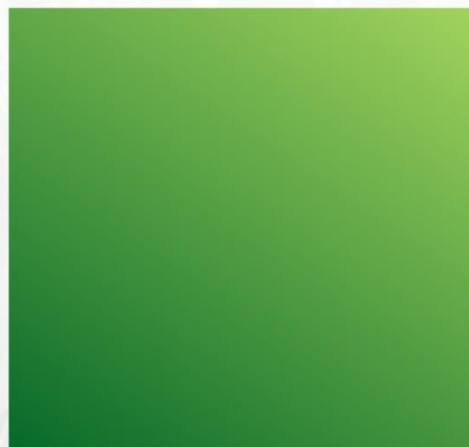
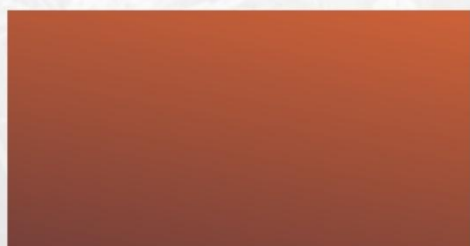
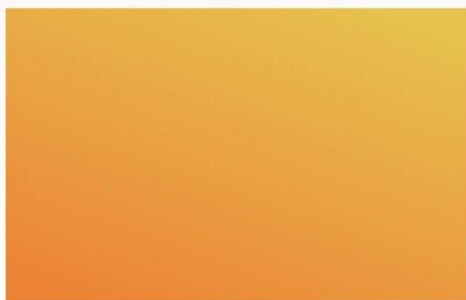


UPDATED AND REVISED GUIDELINES FOR REGISTRATION AND RELEASE OF NEW CROP VARIETIES IN NIGERIA



17 April 2025

(Adopted at the 35th Meeting of the National Variety Release Committee)



Foreword

A More Enabling and Inclusive Variety Release System for Nigeria

It is with great pleasure that I present this revised and updated version of the *Guidelines for Registration and Release of New Crop Varieties in Nigeria*. This is the first comprehensive revision since the guidelines were first introduced. This milestone reflects our shared ambition to adapt to emerging realities and expand the variety release system, opening it up to broader participation, particularly from the private sector. This revision comes at a critical time when Nigeria's agricultural sector must respond to rapidly evolving challenges and opportunities, from climate change and food security concerns to the demand for improved varieties that meet the needs of farmers, consumers, and industry.

This important process was made possible through the support of the Collaborative Seed Programme (CSP) and the effective leadership of the National Variety Release Technical Sub-committee (Crops). Following the principles of inclusivity, practicality, and evidence-based policymaking, this revision drew on the knowledge and experience of a wide range of stakeholders, from public and private sector actors to farmer organizations and research institutions, both national and international.

As we look to the future, the implementation of these revised guidelines will be key to enhancing farmers' access to better seeds, increasing agricultural productivity, and building resilience in our food systems. I am confident that this new framework will serve as a foundation for sustained progress in the Nigerian seed sector.

Together, let us continue to work toward a seed system that delivers for all.



Professor
Olusoji Olaolu Olufajo.
Chairman
National Crop Varieties and Livestock
Breeds Registration and Release
Committee (NVRC)

Acknowledgment

The Federal Government of Nigeria remains committed to upholding regulatory standards that protect public health, conserve genetic resources, and support sustainable agriculture. In line with this, Decree 33 of 1987 (Now Act of Parliament, 2016) established the National Crop Varieties and Livestock Breeds Registration and Release Committee (NVRC), coordinated by the National Centre for Genetic Resources and Biotechnology (NACGRAB).

Since its inauguration in 1989, the Committee has approved the release of over 800 crop varieties across 40 species, and 255 varieties have been entered into the ECOWAS regional catalogue. However, the need to revise the guidelines emerged from current realities and a shared desire among stakeholders for a more current, efficient, and responsive system that is better aligned with today's evolving agricultural landscape and seed sector needs. To address this, we have undertaken the first major revision of the Guidelines for Registration and Release of New Crop Varieties in Nigeria.

This revision is rooted in practical experience, reflects contributions from public and private sector stakeholders and incorporates tested innovations that simplify the process, promote private sector participation, and align with ECOWAS standards. The revised guidelines provide clearer procedures and adaptive testing pathways that accommodate the specific needs of different crop types and agroecological zones.

I commend the leadership of the NVRC and the Technical Sub-Committee, as well as the dedication of the NACGRAB team, Wageningen Social and Economic Research, Sahel Consulting, and all partners who contributed to this effort. I trust that these guidelines will support timely access to improved varieties and strengthen Nigeria's seed system for years to come.



Dr. Anthony Okere

Registrar

National Crop Varieties and Livestock Breeds
Registration and Release Committee (NVRC)

National Centre for Genetic Resources and
Biotechnology (NACGRAB).

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Definitions

The following terms and definitions are pertinent to the current updated and revised guidelines.

Applicant:	An organization (its legal entity) applying for variety registration and variety release.
Breeder:	A qualified person who develops or discovers a new crop variety.
Check variety:	A check variety is a local, registered and/or released variety currently grown and popular in the targeted agro-ecology with known genetic and agronomic characters used for comparing with a candidate variety during VCU and on-farm trials.
Collaborating Reference Organisation (CRO):	An organization with the capacity to conduct DUS and/or VCU tests, overseeing implementation of on-farm trials and assessing documentation relevant to the process of application for registration and release; as such it has been endorsed by the Register. The CRO hosts the CRS.
Collaborating Reference Scientist (CRS):	A scientist with the capacity to conduct the required and/or oversee the trials and other supervisory activities, relevant to the process of application for the registration and release of crop varieties. The CRS should have recognized knowledge of the current varieties registered and released for a crop, and as such be able to assess whether a candidate variety is new, distinct, uniform and stable, and better performing compared with current varieties in value for cultivation and use. The National Crop Coordinators provide inputs for the list of scientists in Nigeria for a specific crop with the capacity to perform the tasks of a CRS. During its annual meeting the Crops Technical Sub-Committee updates, reviews and approves the list.
Coordinating Research Institute:	National Agricultural Research Institute coordinating the research for a specific crop or commodity in Nigeria. National Crop Coordinators are based at these Institutes.
Crops Technical Sub-Committee:	Technical Sub-Committee for the Registration and Release of Crop Varieties, appointed by the National Committee.
Crop variety:	An assemblage of cultivated individuals which are distinguished by any character (morphological, physiological, cytological, chemical or others) which when reproduced (sexually or asexually) retain their distinguishing characters.
Distinctness, Uniformity and Stability (DUS) data	DUS data are the data generated in varietal development at the station of the breeder that match those required to evaluate whether a candidate variety is: (a) distinct from any known variety in respect of critical traits; (b) uniform in morphological, physiological or other accepted traits; and (c) stable in its description after repeated reproduction or propagation. The trial must conform to UPOV guidelines, and the trial should be conducted in two growing periods. The DUS data generated in that way

