# SEED FREEDOM

## A GLOBAL CITIZENS' REPORT

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# Seed Freedom
## A Global Citizens' Report

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# The Seed Keeper

*Burn our land*
*burn our dreams*
*pour acid onto our songs*
*cover with saw dust*
*the blood of our massacred people*
*muffle with your technology*
*the screams of all that is free,*
*wild and indigenous.*
*Destroy.*

*Destroy*
*our grass and soil*
*raze to the ground*
*every farm and every village*
*our ancestors had built*
*every tree, every home*
*every book, every law*
*and all the equity and harmony.*

*Flatten with your bombs*
*every valley; erase with your edicts*
*our past*
*our literature; our metaphor*
*Denude the forests*
*and the earth*
*till no insect,*
*no bird*
*no word*
*can find a place to hide.*
*Do that and more.*
*I do not fear your tyranny*
*I do not despair ever*
*for I guard one seed*
*a little live seed*
*That I shall safeguard*
*and plant again.*

Anon.

Palestinian poem

Organic Seed

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# Seed Freedom - What is at Stake

**Dr. Vandana Shiva**

Seed is not just the source of life. It is the very foundation of our being. For millions of years, seed has evolved freely, to give us the diversity and richness of life on the planet. For thousands of years farmers, especially women, have evolved and bred seed freely in partnership with each other and with nature to further increase the diversity of that which nature gave us and adopt it to the needs of different cultures. Biodiversity and cultural diversity have mutually shaped one another.

Today, the freedom of nature and culture to evolve is under violent and direct threat.

The threat to seed freedom impacts the very fabric of human life and the life of the planet. Seed keepers, farmers and citizens around the world have joined together as a Global Citizens Movement for Seed Freedom to respond to this Seed Emergency and to strengthen the movement for the freedom of humanity. The Global Movement for Seed Freedom is the start of a global campaign to alert citizens and governments around the world on how precarious our seed supply has become and, as a consequence, how precarious our food security has become.

Seeds are the first link in the food chain and the repository of life's future evolution.As such, it is our inherent duty and responsibility to protect them and to pass them on to future generations. The growing of seed and the free exchange of seed among farmers has been the basis to maintaining biodiversity and our food security. Navdanya was started 25 years ago to protect our seed diversity and farmer's rights to save, breed, and exchange seed freely, in the context of the emerging threats of the TRIPS Agreement (Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights Agreement) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) which opened the door to the introduction of GMOS, patents on seed and the collection of royalties.

A Monsanto representative later stated "In drafting these agreements we were the patient, diagnostician, physician all in one". Corporations defined a problem - and for them the problem was farmers saving seed. So they offered a solution, and the solution was the introduction of patents and intellectual property rights on seed, making it illegal for farmers to save their seed.

Organic Seed





Seed as a common good became a commodity of private seed companies, traded on the open market. Today, the threat is even greater. Consider the following:

- The last twenty years have seen a very rapid erosion of seed diversity and seed sovereignty, and the rapid concentration of control over seed by a very small number of giant corporations.
- Acreage under GM corn, soya, canola, cotton has increased dramatically.
- Besides displacing and destroying diversity, patented GMO seeds are also undermining seed sovereignty, the rights of farmers to grow their own seeds and to save and exchange seed.
- In countries across the world, including in India, new seed laws are being introduced which enforce compulsory registration of seed, thus making it impossible for small farmers to grow their own diversity, and forcing them into dependency on giant seed corporations.
- Genetic contamination is spreading - India has lost its cotton seeds because of contamination from Bt. Cotton, and Mexico, the historical cradle of corn, has lost eighty percent of its corn varieties, and these are but two instances of loss of local and national seed heritage.
- After contamination, Biotech Seed Corporations sue farmers with patent infringement cases. More than 80 groups came together recently in the US and filed a case to prevent Monsanto from suing farmers whose seed had been contaminated.
- As farmer's seed supply is eroded, and farmers become dependent on patented GMO seed, the result is indebtedness. Debt created by Bt. Cotton in India has pushed farmers to suicide.
- India has signed a U.S. /India knowledge Initiative in Agriculture, with a representative of Monsanto on the Board, and states are being pressurized to sign agreements with Monsanto. An example is the Monsanto Rajasthan memorandum of understanding (MOU) under which Monsanto would obtain Intellectual Property Rights on all genetic resources as well as research on seed carried out under the MOU.After a campaign led by Navdanya and a "Monsanto Quit India" Beeja Yatra (Seed Pilgrimage) with relentless protests by farmers forced the government of Rajasthan to cancel the MOU. Monsanto influence on the US Government and the joint pressure of both on governments across the world is a major threat to the future of seed and the future of food.
- Wikileaks exposed the US government's intentions to proliferate the use of GMOs in Africa and Pakistan. Pressure to use GMOs imposed by US government representatives is a direct effort to support giant biotech business and to expand their markets.
- For the ballot initiative on GMO labeling in the US, corporations led by Monsanto are pouring millions of dollars to prevent citizens from exercising their right to know and right to choose.

These trends demonstrate a total control over the seed supply and a destruction of the very foundation of agriculture. The disappearance of our biodiversity and of our seed sovereignty is creating a major crisis for agriculture and food security around the world.
We are witnessing a SEED EMERGENCY at a global level.
Determined action is called for before it is too late.



## The assault on Seed

A reductionist, mechanistic science and a legal framework for privatizing seed and knowledge of the seed reinforce each other to destroy diversity, deny farmers innovation and breeding, enclose the biological and intellectual commons, create seed monopolies.

Farmers varieties have been called land races, primitive cultivars. They have been reduced to a "genetic mine" to be stolen, extracted and patented. Not only is the negation of farmers' breeding unfair and unjust to farmers, it is unfair and unjust to society as a whole.

Industrial breeding has been based on strategies to sell more chemicals, produce more commodities and make more profits.

The High Yielding Varieties (HYV) of the Green Revolution were in reality High Response Varieties, bred to respond to chemicals. Hybrids are designed to force the farmer to the market every season, since they do not breed true. "Yield", focusing on the weight of a single commodity is an inappropriate measure. Commodities do not feed people - they go to producing bio-fuel and animal feed. Quantity empty of quality, and weight empty of nutrition does not provide nourishment. Beginning with the false assumption that farmers' varieties are "empty", industrial corporate breeding gives us seeds and crops that are not only nutritionally empty, but loaded with toxins.

The rendering invisible of the diversity that seeds farmers have bred began with the so called 'Green Revolution' The Green Revolution narrowed the genetic base of agriculture, encouraging monocultures of rice, wheat and corn. Varieties bred for response to chemicals were declared Miracle Seeds and High Yielding Varieties (HYVs).

Industrial breeding has used different technological tools to consolidate control over the seed - from so called HYVs , to hybrids, genetically engineered seeds, "terminator seeds", and now synthetic biology. The tools might change, but the quest to control life and society does not.

What I have called the "Monoculture of the Mind" cuts across all generations of technologies to control the seed.

1. While farmers breed for diversity, corporations breed for uniformity.

2. While farmers breed for resilience, corporations breed vulnerability.

3. While farmers breed for taste, quality and nutrition, industry breeds for industrial processing and long distance transport in a globalized food system.

Monoculture of industrial crops and monocultures of industrial junk food reinforce each other, wasting the land, wasting food, and wasting our health.
The privileging of uniformity over diversity, of the quantity over quality of nutrition, has degraded our diets and displaced the rich biodiversity of our food and crops. It is based on a false creation boundary which excludes both nature's and farmers' intelligence and creativity. It has created a legal boundary to disenfranchise farmers of their seed freedom and seed sovereignty, and impose unjust seed laws to establish corporate monopoly on seed. Whether it be breeders rights imposed through UPOV 91, or Patents on Seed, or Seed Laws that require compulsory registration and licensing, an arsenal of legal instruments are being invented and imposed undemocratically to criminalize farmers seed breeding, seed saving and seed sharing.

Every seed is an embodiment of millennia of nature's evolution and centuries of farmers' breeding. It is the distilled expression of the intelligence of the earth and intelligence of farming communities. Farmers have bred seeds for diversity, resilience, taste, nutrition, health, and adaption to local ago-ecosystems. Industrial breeding treats nature's contributions and farmers' contributions as nothing.

Just as the jurisprudence of Terre Nullius defined the land as empty, and allowed the take over of territories by the European colonies, the jurisprudence of intellectual property rights related to life forms is in fact a jurisprudence of Bio Nullius - life empty of intelligence. The Earth is defined as dead matter, so it cannot create. And farmers have empty heads so cannot breed.

## The TRIPS Agreement and the ethical dimension

The deeper level at which the Seed Emergency is undermining the very fabric of life is the ethical dimension of this issue. We are all members of the earth family, a steward in the web of life. Yet corporations who claim legal personhood, are now claiming the role of creator. They have declared seed to be their "invention", hence their patented property. A patent is an exclusive right granted for an "invention", which allows the patent holder to exclude everyone else from, making, selling, distributing and using the patented product. With patents on seed, this implies that the farmers' right to save and share seed is now in effect defined as "theft", an "intellectual property crime".

The door to patents on seed and patents on life was opened by genetic engineering. By adding one new gene to the cell of a plant, corporations claimed they had invented and created the seed, the plant, and all future seeds which have now become their property. In other words GMO meant God Move Over.

In defining seed as their creation and invention, corporations like Monsanto shaped the Global Intellectual Property and Patent Laws so that they could prevent farmers from seed saving and sharing. This is how the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) Agreement of the World Trade Organization was born. Article 27.3(b) of the TRIPs Agreement states: "Parties may exclude from patentability plants and animals other than micro-organisms, and essentially biological processes for the production of plants or animals other than non-biological and micro-biological processes. However, parties shall provide for the protection of plant varieties either by patents or by an effective sui generis system or by any combination thereof." Again, this protection on plant varieties is precisely what prohibits the free exchange of seeds between farmers, threatening their subsistence and ability to save and exchange seeds amongst one another.

Organic Seed









The TRIPS clause on patents on life was due for a mandatory review in 1999. India in its submission had stated "Clearly, there is a case for re-examining the need to grant patents on lifeforms anywhere in the world. Until such systems are in place, it may be advisable to:- (a) exclude patents on all lifeforms;"

The African group too stated "The African Group maintains its reservations about patenting any life forms as explained on previous occasions by the Group and several other delegations. In this regard, the Group proposes that Article 27.3(b) be revised to prohibit patents on plants, animals, micro-organisms, essentially biological processes for the production of plants or animals, and non-biological and microbiological processes for the production of plants or animals. For plant varieties to be protected under the TRIPS Agreement, the protection must clearly, and not just implicitly or by way of exception, strike a good balance with the interests of the community as a whole and protect farmers' rights and traditional knowledge, and ensure the preservation of biological diversity."

This mandatory review has been subverted by governments within the WTO: this long overdue review must be taken up to reverse Patents on life and Patents on Seed.

Life forms, plants and seeds are all evolving, self-organized, sovereign beings. They have intrinsic worth, value and standing. Owning life by claiming it to be a corporate invention is ethically and legally wrong. Patents on seeds are legally wrong because seeds are not an invention. Patents on seeds are ethically wrong because seeds are life forms, they are our kin members of our earth family.

The world view of Bio Nullius - empty life - unleashes violence and injustice to the earth, to farmers, and to all citizens. The violence of the Earth is rooted in both the denial of the creativity and the rights of the Earth as well as in the displacement of diversity.

## Biopiracy

The violence to the farmers is three fold. First, their contribution to breeding is erased and what farmers have co-evolved with nature is patented as an innovation. We call this "biopiracy". Patents on life are a the hijacking of biodiversity and indigenous knowledge; they are instruments of monopoly control over life itself. Patents on living resources and indigenous knowledge are an enclosure of the biological and intellectual commons. Life forms have been redefined as "manufacture", and "machines", robbing life of its integrity and self-organization. Traditional knowledge is being pirated and patented unleashing this new epidemic of biopiracy. To end this new epidemic and to save the sovereignty and rights of our farmers it is required that our legal system recognizes the rights of communities, their collective and cumulative innovation in breeding diversity, and not merely the rights of corporations.





