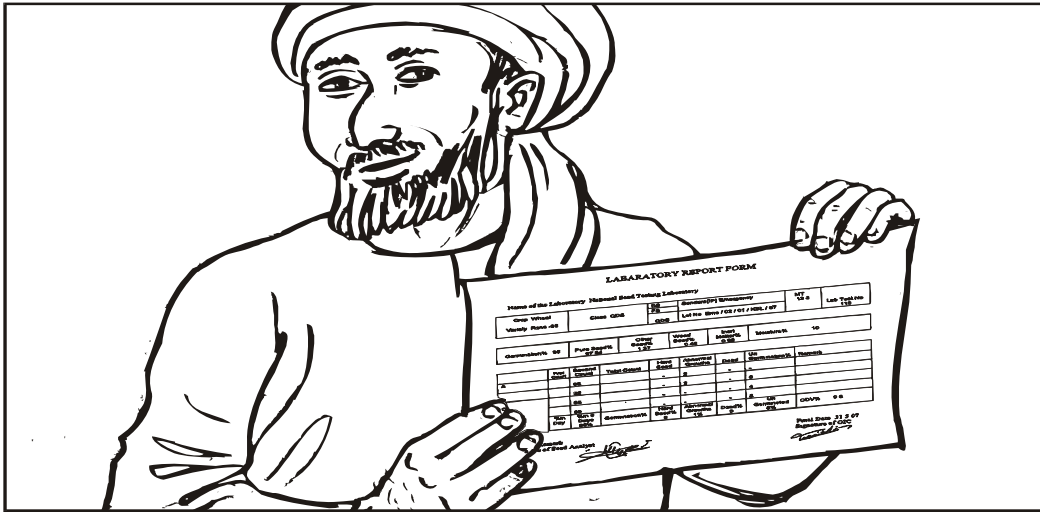
Testing the quality of your seed to ensure the product you sell is free from seed-borne diseases.



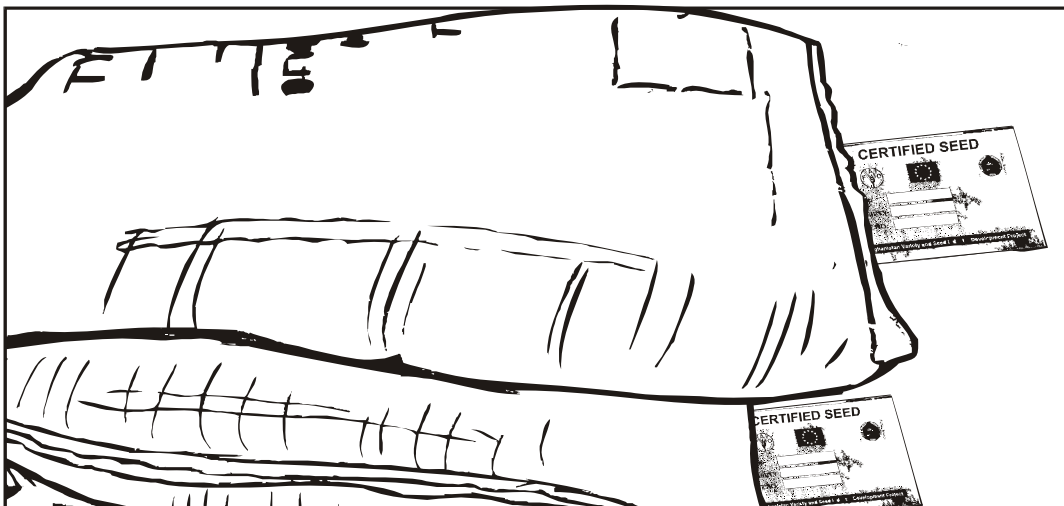
Testing the seed to make sure it will germinate and grow well in the field.



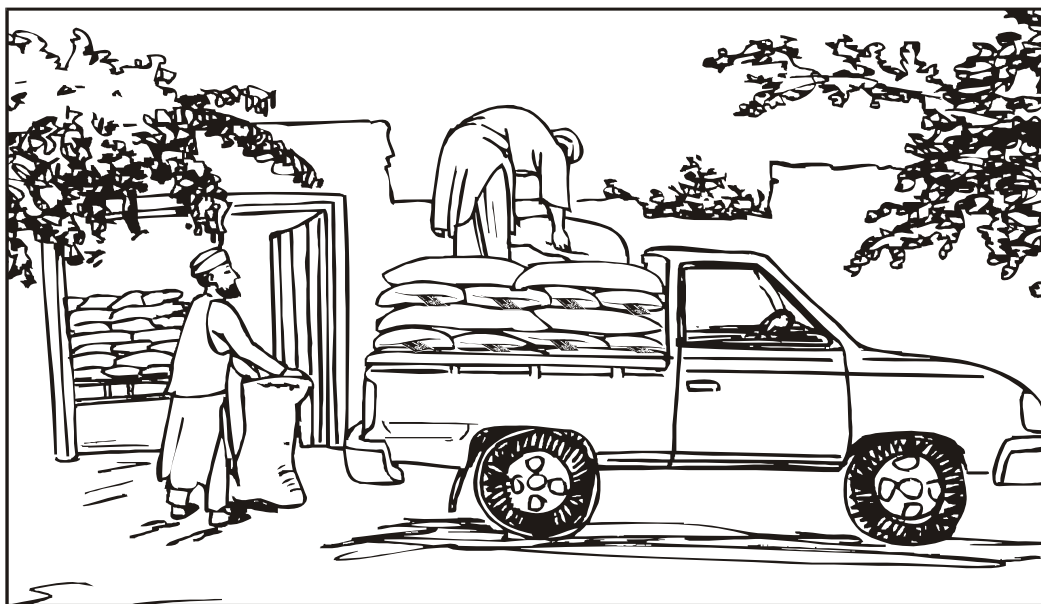
After the tests are completed, the laboratory will issue a quality certificate for each lot indicating the results of moisture content, physical purity, varietal purity and health status if required



The laboratory or agency will issue a certification tag to be attached to all seed lots that pass the quality tests



Wait for the test results and dispatch for sale only those lots that pass the laboratory tests and have certification tags.