	can be submitted with the CRO for assessment and inclusion in the nomination of the candidate variety for registration and release.
DUS trial:	An evaluation to determine whether a new crop variety is (a) distinct from any known crop variety in respect of some traits; (b) uniform in morphological, physiological or other accepted traits; and (c) stable in its description after repeated reproduction or propagation.
List of Collaborating Reference Scientists:	A list of scientists with the capacity to conduct the required and/or oversee the trials and other supervisory activities, relevant to the process of application for the registration and release of crop varieties. The list is compiled by the Secretariat with inputs of the National Crop Coordinators; it includes scientists in Nigeria with expertise on a specific crop and able to perform the tasks of a CRS. During its annual meeting the Crops Technical Sub-Committee updates, reviews and approves the list.
Multi-locational trial:	Evaluation of a candidate variety for at least two growing periods across different agro-ecological zones in Nigeria (minimum of 10 testing sites) or at several appropriate locations in case the candidate variety is developed for a particular agro-ecology. The candidate variety is compared with previously released varieties with similar characteristics (check varieties). The trial is set up to examine the candidate variety for VCU, which examines its adaptability, stability, agronomic performance, and resistance/tolerance to biotic and abiotic stresses.
National Committee:	National Crop Varieties and Livestock Breeds Registration and Release Committee, established under the Acts of Parliament 2016 (Decree 33 of 1987).
National Crop Coordinator:	A National Crop Coordinator is the scientist/plant breeder coordinating at the national level variety development for a crop; this person is located within the Coordinating Research Institute with the national mandate for that crop (see Appendix I).
On-farm trial:	Evaluation of a candidate variety under farmers' production practices and growing conditions; the aim is to compare the candidate variety with a farmers' or popular variety and to validate perception of farmers about the candidate variety.
On-station trial:	On-station testing supports variety release and registration for evaluation of DUS and agronomic performance. Within the process for registration and release, a DUS test is an evaluation within the premises of an organisation responsible for variety development, conducted and overseen by a qualified plant breeder with the aim to determine whether a candidate variety is (a) different from any known variety in respect of critical traits, (b) uniform in morphological, physiological or other accepted traits, and (c) stable in its description after repeated reproduction or propagation. The trial is conducted in conformity with UPOV guidelines. For variety registration and release, the DUS test is

	conducted in one growing period. Within the process for Plant Variety Protection, it is required that DUS evaluations are conducted for two growing periods.
Reference variety:	The reference variety is used to compare with the candidate variety to assess its distinctiveness during DUS tests. The variety must be registered and released in Nigeria (if applicable); any other variety of common knowledge grown in comparable agro-ecology; varieties nominated by the applicant as close controls; other varieties in tests; and/or UPOV example varieties.
Registrar:	A Registrar has been appointed for the enforcement of the Decree No. 33, 1987, for National Crop Varieties and Livestock Breeds Registration and Release. The Director of NACGRAB acts as the Registrar. The Register has specific responsibilities in the process leading up to a decision by the National Committee for the registration and release of a candidate variety.
Registration:	The inclusion of a released variety in the National Variety Release Catalogue/List (Register).
Release:	A process whereby a crop variety has satisfactorily undergone trials and tests for distinctness, uniformity and stability, for yield or other special attributes, and is approved for release by the National Committee.
Secretariat	Staff members of NACGRAB responsible for supporting the Registrar, National Committee and Technical Sub-Committees in running the processes of notification, nomination and decision making in the process of registration and release of crop varieties, livestock breeds and fish strains.
Tricot:	Triadic comparison of technologies; this is an alternative method of conducting on-farm trials.
Value for Cultivation and Use (VCU) test:	A new variety must be beneficial to farming and industrial communities. The trial is used to determine adaptation and stability across varying environments, agronomic performance, reaction to pests and diseases, and resistance/tolerance to abiotic stresses, when compared with existing varieties.

SECTION A: ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND PROCESSES

- 1.0 Establishment of National Crop Varieties and Livestock Breeds Registration and Release Committee
- 1.1 The Federal Government of Nigeria promulgated the Act of Parliament, 2016, that established the National Crop Varieties and Livestock Breeds Registration and Release Committee (hereafter referred to as the National Committee).

2.0 Responsibilities of the Registrar

- 2.1 A Registrar has been appointed for the enforcement of the Act of Parliament, 2016, for National Crop Varieties and Livestock Breeds Registration and Release. The Director, National Centre for Genetic Resources and Biotechnology (NACGRAB) in the Federal Ministry of Innovation, Science and Technology acts as the Registrar.
- 2.2 The Registrar has the following responsibilities:
- Enforce the provisions of Act of Parliament, 2016, for National Crop Varieties and Livestock Breeds Registration and Release;
 - Convene the meetings of the National Committee and Technical Sub-Committees for the Registration and Release of (a) Crop Varieties, (b) Livestock Breeds and (c) Fish Strains; in consultation with Chairman, NVRC.
 - Confirm acceptance of a notification by an applicant of intention to carry out pre-registration/variety release trials of a candidate variety; and identification of a Collaborating Reference Scientist (CRS) and Collaborating Reference Organisation (CRO);
 - Confirm acceptance of a nomination by a CRO on behalf of an applicant of a candidate variety to be presented in a meeting of the Crops Technical Sub-Committee;
 - Notify the applicant of rejection, re-presentation or acceptance of the nomination;
 - Publish the registration in the official National Catalogue and issue a certificate of registration and release, and notify the applicant;
 - Appoint members of his staff to assist in running the secretariat of the National Committee;
 - Recommend to the Honourable Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology and other Honourable Ministers; professional or organization to be part of the meeting of the National Committee for approval.