Secondly, patents lead to royalty collection which is simply extortion in the name of technology and improvement. If the first colonization based on Terre Nullius gave us land lords and "Zameendari" who pushed 2 million people to death during the Bengal Famine, the new bio imperialism based on Bio Nullius has given us life lords - the biotechnology/seed/chemical industry which have pushed 260,000 India farmers to suicide. In Brazil, farmers have been fighting against seed giant Monsanto, most recently filing a lawsuit hoping to sue the company for over 6 million euros on the grounds that the company has been unfairly collecting royalties from the farmers. The seeds Monsanto has been collecting royalties on, are from what are known as 'renewal' seed harvests, meaning that the seeds have been collected from the previous harvest, a practice used for centuries. But, because these seeds are from Monsanto's genetically modified plants, they are demanding that farmers pay. Not only are these royalties unfairly enforced, but they are pushing farmers deeper into debt that they cannot pay back, leaving them floundering in their fields of failed genetically-modified crops.

Thirdly, when the genetically engineered crops contaminate neighboring farmers' fields, the "polluter pay" principle is turned on its head and corporations use patents to establish the principle of "polluter gets paid". This is what happened in the case of Percy Schmeiser in Canada, and thousands of farmers in the U.S.

Owning and controlling life through patents and intellectual property rights was always the primary objective. Genetic engineering was the gateway to patents. Now, the corporations are taking patents on conventionally bred and farm-saved seeds.

During the first 'Green Revolution' (1950s/'60s), farmers breeding was neglected. During the second 'Green Revolution' (1990s) the biotech industries pushed for seed totalitarianism. Farmers' breeding is being criminalized. In 2004, an attempt was made to introduce a seed law in India which would require the compulsory registration of farmers' varieties. A Seed Satayagraha was started - the law has not yet passed... Satayagraha (Force of the Truth) was Gandhi's word for not cooperating with unjust laws. It means force of truth. Gandhi said "as long as the superstition exists that unjust law must be obeyed, so long will slavery exist."

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We need to globalize noncooperation with unjust Seed Laws. This is at the core of the movement for Seed Freedom. The Stories of Seed Freedom are stories of courageous and creative individuals and organizations who are challenging unjust laws.

Patents on seed are unjust and unjustified. A patent or any intellectual property right is a monopoly granted by society in exchange for benefits. But, society has no benefit in toxic, non-renewable seeds. We are loosing biodiversity and cultural diversity, we are loosing nutrition, taste and quality in our food. Above all, we are loosing our fundamental freedom to decide what seeds we will sow, how we will grow our food and what we will eat. Seed as a common good has become a commodity of private seed companies, that unless protected and put back in the hands of our farmers', is at risk of being lost forever.

Resistance to unjust Seed Laws through the Seed satyagraha is one aspect of Seed Freedom. Saving and sharing Seeds is another aspect. That is why Navdanya has worked with local communities to reclaim seed diversity and seed as a commons by establishing more than 100 community seed banks. Across the world, communities are saving and exchanging seeds in diverse ways, appropriate to their context. They are creating and re-creating freedom-for the seed, for seed keepers, and for all life and all people.

When we save seed, we also reclaim and rejuvenate knowledge- the knowledge of breeding and conservation, the knowledge of food and farming. Uniformity as a pseudo scientific measure has been used to establish unjust IPR monopolies on Seed. And IPR monopolies reinforce monocultures. Once a company has patents on seeds, it pushes their patented crops on farmers in order to collect royalties.

Humanity has been eating thousands upon thousands of (8500) plant species. Today we are being condemned to eat GM corn and soya in various forms. Four primary crops - corn, soya, canola and cotton have all been grown at the cost of other crops because they generate a royalty for every acre planted. For example, India had 1,500 different kinds of cotton, now 95% of the cotton planted is GMO Bt Cotton for which Monsanto collects royalties.

Over 11 million hectares of land are used to cultivate cotton for which 9.5 million hectares of this land is used to grow Monsanto's genetically modified Bt variety. Corn is cultivated on over 7 million hectares of land, but of this area 2850,000 hectares are used for a 'High Yielding Variety' corn. Soya now covers an area of approximately 9.95 million hectares, and canola now comprises approximately 6.36 million hectares. This mass shift towards the cultivation of these crops not only threatens the diversity of other crops, but threatens the health and wellbeing of natural resources such as the soil, as this monoculture approach to farming drains the earth of its nutrients.

To break out of this viciousness of monocultures and monopolies, we need to create virtuous cycles of diversity and reclaim our biological and intellectual commons.

Participatory breeding of open source seeds, and participatory framing of open source rights are innovations that deepen seed freedom.

Seed Freedom has become an ecological, political, economical and cultural imperative.

If we do not act, or have a fragmented and weak response, species will irreversibly disappear. Agriculture and the food and cultural spectrum dependent on biodiversity will disappear. Small farmers will disappear, healthy food diversity will disappear, seed sovereignty will disappear, and food sovereignty will disappear.

By speaking and acting strongly in one voice in defense of seed freedom as the Global Citizens Alliance, we can put the obscenity, violence, injustice and immorality of patents on seeds and life behind us. Similarly, in another period slavery was made a thing of the past. Just as today corporations find nothing wrong in owning life, slave owners found nothing wrong in owning other humans. Just as people back then questioned and challenged slavery, it is our ethical and ecological duty and our right to challenge patents on seeds. We have a duty to liberate the seed and our farmers. We have a duty to defend our freedom and protect open-source seeds as a commons.

This Global Citizen Report on Seed Freedom is a kernel/seed that we hope will multiply and reproduce until no seed, no farmer, no citizen is bonded, colonized or enslaved.

Organic Seed





# The Global Movement for Seed Freedom

## A Global Movement for Seed, Food and Earth Democracy

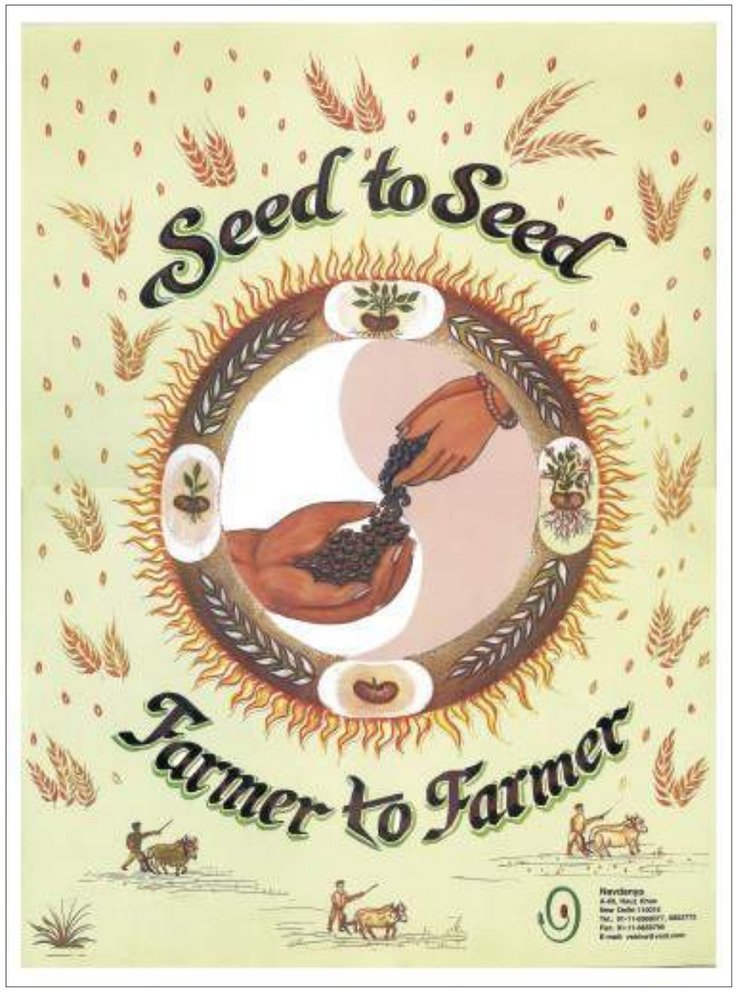
The core aim of the Seed Freedom Movement is to protect Seeds as a commons, defend seed sovereignty and promote food sovereignty in the context of a deepening Seed Emergency and a Food Crisis.

The Seed Freedom Movement, launched in October 2012, continues to gain ground and has been the catalyst by which movements, organizations and individuals around the world are today taking action everywhere to keep seed free from poisons chemicals, GMOs and patents and to protect farmers rights to save, exchange and sell their seeds.

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GMOs, patents, and Intellectual Property Rights.

We will not allow the imposition of Seed Laws based on Uniformity, that criminalise our diversity and seed freedom. We breed for diversity, quality, resilience-not for chemical monocultures.

Across Diverse Ecosystems and cultures we are united in defending Seed freedom/Seed sovereignty as the foundation of Food Freedom/Food Sovereignty, based on ecological production and fair and just distribution, beginning with protecting and promoting local food systems.

Our diverse seeds, used in agroecological systems produce more food and nutrition per acre and are the real solution to hunger and malnutrition, not GMOs.

Our evolutionary seeds, continuously adapting to climate change, are the real answer for climate adaptation and resilience, not GMOS now packaged as "Climate Smart Agriculture"

With all our love we will protect our seeds.

With centuries of knowledge of our ancestors reinforced by the new sciences of agroecology and epigenetics we will resist the imposition of obsolete and flawed reductionist, mechanistic science, and failed GMO and toxic chemical technologies on our food and agriculture systems.

With our intense commitment, and deep solidarity, we will collectively defend our Seed Freedom, Food Freedom, and Democratic Rights to shape a future of food that protects life on Earth and the well being of all.

## Global Movement for Seed Freedom – Our resolve, our commitment

The Global Movement for Seed Freedom is a network of individuals and organisations committed to align our thoughts and actions with the laws of Gaia, Pachamama, Vasundhara, Mother Earth... We protect the biodiversity of the planet by defending of the freedom of the seed to evolve in integrity, self-organisation, and diversity.

We are seed savers and seed defenders, farmers and gardeners, practioners of ecological agriculture and participants in fair trade.

Our right to save and exchange our open pollinated, non GMO, non patented seed is non alienable.

Farmers rights are non negotiable.

We will resist every law and technology that attempts to undermine our freedoms, and the freedom of the seed, which is intimately linked to the freedom of Mother Earth.

We are committed to preventing Monsanto and other chemical corporations which are seeking to control our Seed Supply through



# Seed Freedom Campaigns

## Call to Action 2014 and ongoing events

The Global Movement for Seed Freedom invited everyone to join people and communities around the globe, from the 20th of September to the 20th of October, to reaffirm our commitment to Seed Freedom, Food Freedom and Earth Democracy.
At this time of global crisis, as our planet faces economic and ecological collapse, we recognize the need to imagine and build alternatives to the current dominant economic and agricultural models.
The 'Call to Act for Seed, Food, and Earth Democracy' 2014 is a powerful global event that will help to make these necessary alternatives a reality. Let us stand together as we reclaim the commons of Seed and Food and as we protect our land sovereignty and cultural heritage.