Exercises and discussion points

1. Which quality standard do you consider most difficult to meet and why? In case your seed lot is rejected, what would you do with it?
2. Is it better to check the genetic purity of your seed in the laboratory or in the field? Explain your answer.
3. Why do you think it is important to wait for quality results from the laboratory before dispatching seed to customers?

CHAPTER 8

Promoting and selling your seed

Marketing the seed you produce

- For your enterprise to succeed, you must sell all the seed you produce each season. This requires a thorough knowledge and understanding of which crops and varieties farmers would desire and the quantity of seed they would need.
- The enterprise should obtain this information in advance and use it in making its production plan so that the enterprise produces seed only according to the prospects of real market demand.

Some essential activities that must be done to make good seed sales:

Promote your varieties and seed through field days and on-farm demonstrations.



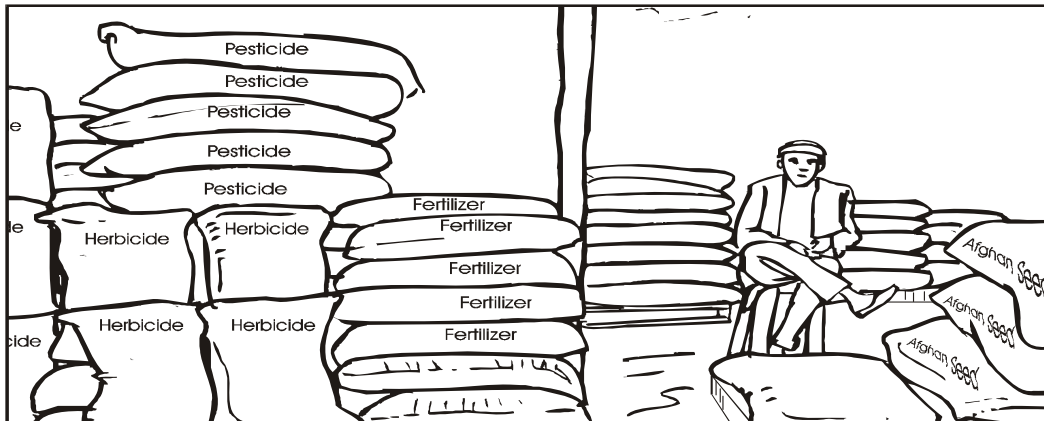
Participate and make displays (e.g. attractive posters and seed samples) at agricultural fairs, meetings or conferences. Talk to participants and distribute brochures and your business card.



Distribute your seed through sales agents located in places that farmers visit frequently such as market bazaars. Ensure that your agents know about seed production, handling and management such that they can give farmers appropriate extension advice.



Endeavour, where possible to sell your seed together with related inputs and other items that farmers would need such as fertilizer, pesticide, herbicide and hand tools. This will enable the farmers to purchase as much of their inputs from one source as possible.



Find out the prevailing market prices for grain and seed of your crop.



Deciding on the right selling price.

To sell at an appropriate price, the enterprise must know its total cost and the components of its cost structure, and understand how particular costs are incurred and how to influence the level of these costs. You can then add a reasonable profit margin to the total cost to fix the selling price. This is called the 'Cost Plus' method of pricing.

Alternatively, you can base your selling price on the affordability and willingness of the farmer to pay a certain level of price for quality seed. To use this method effectively, you need to know the prices other producers are charging for the same kind of seed. A proper price determination uses a combination of both methods mentioned. This means that you must calculate your full costs and also have a good understanding of the final market conditions for your seed.

The procurement of seed from contract growers is the most significant cost for the enterprise. You must have enough money available at the right time to buy raw seed from your growers and at the right price.

Making profit.

- To make profit, the enterprise must get more money from selling its seed than the total cost it incurs from producing and selling the seed. Carryover of unsold seed from one season to another should be avoided because the quality of such seed may fall thus reducing its value and price and making the business less profitable.
- The enterprise should aim at a certain profit margin that will ensure the business continues to survive while charging a competitive price.

Some essential activities that must be done to make profit:

Have a full store at the start of the season.



Sell your seed at a good price that farmers can afford and are willing to pay.



Have an empty store at the end of the season.



Maintain good financial records and have good knowledge about your expenses, expected income and potential profit level.



Provide good after-sale service for your customers.

Quality, price, and service are three factors that are critical to the success of any seed enterprise. The type of service you provide for your customer following the sale of seed should be an integral part of your company's marketing strategy from the start.

Proper service begins with timely delivery of quality seed at acceptable price to your customers. You must continue to care for your customers after selling seed to them by dealing with any complaints they may have, providing any needed advice and ensuring that you maintain customer loyalty.

It is important that you ask your customers to give you feedback about the performance of the seed you sold to them. Remember that properly handled service can be a foundation for growth of your business. You cannot ignore it or leave it to chance.

Exercises and discussion points

1. If a tonne of wheat seed costs a total amount of \$200 to produce, what will be your selling price if you intend to make a 15% profit margin?
2. What promotional methods would you use for the different categories of customers in your community?
3. Why do you think it is critical that you have sufficient cash available and at the right time to procure raw seed from your contract growers? How would you raise this money?
4. Why is it necessary to avoid large carryover of seed from one season to the next? How can you organize your seed business to avoid carryover of seed?