3.0 Responsibilities of the Secretariat

- 3.1 The Secretariat consists of staff members of NACGRAB.
- 3.2 The Secretariat has the following responsibilities:
- Support the Registrar, National Committee and Technical Sub-Committees in their responsibilities in notification, nomination and decision making in the process of registration and release of crop varieties, livestock breeds and fish strains;
 - Support the registrar to organise meetings of the National Committee and Technical Sub-Committees for the registration and release of (a) crop varieties, (b) livestock breeds and (c) fish strains;
 - Support the Registrar to receive, verify and decide on acceptance of a notification by an applicant of intention to carry out pre-registration/variety release trials of a candidate variety;
 - Support the Registrar to propose to the applicant three candidate Collaborating Reference Scientists (CRS) from the CRS list and associated Collaborating Reference Organisations (CRO);
 - Ensure that the applicant identifies one candidate CRS and CRO, inform the Registrar of the decision, and inform the selected CRS and CRO;
 - Based on the information provided by the applicant in the nomination form support the Registrar to make a decision on the type of tests required and/or evaluation of data and information needed (e.g. DUS data from other countries, DUS data from the applicant, data

from multi-locational trials from breeding) for the process of release and registration; and if required act to seek additional information from the applicant;

- g) On behalf of the Registrar and upon consultation with the National Crop Coordinator, provide the applicant, CRS and CRO with the guidelines and reference varieties for the DUS tests and check varieties for the VCU and on-farm trials (if applicable);
- h) Based on the required evaluation of information, tests and supervision required, provide the applicant with information on the costs (based on the cost overview, Appendix III), and processes for payment for services by the applicant to both the CRO and the Secretariat;
- i) Receive and verify nomination forms for registration and release;
- j) Request additional information to regularize missing information for a nomination;
- k) Verify that the new variety fulfils the Distinctiveness, Uniformity and Stability (DUS) and Value for Cultivation and Use (VCU) requirements;
- l) Support the Registrar in informing the applicant of rejection, re-presentation or acceptance of the nomination.

4.0 Composition of the National Committee

4.1 The National Committee shall comprise the following members:

- a) A Chair who shall not be a person employed in the public service of the Federation or of a state, appointed by the President;
- b) The Director, Department of Agriculture of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security;
- c) The Director, Livestock Animal Breeding and Conservation of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development;
- d) The Director, Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture of the Federal Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy;
- e) The Director, Bio-resources Technology of the Federal Ministry of Innovation, Science and Technology;
- f) The Director, National Centre for Genetic Resources and Biotechnology (NACGRAB), Federal Ministry of Innovation, Science and Technology;
- g) The Director General, National Agricultural Seeds Council (NASC), Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security;
- h) The Chair, Committee of Deans of Faculties of Agriculture in Nigerian Universities;
- i) The President, Genetic Society of Nigeria (GSN);
- j) Two experienced breeders, appointed on their personal merit by the Honourable Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology upon the recommendation of the Registrar;
- k) One large-scale crop farmer, appointed on his personal merit by the Honourable Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology upon the recommendation of the Registrar;
- l) Two General Managers representing River Basin Development Authorities from different ecological areas in rotation, appointed by the Honourable Minister upon the recommendation of the Registrar;
- m) The Executive Secretary, Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN);
- n) The Director General, National Biotechnology Research and Development Agency (NBRDA);
- o) The President, Seed Entrepreneurs Association of Nigeria (SEEDAN);
- p) The Head, Genetic Resources Center, International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA).

5.0 Responsibilities of the National Committee

5.1 The National Committee shall have the power to regulate its proceedings. The validity of the proceedings of the Committee shall not be affected by reason of:

- a) Any vacancy in membership of the National Committee;
- b) Any defect in the appointment of one or more members of the National Committee; or
- c) A person not entitled to do so taking part in its proceedings.

5.2 The National Committee has the following responsibilities:

- a) Receives and processes nominations for the registration, naming and release of new crop varieties, livestock breeds and fish strains;
- b) Officially release the list of crop varieties, livestock breeds and fish strains recommended by any Sub-Committee established for that purpose;
- c) Approve names for new crop varieties and breeds of livestock certified as new or distinct such that uniformity in nomenclature is ensured;
- d) Render essential information on the released varieties of crops, livestock breeds and fish strains, their outstanding characteristics, areas of adaptation and the location of foundation seeds or stocks of the released varieties and breeds;
- e) Ensure the maintenance of the National Register for all crop varieties, livestock breeds and fish strains;
- f) Interact with organisations concerned with the development, production and marketing of crop varieties, livestock breeds and fish strains; these organisations include national and international public research organizations, and national and international seed companies, and their representatives;
- g) Organise, in collaboration with the NACGRAB, the maintenance and storage for future use the germplasm of the registered crop varieties, livestock breeds and fish strains;
- h) Ensure that any imported crop variety or livestock breed into Nigeria which are meant for general distribution and use shall pass through the same process new crop varieties and livestock breeds developed in Nigeria;
- i) Formulate policies on matters concerning the validation, registration, naming and release of new crop varieties and livestock breeds, which are either developed in Nigeria or outside the country.

5.3 The National Committee is empowered to appoint such number of Technical Sub-Committees as it thinks fits to consider and report on any matter with which the National Committee is concerned.

6.0 Composition of the Technical Sub-Committee for the Registration and Release of Crop Varieties

6.1 The Technical Sub-Committee for the Registration and Release of Crop Varieties (hereafter referred to as Crops Technical Sub-Committee) shall have as members:

- a) All Crop Coordinators within Coordinating Research Institutes;
- b) One of which shall be nominated by the members to become its Chair;
- c) The National Committee then approves the appointment for a period of four years;
- d) The Director, NACGRAB;
- e) Two experienced breeders, which shall be recommended by the Crops Technical Sub-committee and then approves by the National Committee for a period of four years;
- f) Two representatives of seed companies, nominated by the President of SEEDAN;
- g) The president of the Nigeria Plant Breeders Association (NPBA).

7.0 Responsibilities of the Crops Technical Sub-Committee

7.1 The Crops Technical Sub-Committee has the following responsibilities:

- a) Provide guidelines for the determination of DUS, through on-station testing or provision of DUS data by the applicant; VCU through multilocal testing; and on-farm testing of candidate varieties to be registered and released;
- b) Determine guidelines for the testing of candidate varieties and for describing them;
- c) Recommend new crop varieties for registration and release by the National Committee for general cultivation in Nigeria.

8.0 Composition of the Registration and Release Cost Sub-Committee

8.1 The Crops Technical Sub-Committee appoints a Registration and Release Cost Sub-Committee (hereafter referred to as Cost Sub-Committee) to consider and report on any cost matter concerning trials and other services within the nomination process and with which the Crops Technical Sub-Committee is concerned.

8.2 The Cost Sub-Committee shall have as members:

- a) A Chair nominated by the Chair of the Crops Technical Sub-Committee and approved by the Chair of the National Committee; the appointment is for four years;
- b) Two representatives of the Crops Technical Sub-Committee;
- c) Three representatives of organisations eligible to assume the responsibilities of CRO, not represented in the Crops Technical Sub-Committee and covering different types of crops (grain crops, root- and tuber crops, vegetables and/or perennials);
- d) The Director, NACGRAB;
- e) Two representatives of seed companies, nominated by the President of SEEDAN.