Read more: http://seedfreedom.info/campaign/call-to-action-for-seed-food-and-earth-democracy-2014/

Translated in 10 other languages
Italian, French, German, Spanish, Bulgarian, Greek, Indonesian, Polish, Portuguese (Brazil), Portuguese (Portugal), Slovenian




Seed Freedom

Events submitted by individuals and Organisations and published on
Seed Freedom Events Calendar. No. Events 20 Sept. – 20 Oct.
No Events: 157
No. Countries: 31
http://seedfreedom.info/events/categories/call-to-action-20-sept-20-oct-2014/

Promoted through Social Media
https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.584129855032795.1073741850.238484846263966&type=3

Ongoing Campaign

Events submitted by individuals and Organisations and published on Seed Freedom Events Map/ Calendar. No. Events 2014 (January – December)
No. Events: 298
No Countries: 36*

http://seedfreedom.in/seed-freedom-map/

http://seedfreedom.info/events/categories/seed-freedom-actions%E2%80%8F/

Promoted through Social Media
https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.584129228366191.1073741849.238484846263966&type=3

# No Gmo Banana Campaign

*"First the GMO industry said they would reduce chemical use through Bt-Ht GMOs that were supposed to control pests and weeds. Chemical use increased, and GMO Bt cotton is plagued by pests, herbicide tolerant crops are being overtaken by super weeds. The industry is now trying to save itself with the promise of GMO "super bananas" to deal with Vit A deficiency. As Mantasa's research* has shown, the super banana is based on Biopriracy of Vit A rich indigenous bananas. We don't need more false claims of GMOs based on piracy of indigenous biodiversity and knowledge. The GMO banana project based on biopiracy must stop".*

Vandana Shiva

Articles and Photos: http://seedfreedom.info/campaign/no-gmo-banana-campaign/

Seed Freedom Presents: We Don't Want No Pirate Banana – The Banana Song with Charlie Mgee from the Formidable Vegetable Sound System http://seedfreedom.info/seed-freedom-presents-we-dont-want-no-pirate-banana/

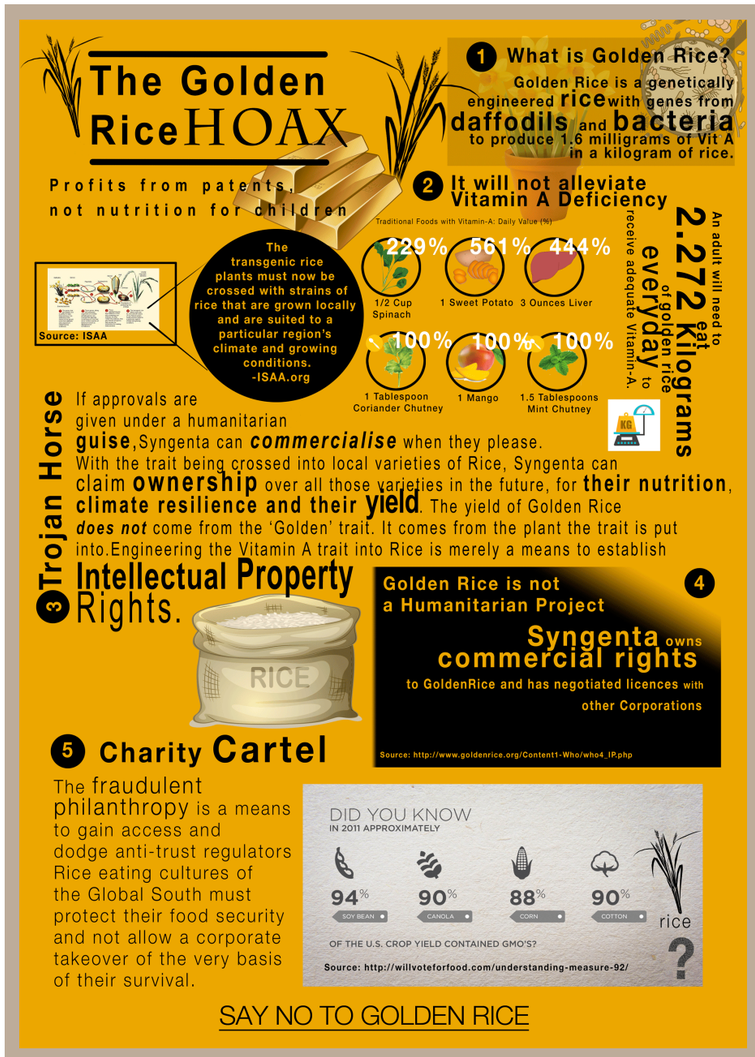


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# The Golden Rice Hoax

Read more: http://seedfreedom.info/campaign/the-golden-rice-hoax/

*The PR army promoting Golden Rice is descending on Phillipines, Bangladesh and India.*

Sign and share the Declaration for International Women's Day, 8th March, to pre-empt the GMO propaganda: http://seedfreedom.info/campaign/declaration-for-international-womens-day-8-march-2015/

Also read:
*GOLDEN RICE – MYTH NOT MIRACLE, by Dr Vandana Shiva:* http://seedfreedom.in/golden-rice-myth-not-miracle/

Seed Freedom

# Africa



Globaljustice.org.uk





Sorghum, Photo: Janki

## Africa - Grain AFSA

**Land and seed laws under attack as Africa is groomed for corporate recolonization**

Across Africa, laws are being rewritten to open farming up to an agribusiness invasion - displacing the millions of small cultivators that now feed the continent, and replacing them with a new model of profit-oriented agriculture using patented seeds and varieties. The agencies effecting the transformation are legion - but they are all marching to a single drum.

A battle is raging for control of resources in Africa - land, water, seeds, minerals, ores, forests, oil, renewable energy sources. Agriculture is one of the most important theatres of this battle. Governments, corporations, foundations and development agencies are pushing hard to commercialise and industrialise African farming.

Many of the key players are well known. They include the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the G8, the African Union, the Bill Gates-funded 'Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa' (AGRA), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the International Fertiliser Development Centre (IFDC).

Together they are committed to helping agribusiness become the continent's primary food commodity producer. To do this, they are not only pouring money into projects to transform farming operations on the ground - they are also changing African laws to accommodate the agribusiness agenda.

Privatising both land and seeds is essential for the corporate model to flourish in Africa. With regard to agricultural land, this means pushing for the official demarcation, registration and titling of farms. It also means making it possible for foreign investors to lease or own farmland on a long-term basis.

With regard to seeds, it means having governments require that seeds be registered in an official catalogue in order to be traded. It also means introducing intellectual property rights over plant varieties and criminalising farmers who ignore them.
In all cases, the goal is to turn what has long been a commons into something that corporates can control and profit from.

Source: http://www.theecologist.org/News/news_analysis/2752051/land_and_seed_laws_under_attack_as_africa_is_groomed_for_corporate_recolonization.html



## Lifting the veil of secrecy

This survey aims to provide an overview of just who is pushing for which specific changes in these areas - looking not at the plans and projects, but at the actual texts that will define the new rules.

It was not easy to get information about this. Many phone calls to the World Bank and Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) offices went unanswered.
The US Agency for International Development (USAID) brushed us off. Even African Union officials did not want to answer questions from -and be accountable to- African citizens doing this inventory.

This made the task of coming up with an accurate, detailed picture of what is going on quite difficult. We did learn a few things, though.

While there is a lot of civil society attention focused on the G8's New Alliance for Food and Nutrition, there are many more actors doing many similar things across Africa. Our limited review makes it clear that the greatest pressure to change land and seed laws comes from Washington DC - home to the World Bank, USAID and the MCC.

## 'Land reform' is to benefit investors, not farmers

Land certificates - which should be seen as a stepping stone to formal land titles - are being promoted as an appropriate way to 'securitise' poor peoples' rights to land. But how do we define the term 'land securitisation'?

As the objective claimed by most of the initiatives dealt with in this report, it could be understood as strengthening land rights.

Many small food producers might conclude that their historic cultural rights to land - however they may be expressed - will be better recognised, thus protecting them from expropriation.
But for many governments and corporations, it means the creation of Western-type land markets based on formal instruments like titles and leases that can be traded. In fact, many initiatives such as the G8 New Alliance explicitly refer to securitisation of 'investors' rights to land.

So this is not about recording and safeguarding historic or cultural rights, but about creating market mechanisms. So in a world of grossly unequal players, 'security' is shorthand for the power of the market, private property and creditors.

Most of today's initiatives to address land laws, including those emanating from Africa, are overtly designed to accommodate, support and strengthen investments in land and large scale land deals, rather than achieve equity or to recognise longstanding or historical community rights over land at a time of rising conflicts over land and land resources.

Most of the initiatives to change current land laws come from outside Africa. Yes, African structures like the African Union and the Pan-African Parliament are deeply engaged in facilitating changes to legislation in African states, but many people question how 'indigenous' these processes really are.

It is clear that strings are being pulled, by Washington and Europe in particular, in a well orchestrated campaign to alter land governance in Africa.



## Seed laws based on neoliberal ideologies

When it comes to seed laws, the picture is reversed. Subregional African bodies - SADC, COMESA, OAPI and the like - are working to create new rules for the exchange and trade of seeds. But the recipes they are applying - seed marketing restrictions and plant variety protection schemes - are borrowed directly from the US and Europe.

And the changes to seed policy being promoted by the G8 New Alliance, the World Bank and others refer to neither farmer-based seed systems nor farmers' rights. They make no effort to strengthen farming systems that are already functioning.

> "This is not about safeguarding historic or cultural rights, but about creating market mechanisms ... 'security' is shorthand for the power of the market, private property and creditors."

African Centre for Biosafety

Rather, the proposed solutions are simplified, but unworkable solutions to complex situations that will not work - though an elite category of farmers may enjoy some small short term benefits.

With seeds, which represent a rich cultural heritage of Africa's local communities, the push to transform them into income-generating private property, and marginalise traditional varieties, is still making more headway on paper than in practice. This is due to many complexities, one of which is the growing awareness of and popular resistance to the seed industry agenda.

But the resolve of those who intend to turn Africa into a new market for global agro-input suppliers is not to be underestimated, and a notable consolidation of seed suppliers under foreign corporate ownership is under way. The path chosen will have profound implications for the capacity of African farmers to adapt to climate change.

Interconnectedness between different initiatives is significant, although these relationships are not always clear for groups on the ground.
Our attempt to show these connections gives a picture of how very narrow agendas are being pushed by a small elite in the service of globalised corporate interests intent on taking over agriculture in Africa.

## New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition

"The 50 million people that the G8 New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition claims to be lifting out of poverty will only be allowed to escape poverty and hunger if they abandon their traditional rights and practices and buy their life saving seeds every year from the corporations lined up behind the G8", warned Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement in September 2014.

Launched in 2012 by the G8 industrialised countries - Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, UK and US - the aim of the gtrandly titled G8 New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition is in fact to mobilise private capital for investment in African agriculture.

To be accepted into the programme, African governments are required to make important changes to their land and seed policies. The New Alliance prioritises granting national and transnational corporations (TNCs) new forms of access and control to the participating countries' resources, and gives them a seat at the same table as aid donors and recipient governments.

As of July 2014, ten African countries had signed Cooperative Framework Agreements (CFAs) to implement the New Alliance programme: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal and Tanzania.

Under these agreements, these governments committed to 213 policy changes. Some 43 of these changes target land laws, with the overall stated objective of establishing "clear, secure and negotiable rights to land" - tradeable property titles.



