

## Why use Good Seed?

Planting “Good” seed often means lower seed rates, a more vigorous crop and higher yields. A vigorous, healthy crop can also reduce problems of weeds, insects and diseases.

## What is Good Seed?

Good seed is “true to type” ( i.e., true to the variety), full in size, viable (with good germination and vigor), and free of materials such as weed seeds, diseases, insects or other non-seed matter.



## Six steps to Good Seed

1. **Starter seed.** Start your on-farm seed improvement with either certified seed from a reliable source or “good” clean healthy seed from a neighbor or from your own crop.
2. **Select seed.** Harvest seed from where the crop is healthy, and similar in color, height and maturity.
3. **Winnow seed.** Winnowing (i.e., using natural wind or an electric fan) separates full (heavier) seed from lighter seed and non-seed matter (e.g., weeds and straw).

**Procedure:** With a moderate wind or fan blowing, pour seed slowly from a height of 1-1.5 m. Repeat, if necessary.

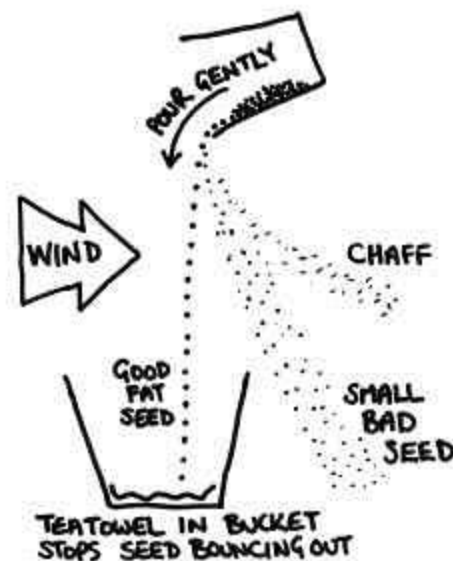
4. **Select good seed.** Select and keep the heavier seed that falls closer to the side from which the wind blows. Throw out diseased, damaged or discolored seed.
5. **Dry and Store seed.** If possible, dry seed (preferably to 12-14% moisture content for cereals) and store in a sealed airtight container or plastic bags specially developed for seed storage. Simple grain moisture meters are available.

**Rule of thumb:** If the cereal seed cracks cleanly when bitten then it is likely dry enough to store.

**Note:** Such seed can last for up to one year and still be good to plant.

6. **Test seed germination before planting.** Where possible, test seed germination before planting (See Fact sheet on Ragdoll method for germination testing).

**Basic procedure:** Select small random samples from the stored seed and germinate test 100-200 seed. You can pre-soak (cereal) seed for 24 hours in water. Arrange soaked seeds in a grid pattern on a wet paper towel. Roll the paper towel up and place in a closed container or plastic bag. Ensure paper remains moist. If seed is too wet to the point of water running off, then seed will rot. Count the germinated seeds 3 and 5 days later and record the germination percentage. Counts are done again after two day intervals to learn about seed vigor.



Winnowing removes lighter seeds and chaff. (diagram realeeds.co.uk)