9.0 Responsibilities of the Cost Sub-Committee

9.1 The Cost Sub-Committee has the following responsibilities:

- a) Prepare and propose guidelines for CROs for costs of trials;
- b) Prepare and propose guidelines for CROs hosting the CRS for costs of supervision and assessment of documents and data part of the nomination process for registration and release;
- c) Ensure that all stakeholders engaged in the nomination for registration and release are consulted to come to a harmonized cost overview;
- d) Develop a harmonized cost overview for fees for the trials, supervision and assessments of documents and data as elaborated in Appendix III;
- e) Ensure an annual update is provided of the harmonized cost overview;
- f) Submit the proposal for the annual update of the harmonized cost overview for decision making to the Crops Technical Sub-Committee and subsequent approval by the National Committee;
- g) Review the overview of fees for the trials, supervision and assessments, and if required, inform the Registrar, who consults the Chair of the Crops Technical Sub-Committee for appropriate action.

10.0 Purpose of registration and release of new crop varieties

The purpose of registration and release of new crop varieties is to ensure that credible and best varieties are introduced to the public for general cultivation in the region to which they are adapted. Another purpose is also to ensure that crops that are introduced to farmers have no harmful effects on the

consumer and the environment at large. This enables the farmers to choose varieties of interest for cultivation in the regions for which they are suitable. The process also helps to know the number of crop varieties available to farmers in a particular region and at a given period of time. Lastly, the process helps to identify the gaps and priority areas of breeders, farmers, and consumers and industries. Generally, the broad goal of registration and release of new crop varieties is to maximize public benefit.

11.0 Reasons for breeding new crop varieties

11.1 Plant breeding aims to improve the characteristics of plants so that they become more desirable agronomically and economically. Generally, a successful variety is one with total balance of traits that makes it more profitable for farmers and acceptable to consumers than any other alternative.

Reasons for breeding a new crop variety include the following:

- a) Higher yields;
 - b) Improved quality, like baking in wheat, cooking in rice, malting in sorghum, vitamin fortified in cassava, quality protein in maize, etc.;
 - c) Resistance/tolerance to pests;
 - d) Resistance/tolerance to diseases;
 - e) Tolerance to abiotic stress like drought, flood, salt and iron toxicity;
 - f) Early maturity;
 - g) Good agronomic characteristics like dwarfness in cereals;
 - h) Photo-insensitivity;
 - i) Elimination of anti-nutritional factors;
 - j) Good storability.
- 11.2 For the purpose of registration and release, if a crop variety is bred for another characteristic apart from yield, in such case, this characteristic must be of economic importance and also, the yield factor must not be compromised.

SECTION B CRITERIA, TESTING MODALITIES, EXEMPTIONS & EVALUATION FOR APPROVAL

1.0 Requirements for registration and release of crop varieties

- 1.1 For a crop to be registered and released as a new variety in Nigeria, it must have passed the tests for Distinctiveness, Uniformity and Stability (DUS) and for Value for Cultivation and Use (VCU), complemented with tests in representative farmers' production environments.

2.0 Distinctiveness, Uniformity and Stability (DUS)

- 2.1 The DUS test is an internationally recognised procedure standardized for variety registration and release and crop variety protection. The test is used to assess novelty of new varieties and also used to gather information regarding the botanical description of new varieties.
- 2.2 The DUS test assesses new varieties for the following:
 - a) Distinctiveness: a new variety should be clearly distinguishable from any other existing varieties in Nigeria;
 - b) Uniformity: individual plants of a new variety should be sufficiently uniform at the same growth stage in the expression of their characteristics; and
 - c) Stability: the genetic traits of a new variety should be stable through generations.
- 2.3 In the context of variety registration and release in Nigeria, the DUS test needs to be in accordance with the following guidance:
 - a) The test needs to follow the guidelines of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) for the evaluation for distinctiveness, uniformity and stability;
 - b) The test needs to be carried out on-station during one growing period managed by the applicant or organisation responsible for variety development or at any designated DUS testing site managed by a qualified breeder with knowledge of the crop and varieties;
 - c) Candidate varieties are compared with reference varieties for agronomic characteristics (like yield, maturity date, height), morphological characteristics (like colour, shape, and size), physio-genetic characteristics (like resistance to pests and diseases), and general tolerance to biotic and abiotic stresses;
 - d) Note that for Plant Variety Protection, DUS testing is conducted during two growing periods.

3.0 Value for Cultivation and Use (VCU)

- 3.1 VCU implies that to be registered as new variety, the variety must be beneficial to farming and industrial communities. The objective of the VCU test for a candidate variety to be registered is to know, in comparison with existing varieties:
 - a) The adaptation and stability across varied environments;
 - b) Agronomic performance;
 - c) Reaction to pests and diseases;
 - d) Resistance/tolerance to abiotic stresses.
- 3.2 The VCU test is to be carried out during the multi-locational trial for two growing periods in different environments.

4.0 Additional requirements for registration and release of crop varieties

- 4.1 The variety must have superior performance over the existing varieties with the farmers or currently registered varieties in Nigeria;
- 4.2 The variety or its progeny is not detrimental to human or animal health and safety of the environment when grown and used as intended;
- 4.3 The variety name is not likely to be confused with the name of a variety that has previously been or is currently being registered;
- 4.4 The variety name is not likely to offend the public;
- 4.5 The variety meets the standard for variety purity established by the International Seed Testing Association (ISTA) for a variety of that species;
- 4.6 The variety was monitored by representatives of the Registrar and the Crop Technical Sub-Committee during the on-farm trials;
- 4.7 The variety is officially nominated to the Crops Technical Sub-Committee and defended by the plant breeder who developed it or the representative;
- 4.8 No false statement or misleading information is submitted in support of the nomination for variety registration and release.

5.0 Trials to be conducted

- 5.1 To ascertain that a crop variety meets the criteria for DUS, VCU and on-farm performance, and other above-mentioned requirements, the candidate variety must be evaluated using three types of trials:
 - a) On-station trials;
 - b) Multi-locational trials;
 - c) On-farm trials.
- 5.2 All data from these trials should be analysed and presented in the form of tables and figures in order of execution along with other relevant documents to the Crops Technical Sub-Committee.

6.0 On-station trials

- 6.1 The DUS on-station trials are conducted during one growing period managed by the applicant or organisation responsible for variety development or at any designated DUS testing site;
- 6.2 A breeder with knowledge of the crop and reference varieties should carry out DUS tests according to UPOV guidelines at a research location in which the reference varieties must be compared with the candidate variety or varieties;
- 6.3 Only candidate varieties that qualify from the DUS tests, complemented with high yield performance, pest and disease resistance and/or tolerance, high quality and any other novel traits of interest are recommended for multi-locational trials.