*The New Alliance also aims to implement both the Voluntary Guidelines (VGs) on 'Responsible Land Tenure' adopted by the Committee on World Food Security in 2012, and the 'Principles for Responsible Agriculture Investment' drawn up by the World Bank, FAO, IFAD and UN Conference on Trade and Development. This is considered especially important since the New Alliance directly facilitates access to farmland in Africa for investors.*

## New Alliance pushing seed 'reform'

*As to seeds, all of the participating states, with the exception of Benin, agreed to adopt plant variety protection laws and rules for marketing seeds that better support the private sector.*

*Despite the fact that more than 80% of all seed in Africa is still produced and disseminated through 'informal' seed systems (on-farm seed saving and unregulated distribution between farmers), there is no recognition in the New Alliance programme of the importance of farmer-based systems of saving, sharing, exchanging and selling seeds.*

*African governments are being co-opted into reviewing their seed trade laws and supporting the implementation of Plant Variety Protection (PVP) laws, as has been seen in Ghana where farmers have risen up against the changes.*

*The strategy is to first harmonise seed trade laws such as border control measures, phytosanitary control, variety release systems and certification standards at the regional level, and then move on to harmonising PVP laws.*

*The effect is to create larger unified seed markets, in which the types of seeds on offer are restricted to commercially protected varieties. The age old rights of farmers to replant saved seed is curtailed and the marketing of traditional varieties of seed is strictly prohibited.*

*Concerns have been raised about how this agenda privatises seeds and the potential impacts this could have on small-scale farmers. Farmers will lose control of seeds regulated by a commercial system, while crop biodiversity may be eroded due to the focus on commercial varieties.*

*Making these processes hard to combat is the mutliplicity of programmes and initiatives carried out by different countries and both national and transnational entities in different parts of Africa, all offering short term benefits to governments but all directed towards a single objective - the neoliberal transformation of land, seed and plant variety governance to open the continent up for full scale agribusiness invasion.*

Afsa



*The report: 'Land and seed laws under attack: who is pushing changes in Africa?' was drawn up jointly by AFSA and GRAIN. Researched and initially drafted by Mohamed Coulibaly, an independent legal expert in Mali, with support from AFSA members and GRAIN staff, it is meant to serve as a resource for groups and organisations wanting to become more involved in struggles for land and seed justice across Africa or for those who just want to learn more about who is pushing what kind of changes in these areas right now.*

*AFSA is a pan-African platform comprising networks and farmer organisations championing small African family farming based on agro-ecological and indigenous approaches that sustain food sovereignty and the livelihoods of communities.*

*GRAIN is a small international organisation that aims to support small farmers and social movements in their struggles for community-controlled and biodiversity-based food systems.*

*This article is based on the above report.*





Land outside Maputo, Mozambique.
Photo: National Geographic

Senegal-vegetables-market politicsofpoverty. oxfamamerica.org




# Ghana – Food Sovereignty Ghana

## Introduction

This report covers the major landmarks of our movement since its inception, almost two years ago. Food Sovereignty Ghana is a grass-roots movement of Ghanaians, home and abroad, dedicated to the promotion of food sovereignty in Ghana. Our group believes in the collective control over our collective resources, rather than the control of our resources by multinational corporations and other foreign entities.

Food Sovereignty Ghana

This movement is a product of Special Brainstorming Session meeting on the 21st of March 2013, at the Accra Freedom Centre. The meeting was in response to several months of calls by individuals, led particularly by the Pan-Africanist International, who have been publishing, discussing, writing, blogging or tweeting, about the increasing phenomenon of land grabs, the right to water and sanitation as a fundamental human right, water privatization issues, deforestation, climate change, carbon trading and Africa's atmospheric space, and in particular, the urgent issue of the introduction of GM food technology into our agriculture, particularly, its implications on food sovereignty, sustainable development, biodiversity, and the integrity of our food and water resources, human and animal health, and our very existence as a politically independent people. These calls insisted that these issues need to be comprehensively addressed in a systematic and an organized manner.

## Press Releases

Apart from organisational tasks such as defining our aims and objectives, rules and regulations, election of officers, membership drive, building our website, etc., our initial activities were centred around press releases such as our "Statement Calling For Moratorium On GM Crop Cultivation In Ghana", which triggered an immediate invitation to the US Embassy in Accra for a CLOSED DOOR "Roundtable Discussion and an Interdisciplinary Presentation on biotechnology at the US Embassy on July 10".

After a careful deliberation we decided to turn down the invitation because it did nothing to "advance our cause for a public debate on the issue".
We also took the decision to publicly advice that the US Embassy Must Be Open And Transparent On GMO Debate In Ghana.

Our press releases were mainly commentaries on biotechnology events and critiques of the activities of the pro-GM lobby in Ghana, such as "The 6th Africa Agricultural Week Is Not About Science".

For a complete view of our Press Releases and Statements, please see: http://foodsovereigntyghana.org/category/press-releases-and-statements/.

Our statements have been published regularly in Sustainable Pulse, Pambazuka, the Ecologist, and Seed Freedom Newsletters.

## The plant breeders' bill aka "MONSANTO LAW"

Our campaign against the Plant Breeders' Bill has been the major preoccupation of our movement since it came into being. We took this campaign seriously because of the track record of Parliament and the bi-partisan accord when it comes to Bills from the pro-GMO lobby. For example, the Biosafety Act of 2011, was voted into an Act of Parliament by a unanimous vote! Our campaign was basically energized by the very evil nature of the Bill: it was so bad that we could not take "NO" for an answer. After issueing a few statements against Ghana's joing UPOV, such as President Mahama, Don't Join UPOV 91, and Parliament Must Reject UPOV 91!

We finally petitioned the Parliament which led to our meeting with the Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, on Wednesday, 4th December, 2013. We find this Bill particularly obnoxious, in that, it makes the rights of farmers subject to the discretion of the Minister of Agriculture, whilst the rights of foreign corporate plant breeders are put above the laws of Ghana! An area where we strongly disagree is why the government opted for UPOV 91 in the first place. The Bill is presented, first and foremost as being in fulfilment of the requirements of UPOV 91, which incidentally is also in conformity with the WTO rules. Meanwhile, Ghana can fulfil our WTO obligations without UPOV. As explained in a petition signed by 51 international NGOs to the Parliament, we do not need UPOV. It is a very restrictive and dangerous trap into a permanent enslavement and loss of our sovereignty as a people.

This is what is staring at us in the face. Our destiny as a people is involved in which decision our Members of Parliament make.
As a result of a series of protestations by our local partners in this campaign and intense public interest that this generated, Parliament finally beat a retreat on Plant Breeders' Bill!

The move to impose the UPOV-compliant Plant Breeders' Bill on Ghanaians suffered a major set-back on Tuesday, November 11, 2014.

This was a significant victory given the level of push back our campaign received from the MPs and the entire apparatus of state of the Mahama Administration. This does not mean the end of the story. The real struggle for a sensible law now begins. For example, the proposed amendments to the Plant Breeders' Bill come directly from UPOV.









## Protest and marches

For the first time, Ghana joined in the March Against Monsanto on Saturday, October 12, 2013, which took place around the world. The protesters rallied against the company's use of genetically modified organisms and tried to raise awareness about its corporate practices.

At the first march, only one African country participated: South Africa.

This time around, already in the second march, there are seven African countries participating, amongst them, South Africa, Nairobi and Accra. Again, on May 24, 2014, as millions of people around the globe demonstrated to call for a permanent end to the use of genetically modified organisms and other harmful agrochemicals used by "Big Agriculture" companies such as Monsanto.

FSG led the Ghana front. The protests were held in more than 400 cities in more than 52 countries on six different continents. The march started from the Obra Spot at the Kwame Nkrumah Circle through the Nsawam Road and ended at the Mallam Atta Market.
The march was so successful and drew interest both locally and internationally to such an extent that FSG Chairperson was interviewed by Ms. Abby Martin on Breaking The Set, RT's flagship, award-winning English-language channel which airs 24/7 from the network's Moscow offices, beamed across six continents, and is available to more than 700 million viewers worldwide.

## Workshops, Symposia, and public lectures

On 28th February, 2014, Food Sovereignty Ghana organized a capacity building and skills sharing workshop on 27th-28th February to discuss the Biosafety Law, the Plant Breeders bill and the Plant and Fertilizer Act (seed law) in collaboration with the African Centre for Biosafety (ACB) and the Third World Network (TWN), and under the sponsorship of the Bread for the World.
Civil society organizations, smallholder farmers, the media, scientists and concerned members of the public attended the meeting.
Again 9-10 June, 2013, we hosted Dr. Vandana Shiva as part of a three-nation tour in Africa of which we are most fortunate to be included.

Food Sovereignty Ghana

The highlights of the visit included a Press Conference in the morning of Monday, 9th June, at the International Press Centre, Accra, which was followed up with a Public Forum at the Paloma Hotel, Accra. Her two-day visit also included radio and television interviews and meetings with representatives of civil society organisations and farmers' groups. Food Sovereignty Ghana has also had cause to reject participation in certain symposia and to denounce them publicly, such as the symposium on Wednesday, 10th December, 2014 at CLOSSAG Conference Room (Ministries) in Accra. The symposium was organized by the CSIR-Science and Technology Policy Research Institute (STEPRI), under the Development Research Uptake in Sub-Saharan Africa (DRUSSA) was described as being organised by GMO Peddlers – Fake Debates and Staged Symposia!

## Legal action against the biosafety committee

As at the time of writing this report, a case filed by Food Sovereignty Ghana, against the National Biosafety Committee, NBC, as the first defendant, and the Ministry of Food And Agriculture, MoFA, has been scheduled to be heard at the Human Right Division of the Fast Track High Court, on Tuesday, 3rd of March, 2015, at 9.00am.

It is the second time the case is being called. The case was first heard on the 17th of February, and adjourned to the 3rd of March, to enable the defendants to put in their statement of case.

This is clearly a landmark case regarding the future of genetically modified organisms, GMOS, in Ghana.

FSG shall be represented in court by Mr. George Tetteh Wayo, whilst the Attorney-General is representing the defendants.

For more information on the case, please see our PRESS RELEASE: FSG Sues Government Over GM Rice and Beans | Food Sovereignty Ghana: http://foodsovereigntyghana.org/fsg-sues-government-over-gm-rice-and-beans/



Some of our members supporters, friends and Lawyer Wayo Tetteh at the High Court Accra. on the first day in court, 17th February, 2015



Hands with seeds - AFSA

# Tanzania – Singo Saidi

## Seed sovereignty status in Tanzania

We are told that Tanzania has an abundance of available fertile land, but that production is inefficient, based on many small farms, and needs modernization through private sector investment in large scale high-input agriculture.

Critics maintain that Africa is seen as the world's last frontier for corporate market penetration, with a focus on land and water, food and bio-fuels. The recent investment wave must be understood in the context of a global food system dominated by large corporations in input supply (seed and agrochemicals), processing, storage, trading and retail.

African governments, desperate for some financial relief, are willing to make whatever changes are necessary to bring the G8 New Alliance capital into their countries (Tanzania is a prominent member of the alliance). The multinationals are setting the terms, with favourable seed laws, access to land, free trade and intellectual property rights as the preconditions for investment.
Farmers' seed sovereignty is under threat from changes to national legislation. Recently, Tanzania adopted a UPOV 1991-compliant Plant Breeders Rights Act (2012) which is designed to protect the interests and intellectual property rights of large scale commercial seed companies (e.g. Monsanto, Syngenta etc.) who are keen to penetrate the African market with hybrid and GM seeds, supported by leading governments under the G8 New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition. The changes criminalize (for PBR protected varieties) the traditional farmers' practice of breeding, saving, and exchanging seeds. With the new PBR in place, Tanzania is about to become the very first Least Developed Country (LDC) in the World to join UPOV91.

Similarly the Seeds Act 2004 is currently being revised to align with the UPOV91 complaint PBR, and will continue to disadvantage the 'informal' farmer-saved seed system by criminalizing any sale of non-certified seed. Government lawyers claim to be in the process of 'domesticating' the ITPGRFA (International Treaty of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture)– which theoretically would strengthen farmers' seed rights – but we see no supporting evidence.
A recent CSO / Government dialogue meeting in Dar es Salaam (Sep 2014) clarified that:

- The Government decision to join UPOV and to establish a framework of UPOV 91 compliant legislation is a "done deal" and advocacy through CSO dialogue with Tanzanian Government to halt, reverse or modify it will be rejected.
- Government sees the new laws as solely focusing on the commercial seed sector, and denies they will have any impact on smallholder farmers.
- Government is gradually ceding control of the commercial seed system to the private sector.
- The Quality Declared Seed (QDS) system – the only way whereby smallholder farmers can legally produce certified seed for sale, and then only in their locality – is being wound down under pressure from the commercial seed industry.
- There is no Government recognition of the value of indigenous seeds (referred to by a government lawyer as 'sub-standard seeds') and no legal protection of the farmer managed seed system.
- The government is acting so slowly to fulfill its promise to domesticate the Seed Treaty (ITPGRFA) – which in principle would give famers some legal rights over indigenous varieties, including benefit sharing if used commercially.

