

How Can I Produce Certified Seed?

Seed production as compared to grain production requires extra time, labor, and conscientious management. Nevertheless, most growers can produce certified seed if they are willing to give the extra effort. The steps necessary to do so are simple but must be followed precisely to be completed successfully. A brief outline of the certification process follows. It must be understood that each crop warrants a specific set of “certification standards,” or rules for producing a certified seed crop. Specific crop standards are available through the Kansas Crop Improvement Association (KCIA) office in Manhattan, KS, as well as on the KCIA web site, www.kscrop.org.

1. Clean all planting and harvesting equipment and storage facilities grain-free before using for certified seed.

Special care must be taken in all phases of certified seed production to prevent contamination from other crops, varieties, or weed seeds. Any available means of cleaning should be used - compressed air, vacuum, broom, and/or water.

2. Plant eligible seed and retain proof of eligibility.

Most crop varieties used today must be planted with FOUNDATION or REGISTERED class seed for the crop to be eligible for certification. A few varieties, released before 1970 and for which foundation seed is not maintained, may be recertified from the certified generation. Generally, careful roguing is required each year on these fields. Your proof that you planted eligible seed is the Foundation or Registered seed label that is affixed to any bag of certified seed, or a bulk sales certificate that is issued by the seller at the time of purchase. Retain that proof of eligibility, as it must be supplied to KCIA to verify your seed source when applying for field inspection.

3. Plant on ground that meets all KCIA land requirements.

“Clean ground” is a relative term. Each person has his or her own definition of a clean field, but KCIA has established minimum standards for types and amounts of weeds allowable in the field. Your previous crop is also important. For instance, you may not certify a field of wheat that had wheat growing on it during the previous twelve months unless it was certified wheat seed of the same variety. Certain other crops grown the previous year may cause a seed field to be disqualified for certification. Field isolation requirements vary from crop to crop. Each eligible field must be isolated from other crops and varieties of the same crop by established minimum distances.

4. Make application for field inspection.

The form you will fill out is the “Declaration of Certifiable Seed Fields” (also referred to

as ‘Form A’), and it is available from the KCIA office. The most important considerations are to read the form thoroughly, fill it out completely, and forward it to KCIA with your proof of seed source eligibility by the appropriate deadline for each crop. This form is due in the KCIA office approximately two months before the earliest harvest of each crop, so you must state your intentions to certify at an early time. After KCIA has received your “Declaration of Certifiable Seed,” that information will be processed and you will be sent “Application for Field Inspection” (Form B) and “Field Identification” (Form C) forms. You will need to supply field information on those forms and return them with payments to the KCIA office by the correct due dates.

5. Prepare your seed fields for inspection by roguing off-type plants and controlling any noxious or objectionable weeds.

Careful roguing of your seed fields ensures varietal purity to the purchaser of the seed.

6. Plan for field inspections.

The most critical element of the certification process is accomplished by a competent, well-trained inspector. The inspector will examine the field carefully for isolation, varietal purity, weed problems, diseases, insects, and general condition. He or she will then complete a report, explain the findings, and leave you one copy of that report for your records. The inspector will indicate on the Field Inspection Report one of the following recommendations:

Passed/Cleaned Seed Inspection - Fields marked “passed/cleaned seed inspection” by the inspector have met minimum field requirements for certification. Careful handling during harvest, transporting, and conditioning is, of course, required. During cleaning, a representative seed sample must be drawn that will accurately represent the seed lot as it will be offered for sale. Proper seed sampling is very important, and detailed procedures for sampling are available through KCIA. A representative ten-pound sample of the cleaned seed must be submitted to the KCIA office for analysis. (Sample size varies with the crop - refer to the certification standards book for each crop.)

Referred - These fields have unusual problems that the inspector determines should be referred to the KCIA staff for review and action. Seed sample requirements generally follow the passed/cleaned seed inspection group.

Rejected - The field does not meet the minimum standards established by KCIA for that class of certified seed. Certification of the seed is halted. Reasons for seed rejection at time of field inspection are

(1) presence of uncontrolled areas of noxious weeds; (2) excess amounts of objectionable or common weeds; (3) excess numbers of other varieties of the same crop, other crops, or varietal “off-types”; (4) lack of sufficient isolation; and/or (5) presence of certain seed-borne diseases. After correcting the problem, the field may be re-applied for and re-inspected.

7. Have the seed conditioned.

All seed that is intended for certification must be properly conditioned before a certificate may be issued by KCIA. Certifiable seed may be custom cleaned at one of the KCIA Approved Conditioners or it may be cleaned by the grower if his facilities meet the specifications established by KCIA for grower conditions. The primary purpose for seed conditioning is to remove all material from the seed lot except the seed itself. Any inert matter, weed seeds, or other crop seed must be cleaned out to within specific strict tolerances that vary for the class of seed and crop. Some crops, such as wheat, should be sized by removing the smaller, less vigorous seeds.

8. Send a ten-pound representative sample of the conditioned seed to the KCIA laboratory for analysis.

The sample must meet or exceed the requirements for purity, germination and other quality related factors as outlined in the KCIA standards for that crop and seed class.



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