7.0 Multi-locational trials

- 7.1 Multi-locational trials are carried out at a minimum of ten (10) testing sites covering relevant agro-ecologies for at least two growing periods across different agro-ecological zones in Nigeria, or at several appropriate locations in case the candidate variety is developed for a particular agro-ecology;
- 7.2 Candidate varieties should be compared with previously released varieties with similar characteristics;
- 7.3 During multi-locational trials, the candidate varieties are examined for Value for Cultivation and Use (VCU);

- 7.4 The VCU tests examine candidate varieties for adaptability, stability, agronomic performance, and resistance/tolerance to biotic and abiotic stresses;
- 7.5 The candidate varieties are compared with the released varieties in their reaction to pests and diseases of economic importance.

8.0 On-farm trials

- 8.1 The on-farm trials are used to test candidate crop varieties on farmers' fields;
- 8.2 The purpose is to validate the perception of farmers about the candidate varieties, whether they will be accepted or not, whether they are better than what farmers already have, and whether they are foreseen to be adapted or not to farmers' growing conditions and cultivation practices;
- 8.3 These trials are carried out on farmers' fields for one growing period;
- 8.4 During the on-farm trials, the candidate varieties are compared with farmers'/commercial varieties in each site; it is possible for the farmers' varieties to be previously released varieties;
- 8.5 For easy management and comprehension, it is advisable that not more than three (3) candidate varieties and one (1) best farmers' variety are compared during an on-farm trial;
- 8.6 Data from at least ten (10) farmers' fields across different agro-ecologies during one growing period are required for each candidate variety;
- 8.7 The trial can be conducted in two ways;
 - a) Supported and supervised by the applicant, preferably collaborating with government extension or other local partners, for which an inspection by the CRS is required;
 - b) Supported and supervised by the CRO, preferably collaborating with government extension or other local partners.

9.0 Concurrent trials

- 9.1 If both DUS and VCU trials are required for the registration and release of a candidate crop variety, the applicant and the CRO conduct the DUS trial and first growing period VCU trial concurrently;
- 9.2 The on-farm trial is carried out concurrently with the second growing period multi-locational trial for VCU testing.

10.0 Exceptional case in perennial crop species

- 10.1 In the case of perennial/long gestation crop species (for example, cocoa, oil palm, rubber, mango, citrus etc; and ratoon crops such as banana, pineapple, etc.), it is recommended that the multi-locational and on-farm trials are combined with farmers' participatory varietal selection;
- 10.2 A minimum of two growing periods of production data in addition to on-station data, should be presented for registration and release of a candidate variety for those crops.

11.0 Payment for testing, oversight, supervision and inspection, and evaluation of documents

- 11.1 The process of payment by the applicant to the CRO and Registrar includes the following steps:
 - a) Based on the crop, type of trials (on-station; multi-locational and/or on-farm), and other services (evaluation of documents) to be provided by the CRS and the CRO, the Secretariat informs the applicant on the total and fixed value of costs to be paid by the applicant to the CRO;
 - b) Appendix III provides in detail the fees for the different trials, assessments and services for the different modalities provided by the CRS and the CRO during the process required for the registration and release of the candidate variety;

- c) The Secretariat informs the applicant on the administration fee for processing the registration and release;
- d) This information is shared up front; 60% payment of service fees for the CRO is required upon confirmation of the CRS/CRO, and 40% at the moment of nomination of the candidate variety (see Appendix III);
- e) The payment of the administration fee is required at the moment of submission of the nomination to the Secretariat (see Appendix III).

12.0 Exemption A: Exemption from DUS testing if DUS documentation and data are available from another country

- 12.1 In the case, the applicant during notification, has indicated that a candidate variety has been released and registered in another country, and DUS data are available, the following steps are to be taken to gain exemption from DUS testing:
- a) The applicant indicates in the notification form in what country and when the DUS testing has taken place;
 - b) The applicant provides the CRS with DUS data and documentation on the decision/certification of registration and release of the candidate variety from the other ECOWAS member state or third country where the candidate variety has been released;
 - c) The CRS reviews the data and other documentation, and provides the applicant with an assessment report, which if supportive to the nomination, should be included in the nomination.

13.0 Exemption B: One growing period testing when the candidate variety has been released in another ECOWAS member country

- 13.1 In the case, the applicant during notification, has indicated that a candidate variety has been registered and released in another ECOWAS member country, the following steps are to be taken to limit multi-locational trials to one growing period:
- a) The applicant indicates in the notification form in what ECOWAS member country and when the variety has been registered and released;
 - b) The applicant provides the CRS with documentation on the decision/certificate for registration and release of the candidate variety in the other ECOWAS member state;
 - c) The CRS reviews the documentation and provides the applicant with an assessment report, which, if supportive to the nomination, should be included in the nomination;
 - d) If the decision is supportive, the applicant is exempted in the nomination from two growing periods of multi-locational trials;
 - e) Subsequently, the applicant and CRS/CRO engage in a concurrent process of one growing period confirmatory multi-locational trials for VCU and on-farm trials;
 - f) The VCU testing should take place in a minimum of five (5) testing sites covering relevant agro-ecologies;
 - g) The on-farm trials include at least ten (10) farmers' fields across different agro-ecologies during one growing period.

14.0 Exemption C: One growing period testing when the applicant provides data from varietal development for VCU testing

14.1 In the case, the applicant during notification has indicated that data are available from advanced stages of varietal development for a candidate variety, the following steps are to be taken to limit multi-locational trials to one growing period:

- a) The applicant indicates in the notification form that data are available and will be shared in the process of registration and release of the candidate variety;
- b) The applicant provides the CRS with documentation including year, locations, check varieties and evaluation criteria, and the resulting data of the evaluations matching the guidelines for multi-locational trials for VCU testing; the data should be presented in a format that matches the VCU testing and only include those criteria included in VCU testing;
- c) The CRS reviews the documentation and data, and provides the applicant with an assessment report, which, if supportive of the nomination, should be included in the nomination;
- d) If the decision is supportive, the applicant is exempted in the nomination from two growing periods of multi-locational trials;
- e) Subsequently, the applicant and the CRS/CRO engage in a concurrent process of one growing period confirmatory multi-locational trials for VCU and on-farm trials;
- f) The VCU trials should take place in a minimum of five (5) testing sites covering relevant agro-ecologies;
- g) The on-farm trials include at least ten (10) farmer's field across different agro-ecologies during one growing period.

15.0 Exemption D: No on-farm trials when providing data from tricot testing of candidate varieties

15.1 In the case, the applicant during notification has indicated that data from tricot participatory on-farm trials have been used in variety development and are available in the process for registration and release for a candidate variety, the following steps are to be taken to gain exemption from on-farm trials:

- a) The applicant indicates in the notification form that data from tricot are available;
- b) The applicant provides the CRO with documentation and data on the tricot including the following:
 - i. Locations and geographic distribution of farmers across agro-ecologies;
 - ii. Number of farmers participating per location and agro-ecology;
 - iii. Farmers'/commercial varieties used as check varieties per location (if applicable);
 - iv. Standard trial lay-out;
 - v. Moments of collection; and
 - vi. Data generated from farmer comparative observations, only covering the criteria used in conventional on-farm testing;
- c) The CRO reviews the data and other documentation, and provides the applicant with an assessment report, which if supportive to the nomination, should be included in the nomination;
- d) If the decision is supportive, the applicant is exempted in conducting further on-farm trials.