Meanwhile over 80% of Tanzania's 4.8 million small-farming families continue to source their seeds from the farmer managed seed system. Some, a few, are using the QDS system to produce certified seeds, maintaining and sharing their local varieties, or multiplying improved open pollinated varieties (OPV seeds). But most farmers rely on seeds saved from last year, either by themselves, or exchanged with neighbouring farmers.

Yet seed banks are rare, reflecting government extension service advice towards commercial and hybrid seeds.




TABIO

TOAM and TABIO are working hard to address the challenges of seed sovereignty as follow:

1. In June 2014, the two organizations in collaboration with Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) organized a one-day event to mark the beginning of celebrating the International Year of Family Farming. This event invited Dr. Vandana Shiva of which issues around seed sovereignty were highly discussed.

2. Carrying out advocacy against changing laws that undermine seed sovereignty in the country. In so doing, TOAM in collaboration with African Center for Biosafety conducted a study on the impact of changing seed-related laws on farmer managed seed systems in Tanzania. The study findings were presented during a stakeholders workshop which recommended for putting up laws that recognize farmers varieties.

3. Working with smallholder farmers in different parts of the county in promoting multiplication and use of local seeds in agriculture. This is because continue loss of local seeds is having a devastating impacts on farming communitiesby reducing the scope of seeds available for planting.

4. Carryout intensive awareness creation on GMOs and also call for decision and policy makers to reject the proposal to weaken strict liability.




### Conclusions

*Promoting seed sovereignty is of paramount important for smallholder farmers in Tanzania. With seed sovereignty, farmers have rights to save, breed and exchange seeds. It enables them to be free from patented, genetically modified which are owned and controlled by the multinational seed companies.*

TABIO





# Zimbabwe – ZIMSOFF (Zimbabwe Smallholders Organic Farmers Forum)

### ZIMSOFF: Strengthening community-based seed systems in Zimbabwe

*Seed is the foundation of life, for without seed, there is no food and without food, life ceases. Every plant starts as seed. In Zimbabwe, over a million smallholder farming households rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. They grow diverse food crops: cereals (maize is the main staple food crop followed by small grains – sorghum, pearl millet and finger millet), pulses (a variety of legumes including cowpeas, beans, groundnuts, round nuts etc.) and vegetables (leaf, fruit, root, bulb and tuber). Most smallholders purchase mainly maize seed from seed companies dominated by SeedCo, Pioneer, Cargill and Pannar. A few smallholder farmers save and use traditional and open pollinated varieties (OPVs) of maize. The pulses and small grains are dominated by traditional farmer saved seeds. Thus, very few seed companies supply such seeds.*

*Zimbabwe, despite shortages between 2003 and 2010, produces adequate maize seed for domestic and export markets. However, the domestic market particularly the smallholders have been affected by price hikes both of seeds and fertilisers. Seed companies have been increasing the price of the maize seed citing increased costs of producing hybrids. In 2014, a 25kg bag of maize seed increased between $68.00 and $113.00, up from $57.00 and $96.00; while a 10 kg bag costs between $27.50 and $31.00, up from $21.00 and $24.00. Most smallholder farmers failed to buy sufficient seed and could lead to food insecurity.*
*The delayed payment for grain delivered by farmers to Grain Marketing Board due to lack of funds worsened the situation.*
*However, not all farmers are affected by price hikes. There exist isolated but significant groups of smallholder farmers who use Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) to save seed of various crops. Zimbabwe Smallholder Organic Farmers' Forum (ZIMSOFF), member of La Via campesina, is one such group of farmers fighting to reclaim and use traditional seeds, and break dependence on commercial seeds. ZIMSOFF farmers grow a wide range of traditional seed varieties and Open Pollinated Varieties (OPVs) (maize, sorghum, millets, groundnuts, vegetables and other pulses). Such practices preserve their culture and ensure food sovereignty and strengthen their communities.*

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## What are the threats to farmer seed sovereignty

Today threats to such practices loom on the horizon. A multi-pronged tactic by big seed and agro-chemical companies has been prepared and unleashed to rid the few remaining places of traditional seed varieties and the knowledge to preserve seed, including free exchange. Tactic includes seed patents (intellectual property rights-IPRs), criminalization of farmers' seed preservation and exchange, marketing of transgenic seeds (GMOs) and institutionalization of pro-UPOV policies in Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Common Markets for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). The ultimate goal is to make all farmers dependent on toxic agro-inputs such as inorganic fertilizers, pesticides and technologies that suffocate both agro-diversity, and soil and nature biodiversity. The farmers' seeds maintain genetic diversity and ensure consumption of healthy, cultural appropriate foods.

## Regional seed policies: SADC and COMESA

Efforts are underway at regional economic and political blocs, the SADC and COMESA, to introduce harmonized seed policies likely to impact on farmers' seeds negatively. The COMESA seed protocol seeks to open national borders through easing market and regulatory requirements on registered commercial seeds. This removes the hurdles to movement of registered seed within the regional countries at the ports of entry which affected timely delivery of seeds to recipient countries. The governments therefore proposed to harmonize seed marketing policies as a quick solution to expedite the export and import of seed. In general, this will flood both the regional and local markets with hybrid and genetic modified (GM) seeds and thus push out traditional seeds. The SADC seed harmonisation policy seeks to promote the "commercial breeders' rights" through Plant Variety Protection (PVP) based on "DUS" (Distinctiveness, Uniformity, Stability).
This favours commercial breeders and criminalize smallholder farmer seed saving and exchange.

## Corporate takeover through investment/shareholding

Most seed companies in Zimbabwe are subsidiary of large transnational agribusiness corporations such Pionner, Pannar etc. These entered the local seed market during the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1990s when economy and trade was liberalised. Recently, Limagrain, increased its shareholding through its subsidiary Vilmorin & Cie in the local seed company, SeedCo. Vilmorin, a French seed maker is expected to double its stake in SeedCo to 32%. South African seed companies such as AgriSeeds are also gaining market share.

## Seed company dominance: seed infrastructure, high registration fees and policy bias

In Zimbabwe, seed companies dominate the commercial seed supply market because they have the requisite seed production and testing infrastructure and are also able to pay the high registration fees. These requirements are prohibitive to entry of smallholder farmers. At the moment there are registered 43 Plant Breeders in Zimbabwe. The existing national legislation caters for these registered breeders. No policy exists for smallholder farmers despite being breeders too; few amendments to existing policy were done to include smallholders after their outcry. The smallholders have no access to these policies in local languages. This affects their participation in the processes.



Varieties of traditional and open pollinated crops farmers save and grow



## GMO processed foods and food aid

GMO processed foods from South Africa are slowing flooding the local markets. The opening up of local markets set the stage for their wider acceptance and lobbying by some for the government to allow GMO seeds is gaining ground. At the moment, the Government of Zimbabwe does not allow import of unprocessed GMO materials.

## Zimsoff initiatives for seed conservation, freedom and reclaimation.

## Strengthening the campaign for seed sovereignty

Zimbabwe Small Organic Farmers Forum is working with likeminded organisation such as Community Technology Development Organisation (CTDO), Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM Zimbabwe), Towards Sustainable Resources Use Organization (TSURO Trust) and Chikukwa Ecological Land Use Community Trust (CELLUCT) and other farmers' organisations to create a partnership that responds to contextual factors on seed. This collaboration on seed is the first of its kind. It envisions seed sovereignty farming communities improving and sustaining their livelihoods through protecting and promoting the smallholder farmers' rights and ability to produce, trade and save a wide diversity of open pollinated and traditional seed of high quality. It also seeks to design a multi-year collaborative and strategic programme to promote farmer saved seeds and share seed knowledge by holding seed fairs locally and nationally; conduct research to document farmers' seed initiatives and strengthen Community Based Seed System; and increase understanding of Seed Policy and raise awareness.

By allowing our smallholder farmers to practice the age old seed preservation, growing and exchange, ZIMSOFF fosters seed variety diversity, as well as a greater within variety genetic diversity. This enables the smallholder farmers more adaptable to changing conditions than homogenous commercial agriculture.

## Guarding against erosion of seed diversity through dialogues, advocacy and campaigns

ZIMSOFF has over the years organized several meetings to issues affecting seed sovereignty at farmer level. Various stakeholders including government officials, Seed Services Zimbabwe, social movements and activists have participated in these meetings. Such efforts have recently received support from the African Centre for Biosafety (ACB) and Third World network (TWN), organisations working against transgenic seeds and the new regional (COMESA and SADC) seed policies. Smallholder farmers have built the capacity to understand and defend their seed rights nationally. In one the meeting held in Harare on the 2nd and 3rd of June the ZIMSOFF farmers, agreed to take the following actions and positions:

- To scale up networking and participation in dialogues on seed issues; and that ZIMSOFF should seek space in the panels that have been created in the region to discuss seed issues. The organization should also continue to strengthen the smallholder farmers to defend their rights against the new systems which threaten farmers' rights to save and exchange their indigenous seeds.
- To reject certification of seed, which it is too expensive and smallholder farmers cannot afford. Moreover, to reject the whole process because it is top down and its ownership is not clear.
- To engage with and lobby the government to recognize agro-ecology and peasant seed production systems and protect them from competition from big companies.
- Push the government to consult smallholder farmers before signing these policies.
- However, the government official indicated that the country has the most stringent conditions on registering seed companies. He also added that member States have room to deny entry any genetic material on ecological and environmental grounds.

ZIMSOFF farmers are also participating in regional and international fora on seed issues. Such spaces provide a platform to learn and exchange key information on experiences with other farmers, thereby building solidarity among their organization and foster collective action.
At regional and continent level, ZIMSOFF works with Eastern and Southern Africa Farmers' Forum (ESAFF), Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), the People's Dialogue, Rural Women Assembly (RWA).





Janet Maro

Through these networks, ZIMSOFF has been pushing the seed agenda at political spaces such the annual SADC Head of States Summit. ZIMSOFF is building and strengthening its regional network to fight against proposed regional seed laws. During a meeting with the Zimbabwean government, ZIMSOFF, AFSA, allied organisations and Dr Vandana Shiva lobbied for a ban on GMOs, and called for the support for indigenous seeds. Some members of ZIMSOFF have participated in seed and knowledge initiative exchange visits held in Zimbabwe and South Africa (Limpopo and KwaZulu Natal Provinces) and Italy (Rome); some of its members attended importance seed deliberations at Africa Union level in Ethiopia. In September 2014, ZIMSOFF held several local seed and food fairs followed by a national food festival held in Harare in which also government representatives participated.

At the international levels, ZIMSOFF is working with La Via Campesina to fight for farmer saved seeds and exchange and against Transnational Corporation (TNC) control of seeds. On the 17th April, the International Day of Peasant Struggles, La Via Campesina successfully organized and mobilized actions across the globe to highlight our struggle to defend peasant seeds. At the meeting of the parties to the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), in a landmark decision, governments agreed to regulate synthetic biology.

## Building a firm foundation for seed sovereignty through seed sharing and exchange

In an effort to build seed sovereignty, some ZIMSOFF farmers visited and gathered from different parts of Zimbabwe traditional seeds and open polluted varieties. Mr Mpofu and his wife Elizabeth Mpofu, the General Coordinator of La Via Campesina, keep and multiply a wide variety of seeds collected from different areas through exchange and sharing with other farmers. They have over 15 different seed varieties of maize, sorghum, millets, beans, round nuts, ground nuts, cowpeas, pumpkins, melons and many other traditional crops. Most seed varieties have been shared with other farmers within ZIMSOFF. The Agroecology School at Shashe produces seeds for most local vegetables they grow, a practice learnt from other farmers through horizontal exchange of knowledge.

ZIMSOFF has been urging its members to create seed banks, market traditional seeds and promote the consumption of indigenous vegetables and crops, which conventional research has ignored, within their communities.



