

Growing Seed Markets Discussion

Current model:

- Grant funding for contract production
- Not sustainable in the long run

Looking forward:

- Growers grow on speculation and use their own business model
- Need to ensure that there is sustained demand on the open market
- Actual seed projections for future seed needs can help—how far in advance can you forecast your restoration needs?
- Seed takes time to collect and produce so seed projections are crucial, and it's important to keep the collection/production timeline in mind

Examples of projecting seed needs:

- Quantitative assessments—predicting acreage of habitat restoration projects and what seeds will be needed for the projects
- USFS Region 6 has been using wildfire risk to predict future seed needs
- Understanding state and federal funding cycles will help improve seed production models

GROWER QUESTIONS:

1. Are quantitative or qualitative projections more useful?

Bamert Seed: The biggest thing is accuracy— if you can secure the funding today for future production that will help production needs. Specialty niche products do not fall in line with some of the other priorities that the producers grow. How much do managers/restoration practitioners know they want to produce and what is that going to cost?

Curtis & Curtis Seed: Anytime there is an administration or funding change, that changes the whole agreement/contract. How can we get around this and make longer term visions? How can we have faith that we're not just going to be gambling?

BLM: Oil & gas contractor companies consistently buy seed so could you just collaborate with them for seed buying?

Bamert Seed: I would love to say these species could be sold to contractors, but unless there are practitioners committed to conservation, we can't ensure that that would work. Most of their [contractor] focus is very short-sighted. Agency specs could help with this issue.

2. How does IDIQ [Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity purchasing contract] fit into this conversation?

BLM: It is just beginning currently. The BLM warehouse does massive seed buys, so they could help drive the market/demand for the seed. [These buys] can't be mixes, but rather individual species. [We should] encourage growers to sell to the BLM warehouse.

Bamert Seed: Consistency is a big concern. We would like to have the reassurance that a certain species will be utilized for several years to come. We are an industry that is here to help provide solutions to project needs expressed by land managers. Nothing is off the table.

3. The DOT has made more refined lists for their roadside reclamation; is this useful for your industry?

Audience: This is very useful for producers to grow the appropriate seed for the project. The more information we have the better products we can produce. Building lists collaboratively with growers is useful.

Audience: Building realistically diverse lists is important

*Ensuring some level of consistency is a theme in the responses from this group.

4. What types of assurances do new small scale growers need to feel confident that they can begin to invest in native seed production?

Audience: What species would be most cost-effective for growers to take on? Different species require different kinds of analysis.

IAE: Grow the Growers is doing an analysis to see how some of these species can be grown on a small scale.

Bamert Seed: Commercial seed growers have opportunities to overlap with smaller growers- they do have the large equipment needed for seed production and could help farmers with that. How can we partner and try to make this happen collaboratively? At the end of the day, there needs to be benefits on both sides.

*What kind of equitable agreements could exist between large and small growers? Could there be some kind of template?

SEED USER QUESTIONS:

1. How can seed users define their needs? How precise can you be?

Audience: In the oil & gas world, you can get specific with predictive models and even look into soil types and species lists needed for projects.

Follow-up Question: Does that [degree of specificity] happen in the oil & gas world?

Audience: No

Audience: Ideally, a project is a few months out so you can request seed ahead of time to serve the project

Bamert Seed: When the consumer demands a product, the industry provides it. The more we promote proper land management and reclamation, the better the demand is for the industry. There are a lot of success stories for species and cultivars used in the range world. Pushing incentives will push demand and help drive the market in the direction we are interested in seeing it go.

USFS: What steps do we need to take to make reliable lists that represent the agency's needs? Where we are now: we know trends and risk analysis but how do we move from there as agencies and project designers to get it into a more quantitative/purchasing unit where we can be committed to projects. Having bulk seed available for projects is imperative and having projects for seeds is also imperative. How can we tie production schedules into plans? Maybe we can work this into the 5-year strategy. How do our timelines overlap with growers' timelines? Maybe we could determine project commitments/forecasting when we are doing NEPA.