16.0 Exemption E: No VCU testing and reduced number of farmer fields for vegetable crop varieties

16.1 In the case, the applicant during notification, has indicated that a candidate variety is of a vegetable crop, the following steps are to be taken to get exempted from VCU testing with a reduced number of farmer fields:

- a) The applicant indicates in the notification form the crop for the candidate variety, and in case this is a vegetable crop, requests exemption from VCU testing and a reduced number of farmer fields in on-farm trials;
- b) The Registrar confirms the notification, and subsequently, in the guidance of the process, exempts the applicant from VCU testing;
- c) The applicant and the CRO start the planning for on-farm testing of the candidate variety;
- d) The on-farm trial includes at least ten (10) farmers' fields across different agro-ecologies during one growing period; while for nomination at least data from five (5) farmers' fields are presented;
- e) The trial can either be coordinated by the applicant within its own on-farm trials or demos, though following the required lay-out for on-farm trials and supervised by the CRO, or by the CRO collaborating with government extension or other local partners.

17.0 Standard operating procedure for the nomination process

Phase I: notification and identification of the CRO

17.1 The notification by the applicant of the Registrar includes the following steps:

- a) The applicant (research institute, university, seed and/or breeding company) notifies the Secretariat of the intention to carry out pre-registration/variety release trials of a candidate variety by completing and submitting the notification form;
- b) The Secretariat assesses the completeness of the form, information and documentation provided; and the Secretariat decides on accepting the notification or not;
- c) If accepting the notification, the Secretariat informs the applicant and the Registrar, and proceeds with the next step;
- d) If not accepting the notification, the Secretariat, on behalf of the Registrar, informs the applicant with the reasons for rejection.

17.2 The identification and decision on the Collaborative Reference Scientist (CRS) and Collaborative Reference Organisation (CRO) include the following steps:

- a) Based on the crop, variety characteristics, qualities, target agro-ecologies and target markets, the Secretariat recommends, based on the list with CRSs, three candidate CRSs and their associated CRO with the capacity to conduct the required and/or oversee the trials, and conduct other supervisory activities in the nomination process;
- b) If at all possible, the CRS should have no direct institutional relation with the applicant or involvement in the development of the candidate variety;
- c) The applicant identifies one CRS and associated CRO from the three proposed organisations, and informs the Secretariat;
- d) The Secretariat confirms the decision with the applicant and the selected CRS and CRO and informs the Registrar.

Phase II: Review and exceptions

- 17.3 Based on the evaluation of the notification form, the Secretariat informs the applicant, the CRS and the CRO on the required trials (on-station, multi-locational and/or on-farm trials), the type of evaluation of documents required in supporting the nomination for registration and release of the variety including (a) exemption of DUS testing, (b and c) one growing period instead of two growing periods multi-locational trials, (d) exemption of on-farm trials, and (e) exemption from VCU testing and reduced number of farmers' fields in on-farm trials;
- 17.4 The Secretariat provides the applicant, and the CRS/CRO with the guidelines for the required trials; the Secretariat includes the list of reference varieties for the DUS trials and check varieties for the VCU trials with which the new variety must be compared, complemented with other rules that must be followed;
- 17.5 The applicant provides the CRS/CRO with the following information:
- a) Detailed information required for the registration and release process;
 - b) DUS data, documentation and certificates from another country or DUS data from on-station trials performed by the applicant, meeting all requirements (if applicable);
 - c) Type of trials required for VCU testing (if required);
 - d) Documentation on registration and release in another ECOWAS-member country, requesting one growing period testing (if available);
 - e) Data from advanced stages of varietal development to be assessed if requesting one growing period testing (if applicable);
 - f) Information from tricot participatory on-farm testing if requesting for exemption from on-farm trials (if applicable).
- 17.6 Based on the notification, including crop and exemptions applicable, the Secretariat informs the Applicant and the CRS/CRO on the costs for the various modalities and services based on the overview in Appendix III;
- 17.7 The CRS/CRO and the applicant make a joint plan for testing covering locations, responsibilities, supervision and inspection, and reporting;
- 17.8 The joint plan is a basis for a Memorandum of Understanding between the applicant and the CRO, including a reference to the joint plan and notified cost overview.

Phase III: Trials

- 17.9 The CRS/CRO and the applicant implement the joint plan;
- 17.10 The CRS/CRO and the applicant compile and agree on a report with testing results and other documentation required, and prepare for nomination.
- 18.0 Steps in nomination of a new crop variety for registration and release**
- 18.1 The CRS or a representative of the CRO nominates on behalf of the applicant the candidate variety for registration and release;
- 18.2 Application and supporting documents must be in English, Nigeria's official language;
- 18.3 The guidelines stated below should be followed:
- a) The document should be typed in double-space, leaving a margin of 1-1.5cm on the left-hand side and 1.5cm on the right side on A4-sized paper. Upper and lower margins should be 1.5cm;
 - b) Font type should be Times New Roman, size 12;

- c) Total length of the document, excluding Tables, Figures and Pictures, should not exceed five pages;
 - d) Title of the document should be in CAPS and centralized. This should be followed by Author(s) name(s) (surname first) and affiliations. Authors' titles should not be included;
 - e) Scientific names should be italicized;
 - f) Oxford English spelling should be used, and consistency of spelling should be maintained throughout the manuscript;
 - g) The content of the document should be structured as follows:
 - i. Introduction: providing brief background information and objectives;
 - ii. Brief methodology for on-station, multi-locational and on-farm trials (if applicable);
 - iii. Justification for the nomination;
 - iv. If using DUS testing from a third country, justification with an assessment report (in attachment) of the CRS validating the DUS data, documentation and/or certification;
 - v. If using one growing period testing, justification with an assessment report (in attachment) of the CRS validating release and registration in another ECOWAS member country or assessment of data and documentation provided by the applicant from advanced stages of varietal development;
 - vi. If exempting from on-farm trials, justification with an assessment report (in attachment) of the CRS validating the data and documentation of tricot participatory on-farm testing provided by the applicant;
 - vii. Recommendations;
 - viii. References: relevant both in text and references section;
 - ix. Tables: these should be clear and simple (e.g. the author may present multi-location trials for different growing periods separately). Current standards should be followed. Names and statistics on the reference variety should be highlighted or made bold;
 - x. Figures: where necessary; all figures should be clearly presented;
 - xi. Pictures: these should elucidate the characteristics of the variety;
 - xii. Approved general and specific descriptors should be attached for each variety.
- 18.4 The CRS/CRO on behalf of the applicant must provide a softcopy of the documents at least 2 weeks before the meeting and a number of forty (40) printed copies at least 24 hours before the date of the meeting to:
- Registrar,
National Crop Varieties and Livestock Breeds Registration and Release Committee
c/o National Centre for Genetic Resources and Biotechnology (NACGRAB)
Moor Plantation, P.M.B 5382, Ibadan, Nigeria.
Tel: +2348034221101 or +2348065152346
E-mail: varietyreleasenigeria@gmail.com
- 18.5 The Crops Technical Sub-Committee usually meets once a year (around November/December), but when funding is available, it can meet twice in a year. The Registrar will send the date/period of the meeting six weeks in advance. Note that any nomination later than two weeks before the date of the meeting will not be entertained but deferred till the next meeting.
- 18.6 A representative of the CRO will present using a PowerPoint presentation the nomination of the candidate variety at the Technical Sub-Committee meeting; a representative of the applicant can be present or do the presentation.