It is now widely acknowledged that a smallholder-based, agro-ecological food production system is the best way to eradicate hunger and reduce the impact of agriculture on climate change, less attention is given to the role farmers' play in sharing the lessons they have learned. Building on a farmer-to-farmer approach, the ZIMSOFF is interested in training community facilitators and trainers, helping them develop a horizontal and participatory learning system.

## Growing for own consumption adequate and culturally appropriate food crops

ZIMSOFF campaigns for farmer saved seeds in a number of ways including promoting the consumption of adequate and culturally appropriate food. Besides growing over 10 different crop varieties (maize, sorghum, millets, round nuts, ground nuts, cowpeas, beans, sunflower, pumpkins, melons, most farmer households at ZIMSOFF's Shashe Smallholder farmer organisation (SFO) in Masvingo have small kitchen gardens, located very close to their homesteads, where they grow vegetables such as covo, cabbage, rape, onions and tomatoes for own consumption. According to Mrs Mudzingwa, the small farmers are at the forefront of ensuring household food security by growing different types of small grains which give meaningful yields even during droughts. Sorghum, pearl and finger millet, and groundnuts are easy to grow and require less manure. Again, these crops, unlike maize, can easily be processed into meal mealie using a grinding stone

worldagroforestry.org



# Seed Freedom in Africa



## Seed Freedom, GMOs and Seed Laws in Africa – June 2014

Vandana Shiva supports AFSA

*The Seed Freedom Campaign through Vandana Shiva was invited for a special address for the African Food Sovereignty Network in August 2013 to establish links between seed sovereignty and food sovereignty and share successful strategies with the African network that the Seed Freedom campaign has built. In the wake of threats against Africa's knowledge systems and diversity by corporate and genetically modified seeds, AFSA invited Dr. Vandana Shiva and The Seed Freedom Movement to come together and help build a strong defense against these laws and Green Revolution on Africa. The Seed Freedom Africa tour included Conferences and Movement-building actions to strengthen movements for Seed and Food Sovereignty in South Africa, Ghana, Tanzania and Zimbabwe in June 2014.*

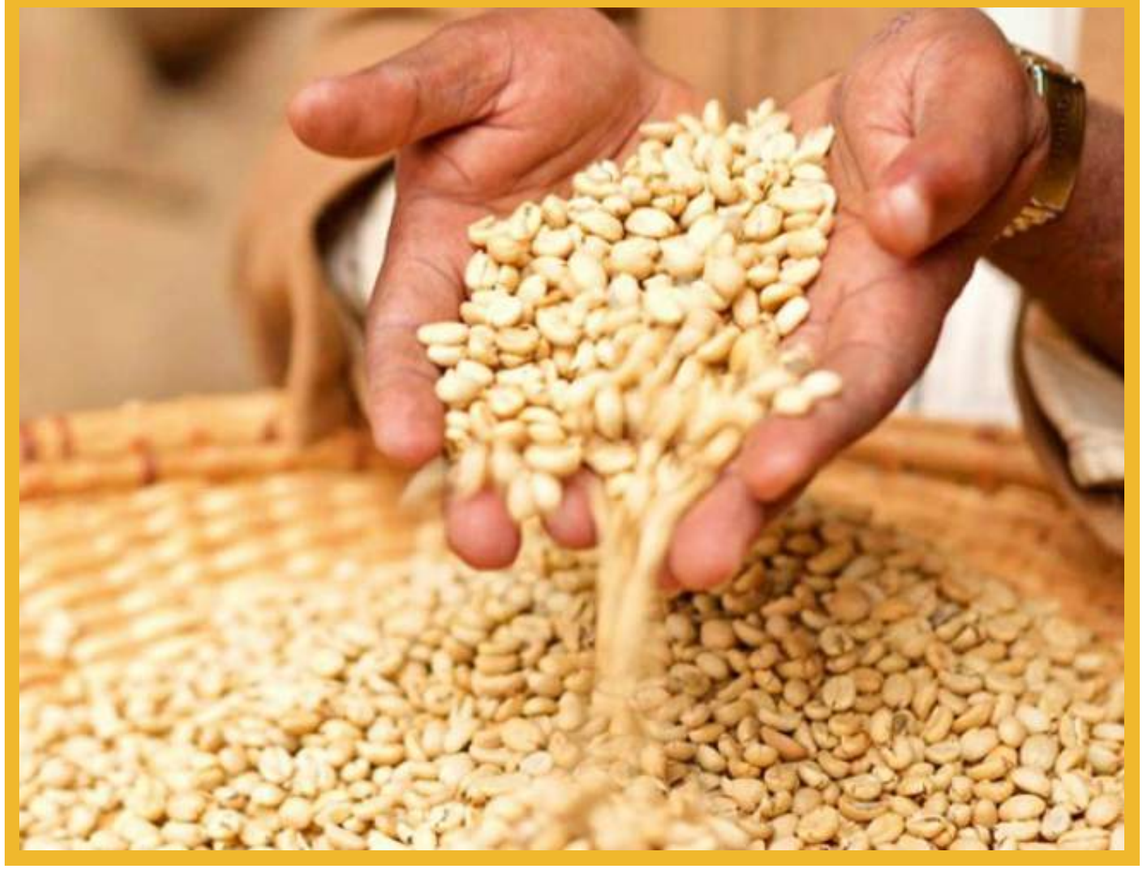
*The Seed Freedom movement is working closely with African networks on strategies, advocacy and campaign to resist the African Regional Seed laws such as ARIPO PVP Harmonized law, SADC PVP Harmonized Law, COMESA Seed Laws.*



# Key Outcomes

1. *The African mobilization tour of Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Ghana and South Africa has led to a strong movement against GMOs and harmonization of seed laws. Pabia Isaac from Food Sovereignty Ghana communicated that the public meetings by Vandana Shiva and seed freedom campaigns ignited public discussion on plant breeders bill in Ghana and led to movements joining hands to resist unjust laws that threaten their seed sovereignty. Saidi Singo from Tanzania said that thanks to the seed freedom tour, we clearly understand the links between seed sovereignty, food sovereignty, agro ecology and climate change. The visit in Tanzania helped highlight and bring into public discourse that it is agro ecological farming that provides the solutions to climate change and hunger.*

Organic Seed



2. As a direct outcome, key representatives from farmers' organizations from Tanzania, Ghana and Zimbabwe were chosen to spend one month in India to learn agro-ecological farming, seed saving, participatory breeding and replicate these in their communities in their respective countries.

3. Representatives movements from Tanzania, Ghana and Zimbabwe also visited Navdanya for the Seed Freedom Strategy meeting in September 2014. An intensive joint campaign has been planned against GMO Banana piracy with key African countries such as Uganda and the African Food Sovereignty Network.

Vandana Shiva in Tanzania – A physicist who put a human face on agriculture:
*http://seedfreedom.in/tanzania-dr-vandana-shiva-physicist-who-has-put-a-human-face-on-agriculture/*

Vandana Shiva supports AFSA in making the case for Agro-ecology:
*http://www.greenpeace.org/africa/en/Press-Centre-Hub/Press-releases/Vandana-Shiva-supports-AFSA-in-making-the-case-for-Agro-ecology/*

VIDEOS - Vandana Shiva in Ghana:
*http://foodsovereigntyghana.org/video-dr-vandana-shiva-in-accra-1-public-forum/*

Ghana's Farmers battle 'Monsanto Law' to retain their Seed Freedom:
*http://seedfreedom.info/ghanas-farmers-battle-monsanto-law-to-retain-seed-freedom/*

Ghana: Atikpo Flails Away, Never Lands A Blow On Shiva
*http://seedfreedom.in/ghana-atikpo-flails-away-never-lands-a-blow-on-shiva/*



TASAI
Women hand-sorting seeds



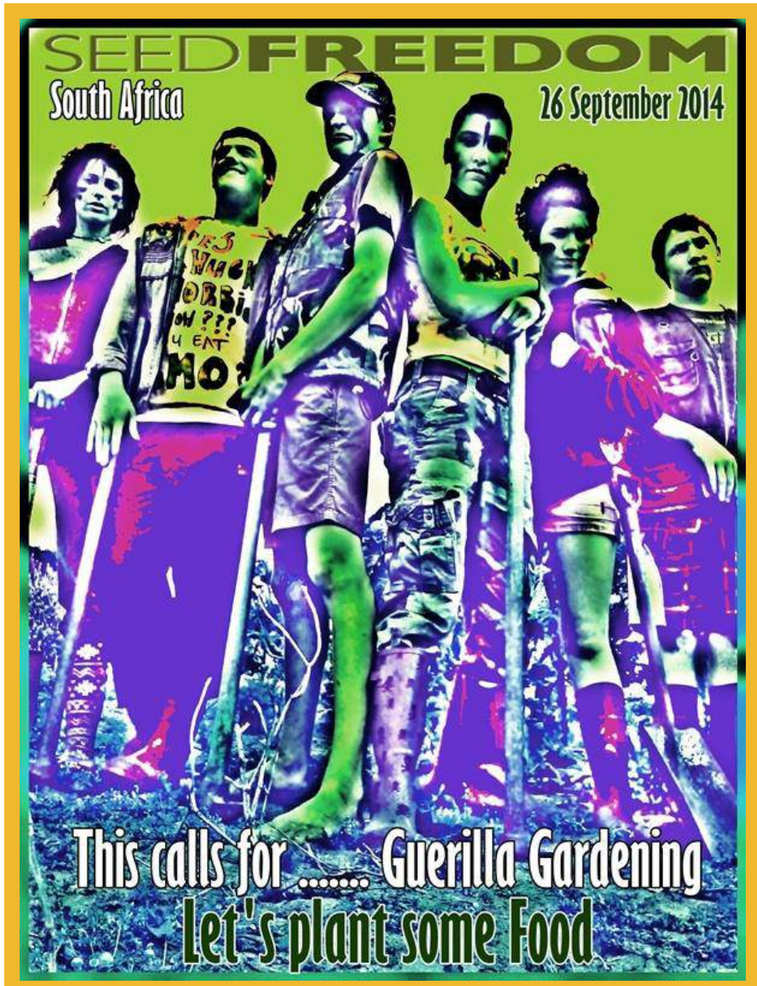
**PORTO NOVO, BENIN:**

Let's reclaim the value of our ancestral seeds / Retrouvons nos valeures semencieres ancestrales – Call to Action 2014:

*http://seedfreedom.in/events/retrouvons-nos-valeures-semencieres-ancestrales/*



Association des Jeunes Environnementalistes pour un Developpement Durable







**PORT ELISABETH, EASTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA:**

**Guerrilla gardening for Seed Freedom, with Non GMO food Port Elizabeth – Call to Action 2014:**

*http://seedfreedom.in/events/guerilla-gardening/*

**WATCH VIDEO:**
*http://youtu.be/ESBtDcIyyRk*

Some teens from South Africa take a stand against GMO seed Giants, Monsanto and FOR the Seed Freedom movement



**DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA:**

**Morningside Peace Garden get-together & Community Seed Swap, with Citi-Zen Gardens – Call to Action 2014:**

*http://seedfreedom.in/events/morningside-peace-garden-get-together-community-seed-swap/*




Non GMO Port Elizabeth

Citi-Zen Garden





# Asia - Pacific

# India – Navdanya

## Corporate fiction

by Dr. Vandana Shiva –
The Asian Age, 6 january 2014
Source: http://www.asianage.com/columnists/corporate-fiction-661

As the New Year begins, I feel compelled to reflect on how fictions and abstract constructions are ruling us; the nature of being and existence is being redefined in such fundamental ways that life itself is threatened. When corporations that were designed as legal constructs claim "personhood", then real people who stand in line at polling booths, eke out livelihoods, and raise families lose their rights. This has happened recently in Vermont and Maui. Residents of Maui County, Hawaii voted on November 4 to ban the growing of genetically modified crops on the islands of Maui, Lanai, and Molokai until scientific studies are conducted on their safety and benefits. Monsanto and Dow Chemical's unit Mycogen Seeds have sued the county in federal court to stop the law passed by the people. And Vermont, which passed a GMO labelling law through a legal, democratic process, is being sued by a conglomerate of corporations on the false premise of corporate personhood, and the influence of money as corporate "free speech".