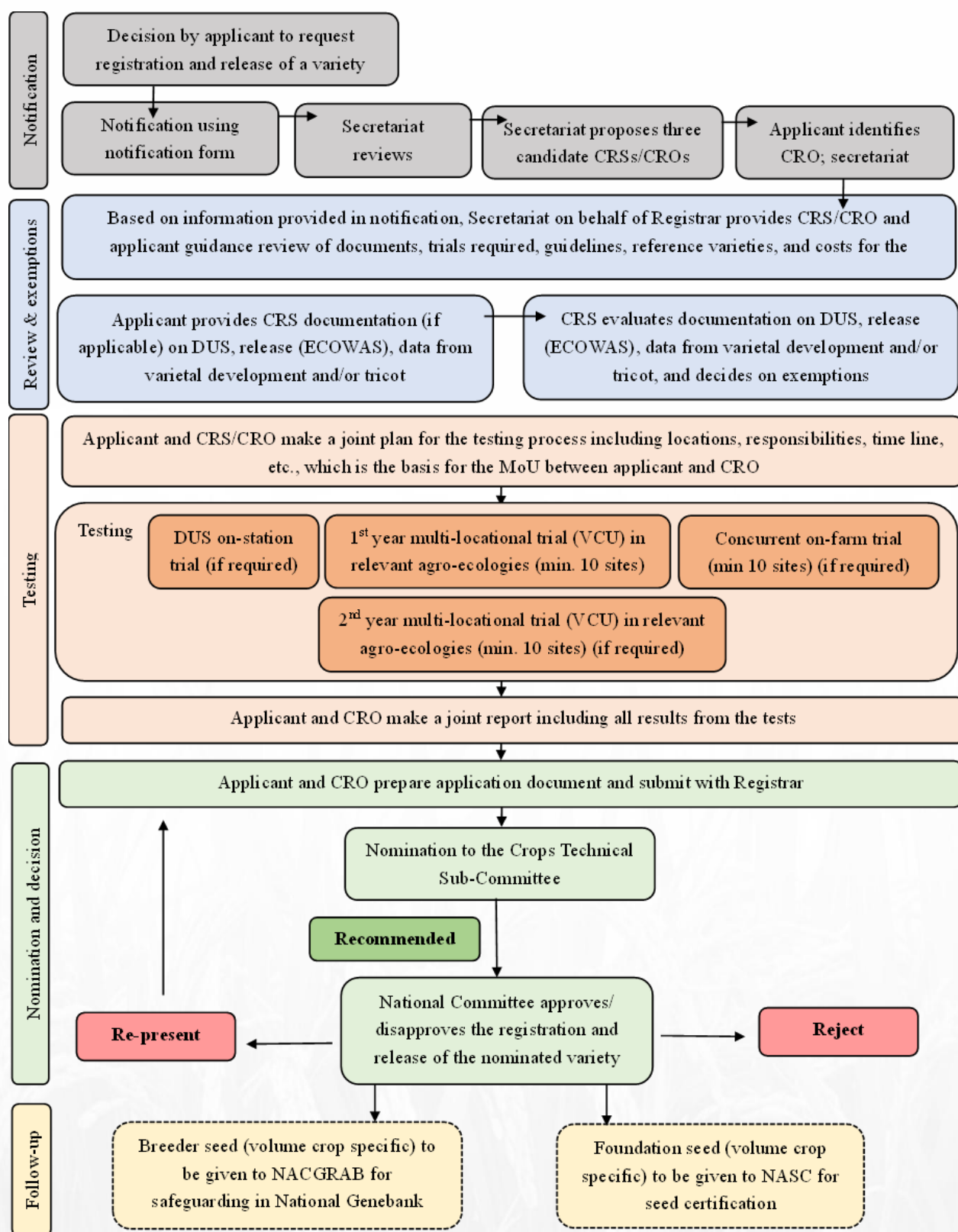
19.0 Decision on new crop variety for registration and release

- 19.1 Upon presentation by the representative of the applicant and review of the documentation provided, the committee will deliberate whether the candidate's variety should be accepted, re-presented or rejected;
- 19.2 The Crops Technical Sub-Committee will recommend only those varieties that meet the requirements stated above to the National Committee meeting for final deliberation and approval;
- 19.3 When a variety is registered, the Registrar issues a certificate of registration and release to the applicant. Only one certificate is granted per variety.

20.0 Additional requirements for the applicant upon registration and release

- 20.1 A requirement for the breeder or representative of the applicant at the time of the meeting of the Crops Technical Sub-Committee, during which the nomination is presented, the committee deliberates and comes to a decision, is that:
 - a) The applicant or representative provides 10 kilograms of foundation seed for grain crops, a quantity of 'foundation seed' planting material that is sufficient to plant 0.2 hectare of vegetatively propagated crops, or 50 grams of foundation seed of vegetable crops to be given to NASC for seed certification;
 - b) The applicant or representative provides 2 kilograms of breeder seed for grain crops, a quantity of 'breeder seed' planting material that is sufficient to plant 50 m² of vegetatively propagated crops, or 10 grams of breeder seed of vegetable crops of breeder seed to be given to NACGRAB for safeguarding in the National Genebank;
 - c) In case the foundation seed for certification and breeder seed for safeguarding are not provided, the nomination will be taken off the agenda of the meeting of the Crops Technical Sub-Committee.

Figure 1. Diagrammatic representation of the procedure for registration and release of a crop variety in Nigeria



21.0 Crop descriptors

- 21.1 There are two crop descriptors to be completed by the applicant, of which one is general, and the other is specific;
- 21.2 The general descriptor outline is the same for all crops, while the specific descriptor outline, as the name implies, is specific for the crop nominated for registration and release;
- 21.3 A format for the general descriptor is provided in Appendix IV.