This is at the heart of new free trade treaties based on "investor rights". Denying citizens the right to know violates the fundamental principles of food democracy. Dow and Monsanto sued Maui, thus subverting the democratic process that rests on the will of people, not on the power of corporations. This corporate jurisprudence needs to be reversed if human rights and the rights of Mother Earth are to be protected.

Corporate fictions that have already had disastrous impacts on the biodiversity of the planet, nations and on farmers whose time immemorial rights to save and exchange seeds are being criminalised under patent law and new seed laws.

When biotechnology corporations claim to have "invented" the seed and courts and governments uphold this fiction, millions of years of evolution and thousands of years of agricultural history gets erased.

Seeds are not automobiles or circuit boards; life cannot be manufactured. It is not an invention. It is not engineered, piece-by-piece, by a worker on an assembly line. Living organisms are self-organised complexity. Chilean scientists Maturana and Varela differentiated between two kinds of systems autopoietic and allopoietic. Autopoietic systems are self-organised and make themselves. Allopoietic systems are put together externally. A seed is an autopoietic system constantly self-organising, evolving and adapting to changing contexts. To claim that by adding one gene a corporation creates the seed and all future generations of that seed is an ontological flaw, a scientific outrage and an ethical violation.

India's laws have a clear articulation that biological and living systems are not inventions. Article 3(d) of India's patent laws states clearly that the discovery of a new property or a new use of a known substance is not an invention.

When corporations claim ownership of a seed that contains a gene from a Bt-bacteria, it is, in fact, a new use of a known substance. When they introduce the gene into a plant by "shooting" the gene through a gene gun into the cell of a plant, the reproduction of the cells and the life cycle of the plant is a biological process. The biotech industry is not assembling the organism, nor are they assembling future generations of seeds.

Section 3(j) of Indian Patent Act is a legal interpretation of the scientific principle of the self-organisation of life. That is why the Appellate Board of the Indian Patent Office ruled in the case of Monsanto's climate resilience patent application: "the claimed method is considered as a series of generic steps modified by the plant cell... In the case like the present which does not involve a simple leap from prior art to the invention but rather entails a journey with many generic method steps that are essentially biological taken in sequence and we have found the invention is not involving inventive step, mere fact of human intervention would not change the position as we have otherwise found it not patentable in view of obviousness and new use of known substance."

While the Indian law recognises that seeds make themselves, including future generations of transgenic seed, which have a gene introduced from an unrelated organism, the American laws treat the transgenic seed as a "machine" invented by corporations. This position of seeds as machines and corporations as inventors was elaborated in the US Supreme Court case of Bowman vs Monsanto. Bowman had bought mixed soyabean seeds from a grain elevator and planted them. Monsanto claimed that the seed being planted to get a crop was not the natural reproduction of a seed sprouting into a plant, which then produced the next generation of seed. The US Supreme Court upheld Monsanto's claim that the reproduction of the plants in Bowman's fields was a "replication of a machine" invented and patented by Monsanto.

From the very beginning, Monsanto's push for GMO seeds has been for claiming creation and ownership of seed.

India's Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act, 2001, has a clause on farmers' rights, which states, "a farmer shall be deemed to be entitled to save, use, sow, re-sow, exchange, share or sell his farm produce including seed of a variety protected under this act in the same manner as he was entitled before the coming into force of this act."

The US would like to force India to adopt a false science and laws that dictate that seeds have been created by Monsanto and are therefore Monsanto's property.

US President Barack Obama will be the chief guest at our Republic Day celebrations. It is time to start a planetary dialogue and a civilisational exchange based on us all being part of the Earth family; and based on our inalienable right to Swaraj, including "bija swaraj (seed democracy).

We hope Mr Obama's visit will enhance and deepen the common freedoms of the people of India and the US, and not just the freedoms of corporations, which are undermining the freedoms of citizens in both countries and across the world.

The writer is the executive director of the Navdanya Trust

photo Manlio Masucci



photo: The Hummingbird Project

## A-Z of Agroecology and Organic Food Sytems – September 2014

*A Global Capacity Building Workshops was held at the Navdanya Biodiversity Conservation farm for citizens' organizations and movements on seed saving, seed exchange and participatory breeding and the links between Seed Sovereignty and Food Sovereignty,and issues of Intellectual Property Rights, Patents, Seed Monopolies and Farmers Rights at Dehradun with eminent scientists and environmentalists like Professor Salvatore Ceccarelli, Dr. Vandana Shiva, Sandor Katz, AV Singh, Javier Carrera, Fabian Pacheco, Marilyn Kennedy, Chris Kennedy, Dr. Mira Shiva, Dr. Anna Powar. The global capacity building workshop (A-Z on Agroecology) concluded with the annual Earth Festival (Bhoomi) organized by Navdanya in New Delhi on 01/10/2014.*

*Glimpse from A to Z of Agroecology and Organic Food Systems:* http://www.navdanya.org/news/450-a-z-of-agroecology-and-organic-food-systems-a-report-of-the-week-one-from-the-earth-university

Report, Videos and Photos: http://seedfreedom.info/a-z-of-agroecology-and-organic-food-system/






## Navdanya – An Indian farm inspiring the World

*by Charlie Mgee – Formidable Vegetable Sound System, 2 October 2014*

Source: http://formidablevegetable.com.au/navdanya-an-indian-farm-inspiring-the-world/

*After just a week at Navdanya – Vandana Shiva's biodiversity conservation farm in Dehradun, northern India, my mind is blown. This place is such haven of peace and tranquility amidst the chaos of India, but it is also buzzing with the enthusiasm of so many active, inspired people from all over the world.*

*I arrived at the tail-end of their annual A-Z of Agro-Ecology course, where a contingent of about 30 people from over 15 countries had come to learn universally adaptable ways to design resilient food systems. Encompassing everything from permaculture, horticulture and vermiculture to fermentation, preservation and Indian chutney-making, people really were given a deep sense of where their food comes from and how to produce it ethically from farm to table.*

*To see this small farm (less than 20 acres) not only growing all kinds of organic, traditional, non-GMO varieties of grain, fruit, vegetables and medicines from all over India, but also planting seeds of empowerment and hope into the minds of such a diverse range of people was a truly inspiring thing.*

*When the course was over, everyone was left with a strong sense that the movement towards organic, ecological, resilient food production is crucial for our survival and wellbeing in the years to come. More importantly, it was agreed that this is only going to happen at many diverse, small-scale, community levels rather than through unsustainable, industrial monoculture farming and that this will ultimately give us a deeper connection and respect for our food and the world around us. The best way to the heart is through the stomach, but what is put into the stomach should also come from the heart.*

Charlie Mgee



# Indonesia – Mantasa

## Seed Freedom report from Indonesia

Mantasa is a non-profit organization works on edible wild plants for food and nutrition sovereignty. In human history, 40-100,000 plant species have been regularly used for foods, fibres, industrial, cultural and medicinal purposes. At least 7,000 cultivated species are in use today around the world. Over the last five hundred years, with increased contacts between disparate populations and the development of a global trading systems, 30 or so crop speciec have become intensively and widely used and are now the basis of much of the world's agriculture. These commodity crops have been the focus of attention of markets and scientific research world-wide.
As a consequence, some species have been replaced or fallen into disuse, while others have remained important in their centres of origin or secondary centres of diversity, but largely ignored by commerce and science. Those species are the ones that called “underutilized species”, “wild foods”, “edible wild plants”, “hunger foods” or “food for the poors”.

We have been working since 2009, and since then we have identified more than 1,000 species of edible wild plants all over Indonesia including their social, spiritual and cultural significance for local people. We divide our activities into three main activities, they are campaign, education and research and we work mostly with women in village because we believe women hold important role in creating food sovereignty. In education, we build discussion groups where women can share and exchange knowledge and skill. In research, we do research on nutritional value of edible wild plants as well as research on their social and cultural value.
In campaign, we have festivals, workshops, seminars and other activities to campaign the use of edible wild plants.

When we talk about edible wild plants we also talk about many other issues. We talk about the loss of biodiversity, about the richness of traditional knowledge based on these plants, about resilience of local people on facing climate problems, about access to food and many other things. After five years working on food sovereignty issue, we celebrate it by inviting Dr. Vandana Shiva to Indonesia on a campaign called Our Seeds, Our Future: Strengthening Indonesia's Food Sovereignty.
We hope people can see the connection of different issues and can think that a simple act is needed to help solve problems.





A few of nutritious wild plants found in farmland. Commonly, they are considered as weeds by people.

## Our Seeds, Our Future: Strengthening Indonesia's Food Sovereignty

Between 2005 and 2010 in Kediri and Nganjuk regencies of Java, a number of Indonesian farmers were prosecuted and jailed for saving and producing their own seeds. This ruling was overturned in 2013 after a judicial review by the Indonesian Constitutional Court found the prosecutions unconstitutional and ruled that Indonesian farmers, especially Indonesian small farmers, should have the legal right to produce and to exchange their own seeds. Our Seeds, Our Future, a project undertaken in 2014 by Mantasa with local and international partners, has sought to highlight the threat to Indonesia's seed freedom posed by the prosecution of farmers for producing and exchanging seeds and to celebrate and protect this important victory for Indonesia's seed freedom.

Beginning in 2014, Mantasa, along with 23 partner organisations, held events in August in Jakarta, Indonesia's capital, as well as in Kediri, East Java, where the farmers had been prosecuted and jailed, and in Bali. (See: http://mantasa.org/our-seeds-our-future-strengthening-indonesias-food-sovereignty/) These included an Indonesian lecture tour by Dr Vandana Shiva beginning with a main address at Universitas Indonesia in Jakarta hosted by KEHATI, an Indonesian biodiversity conservation organisation, and the Body Shop Indonesia. Dr Shiva also met with Indonesian activists in a Q and A hosted by WAHLI, Indonesian Friends of the Earth. A one hour television special 'Face2Face with Vandana Shiva', produced at our events by one of Indonesia's most respected journalists Desi Anwar, was broadcast in December 2014 and can be watched online (See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hS6Y-dkTC-8).
Important to Our Seeds, Our Future's work was the building of strategic partnerships with organizations and individuals who can help enable and spread awareness and practices of seed freedom. In October 2014 we held a workshop on seed sovereignty at the Ubud Writers and Readers Festival in Bali, a lively regional form for debate and discussion.

Dr Shiva's visit to Indonesia helped shine a light on the importance of securing Indonesia's seed freedom and resulted in several ongoing initiatives, including the launch of several ongoing seed saving initiatives in Kediri “Lumbung Winih” and in Bali “Benih Bali”. Dr Shiva also visited and gave a speech to students and community at the Bali Green School, voted the greenest school on earth in 2012, where Bali Green School students have also taken an initiative, inspired by Dr Shiva's visit, to start saving seeds. Mantasa's own work since Dr Shiva's visit has included a joint campaign with Navdanya International against GMO banana biopiracy “No GMO Banana Republic” and a new awareness raising campaign on GMO soy consumption in Indonesia, with a new seed saving project “Tempeh Nation” to save Indonesia's disappearing non-GMO soy biodiversity and farming methods.