22.0 Organisations which can nominate a crop variety for registration and release

- 22.1 The following requirements apply to organisations that want to nominate a crop variety for registration and release:
 - a) Organisations must be legal entities in Nigeria;
 - b) In case of private companies or foreign bodies, they must be registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC);
 - c) Seed companies (both domestic and foreign) must be registered with the company register of NASC;
- 22.2 The applicants can be the following type of organisations:
 - a) National Agricultural Research Institutes (NARI's) in Nigeria;
 - b) Universities in Nigeria;
 - c) CGIAR Research Centres through NARI's;
 - d) Private seed companies that engage in variety development and/or their representatives;
 - e) Non-Governmental and/or Community-based Organisations;
 - f) Farmers engaged in variety development.
- 22.3 All crops cultivated in Nigeria have their coordinating research institutes (see Appendix I), where there is a National Crop Coordinator. If a new variety is developed by any other organisation apart from the coordinating research institute, such organisation (including seed companies) should work harmoniously with the coordinating research institute. The collaborating reference organisation and applicant therefore should work together with the coordinating research institute to evaluate the varieties.

23.0 Rejection and re-presentation of a variety nominated for registration and release

- 23.1 A variety nominated for registration and release will be rejected if it is found not to meet all requirements for registration and release;
- 23.2 The National Committee and Technical Sub-Committees have the discrete authority to decide whether a variety not being approved can be re-presented in another meeting provided expected requirement(s) have been met.

24.0 De-registration of an already registered and released variety

- 24.1 A variety that has been registered and released can be de-registered when:
 - a) The variety has an adverse effect on Nigerian agricultural and the food system;
 - b) The variety or its progeny may be detrimental to human or animal health and safety, or the environment;
 - c) False or misleading information was submitted as part of the nomination;
 - d) The variety has been found to be indistinguishable from another variety already registered or known to exist;
 - e) In any of these cases, NACGRAB and NASC will lawfully mandate the organisation that developed the variety to withdraw it from the public.

Appendix I: National Agricultural Research Institutes and their mandate crops

No	Institute	Mandate crops
1	Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria (CRIN), P.M.B. 5244, Idi-Ayunre, Ibadan	Cocoa, cashew, kola, tea and coffee.
2	Institute for Agricultural Research (IAR), P.M.B 1044, Zaria	Groundnut, cowpea, sorghum, maize, cotton, sunflower and jatropha
3	Institute of Agricultural Research and Training (IAR&T), P.M.B 5029, Moor plantation, Ibadan	Maize, kenaf and jute
4	Lake Chad Research Institute (LCRI), P.M.B 1293, Gamboru-Ngala Road, Maiduguri	Millet, wheat and barley
5	National Cereals Research Institute (NCRI), P.M.B. 8, Bida, Badeggi, Niger state	Rice, soyabean, benniseed, sugarcane and Castor plant
6.	National Institute for Horticultural Research (NIHORT), P.M.B 5432, Idi-Shin, Ibadan	Fruits and vegetables, and ornamental plants
7	National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI) Umudike	Cassava, yam, cocoyam, potato, ginger and sweet potato
8	Nigerian Institute for Oil Palm Research (NIFOR), P.M.B 1030 Benin City	Oil palm, raphia date, coconut and ornamental palms
9	Rubber Research Institute of Nigeria (RRIN), 3-5, Osazuwa Avenue, Benin City	Rubber and other latex producing plants

Appendix II. Notification form

S/N	Category	
1.	Common and botanical name of crop:	
2.	Proposed name of variety:	
3.	Genetic origin/source:	
4.	Breeding technique:	
5.	Pedigree of variety:	
6.	Name of developing organization(s):	
7.	Name of releasing organization/maintainer:	
8.	Name of developing plant breeder (including contact details):	
9.	Names of collaborating plant breeders:	
10.	Adapted agro-ecology:	
11.	Has the variety been registered and released in an ECOWAS member country?	☐ Yes, if so where and when ☐ No
12.	Has the variety been released and registered, including DUS testing?	☐ Yes, if in an ECOWAS member state, where and when ☐ Yes, if in a third country (non-ECOWAS member), where and when ☐ No
13.	Does the applicant want to use data from varietal development to request one growing period instead of two growing periods VCU testing?	☐ Yes ☐ No
14.	Does the applicant want use data from tricot used during varietal development to exempt for on-farm testing?	☐ Yes ☐ No

Appendix III: Cost for various modalities/services by CROs in the nomination process

The cost has been elaborated for grain crops; they need further elaboration specifically for root and tuber crops and vegetable crops.

Modality	Cost
On-station DUS testing (including testing, fees, etc)	US\$ 800
Evaluation of DUS testing data, documentation and certificates from a third country (including fee)	US\$ 200
Multi-locational trials for VCU testing (minimum 10 sites; all done by CRO) per growing period (including all fees, per diem and travel for CRO) and a one-time inspection by members of the NVRC to the location (covering travel and per diem for NVRC members)	US\$ 4,328
Multi-locational trials for VCU testing (minimum 10 sites; all done by applicant but supervised and inspected by CRS) (all fees for the supervision, travel and per diem) and a one-time inspection by members of the NVRC to the location (covering travel and per diem for NVRC members)	US\$ 1,210
Evaluation of variety registration and release data, documentation and certificates from another ECOWAS member (including only fee)	US\$ 200
Evaluation of data and documentation from advanced variety testing (including only fee)	US\$ 200
On-farm trials (10 farmers; covering with locations relevant agro-ecologies; supervised by local government organisation identified by CRO) (including all fees, per diem and travel for CRS/CRO; including fees local government organisation)	US\$ 3,347
On-farm trials (10 farmers; covering with locations relevant agro-ecologies; all organized by applicant but supervised by CRS) (all fees for the supervision, travel and per diem)	US\$ 1,210
Evaluation of data and documentation from tricot participatory on-farm trials (including only fee)	US\$ 200

Appendix IV: General descriptor format

S/N	Descriptor	
1.	Species:	
2.	Name of Variety:	
3.	Old Name:	
4.	Origin/Source: Ibadan.	
5.	Type of Variety:	
6.	Pedigree:	
7.	a) Name and address of developing organizations: b) Name and address of releasing organizations: c) Breeders: d) Collaborating scientists:	
8.	Morphological Characteristics:	
9.	Adaptation:	
10	Days to Maturity:	
11.	Potential Yield:	
12.	Pest and Disease Reaction:	
13.	Outstanding Characteristics:	
14.	Nutrient content:	
15.	Year of release:	