Dinner and discussion with Indonesia National Commission of Women

*The launching of Our Seeds, Our Future in August 2014 was timely as the election of the new Indonesian President Joko Widodo focused many people's attention on what the new administration's environmental policies might be. Our Seeds, Our Future will continue in 2015 by leading an Indonesian delegation to Navdanya's research farm in India for one month training in September, with follow up events held in Bali, to forge ongoing links between Indonesia and India and to help create a group of change agents who can help realise an ecological biodiversity-based agriculture shift in Indonesia. (See: https://thepollinationproject.org/grants-awarded/hayu-patria-adam-breasley-our-seeds-our-future-a-journey-of-food-sovereignty-impact-grant-2014/ )*

*In 2015 with our events in India and Bali we hope to link up movements from Hawaii to Bhutan for Making seed mandala from different kind of seeds, Ubud Writers and Readers Festival, 5 October 2014 the urgent transition to ecological agricultural systems based on biodiversity that the UN now agrees are needed to cool and feed the planet.*

*For both Our Seeds, Our Future 2014 and Our Seeds, Our Future 2015 we received and would like to acknowledge kind support in 'seed money' from ethical philanthropists the Pollination Project, who give out 1000USD to small projects everday of the year (we encourage organizations to apply! https://thepollinationproject.org/), and we would also like to thank Dr Vandana Shiva and Navdanya International for their kind support of our work. A number of ongoing initiatives for seed freedom that were launched through Our Seeds, Our Future are listed below.*





Making seed mandala from different kind of seeds, Ubud Writers and Readers Festival, 5 October 2014








## Lumbung Winih (Seed Barn) KIBAR Kediri

*This initiative begun when our local partners in Kediri, KIBAR, began giving advocacy to maize seed farmers in Kediri area in 2005. KIBAR then began developing more varieties of seeds as well as the quantity. Dr Vandana Shiva was invited to Kediri to share valuable experiences to Javanese activists and farmers of organic agriculture practices and local food movements . A garden was launched in December 2014 by conducting seed collection, seed documentation, and seed saving and distribution. During its development, KIBAR have been planting and developing seed for various local foods, which now has reached 60 varieties, consisting of 16 grains and starches, 18 vegetables, 12 fruits, 5 protein crops, 5 herbs and spices, and 4 drinks. The planting done in rural area applies animal and green manure as fertilizers by keeping chickens and sheep and collecting fallen leaves. In urban area, KIBAR supporters plant the seed by practicing verticulture and hydroponic in organic system.*

*On September 9, 2014, farmers in Kwadungan Village, where the event with Vandana Shiva had taken place in Kediri, have established Dhahasatata Organic Community (DOC). Perayaan Pangan Desa (Village Food Festival) which has encouraged the villagers to implement organic agriculture. They before were unfamiliar with organic matters, but now they prove that they can make it by strong motivation to live healthy and usefully. DOC activities consist of the cultivation of black local rice using SRI, fish farming, chicken & rabbit raising, and red ginger planting using organic method.*

*Lumbung Winih and its seed collections - Photo credit: KIBAR Kediri*



## Benih Bali

*Dr. Vandana Shiva's visit to Bali August 20-23 included fundraising dinner on Aug 21 and a half day seminar on Aug 22 locally organized by Slow Food Bali, with support from IDEP Foundation, which covered the traditional Balinese subak rice irrigation and water-sharing system. The Bali events also included the announcement of plan to initiate BENIH BALI, a local organic, open pollinated seed (OOP) program. On October 16 (UN World Food Day) the Official Launch of BENIH BALI was held. The launch event included representatives from Slow Food Bali, IDEP Foundation, Yayasan Mantasa, Permablitz Bali, and the Bali Green School. The BENIH BALI website was also launched: www.benihbali.org.*

*From October 2014 onwards, the following programs have been set up by BENIH BALI:*
*Initial BENIH BALI Seed Library setup, based on a collection of local OOP seed varieties, along with successfully adapted or recently imported OOP seeds.*
*Initial free distribution program of seeds to small scale farmers and home garden enthusiasts.*
*"Forgotten Grains" Program initiated, focusing on local sorghum, millet and amaranth, for cultivation in Bali. Three varieties of OOP sorghum from Flores (from eastern Indonesia), along with one variety of imported OOP white sweet sorghum have been planted on a small research scale in Bali, for comparative studies. Locally grown OOP sorghum and amaranth have been distributed for free to several small scale farmers and home garden enthusiasts for local productivity evaluation.*

*"The Story of Sorghum" Event is scheduled on Feb 28, in conjunction with Slow Food Bali. Maria Loretta (Ashoka Changemaker and respected activist) and Mary Jane Edleson (Program Coordinator for BENIH BALI, and Convivium Leader for Slow Food Bali) to present the sorghum program, including the history, culture, cultivation, nutritional value, and culinary opportunities of local sorghum. A special educational program followed by a lunch featuring a variety of sorghum recipes to be offered to Slow Food members and friends. A separate program to be presented at Udayana University, with an additional program to a farmer's group in Karangasem (northeast Bali).*

*BENIH BALI Seed Saving Workshops (with sessions in English and Indonesian) starting in March 2015, in conjunction with Slow Food Bali, IDEP Foundation, and Udayana University, to be repeated on a regular basis.*

*"Grow Your Own Dinner" Program established, in conjunction with Slow Food Bali. BENIH BALI to setup Seed Stewardship program within the program, encouraging a variety of small scale farmers to become seed "stewards" of a specific seed (or more).*

*The launch of BENIH BALI, Ubud, 16 October 2014*



## NO GMO Banana Republic

We do not usually think of bananas as having seeds, but that is only because the commercial banana monocultures of the Cavendish variety have had the seeds largely bred out. The centre of origin of banana biodiversity is the region through Indonesia, Melanesia and Mirconesia, where there are many seeded varieties as well as many nutritious local varieties. It is this biodiversity which those precarious commercial banana monocultures rely on for their continued existence. The same biodiversity has also become a target for bioprospectors like Dr James Dale of Australia's QUT who want to use GMOs to enter into commercial banana production.

After discovering that the GMO super-banana from QUT that is being funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was based on biopiracy of traditional nutritious Fe'i bananas from Melanesia and Mirconesia, we have worked together with Navdanya International to raise awareness of this blatant act of cultural theft. The 'super-banana's high-vitamin A trait was bio-pirated from a Papua New Guinean banana.
The traditional knowledge of Fe'i bananas as a source of vitamin A comes from the State of Pohnpei in Federated States of Mirconesia which has a Fe'i banana variety that is known as the 'Karat' banana for this reason, which is featured on the state emblem and stamps. Dr Dale's disease-resistance genes with which the GMO banana project hopes to come to the rescue of commercial banana monocultures were taken from banana varieties from Maluku in Indonesia.

Our No GMO Banana Republic campaign was launched simultaneously in Bali and New Delhi on Gandhi's birthday anniversary on October 2, 2014 with a pledge of non-cooperation with the GMO 'super-banana' and its basis in biopiracy. We have used various literary references in our campaign to illustrate the multiple dimensions of the problem, as biopiracy is also a cultural and moral issue, including Chilean poet Pablo Neruda's poem La United Fruit Co and Columbian Gabriel Garcia Marquez' 100 Years of Solitude, which contains a fictionalised version of the 1928 Columbian banana massacre.
We also referred to artist Paul Gauguin's paintings of Tahiti, since they depict the Fe'i banana variety that has been biopirated to make the GMO 'super-banana'.

We also were kindly donated a theme song for the campaign by Charlie Mgee from the Australian permaculture music band Formidable Vegetable Sound System, who together with the participants of the BHOOMI Festival in Delhi, performing as Los Bananos, launched the campaign song "We Don't Want No Pirate Bananas'. The pirate banana song has been translated into English, Spanish, Bahasa Indonesia and Swahili. We invite you to help translate the song into your own languages.

# Seed Freedom Presents: We Don't Want No Pirate Banana

with Charlie Mgee from the Formidable Vegetable Sound System
*http://formidablevegetable.com.au*

Lyrics:

- English

Yes! we have many Bananas,
we have many bananas today.
We don't want your Pirate Bananas.
Take your pirate bananas away

- Spanish

¡No queremos piratas bananos!
¡Piratas Fuera de aqui!
¡No queremos piratas bananos!
¡Piratas Fuera de aqui!

- Swahili

Tuna aina nyingi za ndizi
Tuzilinde na kuzipanda
Hatutaki zilizobadilishwa nasaba
Tuna uhuru wa kuchagua

- Indonesian

Ya! Kami punya banyak pisang
Banyak pisang hari ini
Kami tidak mau pisang bajakanmu
Bawa pisang bajakanmu pergi



Cultural performance in Kediri, East Java, celebrating local farmers' seed freedom win. Photo: Kartikey Shiva.

## Tempeh Nation

Indonesia for centuries has been the land of tempeh, the nutty and nutritious moulded soybean cake. In the mid-1990s Indonesia was self-sufficient in soy production and 87 per cent of soybeans were farmer's own saved seeds. However, unknown to most Indonesians is the fact that in the last decades, Indonesia's indigenous soy biodiversity has been largely replaced by GMO soybean imports which now make up almost all of the soy consumed in Indonesia, where soy in the form of tempeh and tofu is a staple food for millions of people.

In 2012 CNN Environment Hero Robin Lim of natural birthing clinic Bumi Sehat (Healthy Earth) in Bali questioned if the increase in placental and umbilical birth defects she was observing in the mothers she is working with was the result of Indonesians' consumption of GMO soy.
Hers has been almost a lone voice in Indonesia as the introduction and vast spread of GMO soy in Indonesia has happened virtually without any public debate or even awareness. This is something we are now working to change, working with local partners in Bali and Java, together with Mothers Against Genetic Engineering (MADGE) from Australia, who are concerned about the impact of GMOs and pesticides on mothers and children.

In addition to an awareness campaign on GMO soy consumption in Indonesia, we are also working with local partners to save and conserve the disappearing non-GMO Indonesian soybean varieties and to bring back non-GMO soybean farming across the world's largest archipelago.



## Edible wild plants community garden

In 2015, Mantasa is committed to make several edible wild plants community gardens in different area in Indonesia.
The first one was established recently in Mendira village, Jombang, East Java. We have planted over 40 plant species and more than 200 seedlings and it will continue to grow. The plants we grow have cultural significance for local people and they are getting hard to obtain, so making a garden is our way to conserve plants and knowledges. The next garden we will make would be in Problinggo, East Java and Flores.

Making edible wild plants garden in Mendira village
Photo credit: Mantasa



# An open letter to the Prime Minister of Thailand

**BioThai Foundation, 30 October 2014**

Source: http://seedfreedom.info/an-open-letter-to-the-prime-minister-of-thailand/

An open letter to the Prime Minister of Thailand from concerned scientists and academics around the world regarding the open-field testing and commercialisation of genetically modified crops in Thailand.

*A recent attempt by the Thai government to consider allowing for an open-field testing and commercialisation of genetically modified (GM) seeds raises concerns from the Thai National Farmer Council and over thirteen civil society groups, including the Alternative Agriculture Network, the Confederation of Consumer Organisation, Thailand Organic Trade Association, Green Peace Southeast Asia, BioThai foundation, and many others. On the 30th of October 2014, this alliance of civil society groups submitted a letter to the Prime Minister of Thailand urging him to:*

1. *stop the government from permitting open-field testing of GM seeds until Thailand passes a Biosafety law which enforces accountability in the case of genetic contamination;*
2. *establish a national committee under the Thai National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) to develop a national strategy to promote sustainable agriculture and organic farming, involving representatives from stakeholders, especially farmer networks, grass-root and non-profit organisations, as well as related parties in the private sector. On the same day farmer groups and their allies also submitted letters voicing the same concerns and demands to Provincial Governors in eleven other Provinces across the country: Chiang Mai, Mahasarakham, Khon Kaen, Yasothon, Surin, Nakhon Sawan, Supanburi, Chachoengsao, Chantaburi, Songkhla, and Pattalung.*

*As concerned scientists and academics who specialise in the areas of biotechnology, agriculture, food, the environment and development, we support the campaign and urge the Thai government to consider accepting the two demands. Existing academic literature suggests that while it is unproven that genetically modified seeds are higher yielding, there are causes to be extremely concerned by genetically modified crops' negative ecological, social, health, and economic impact. Under the current intellectual property rights system which allows for monopoly control over genetically modified seeds, farmers may be forced to pay inflated-prices for these patent seeds, not to mention that Thailand risks losing export markets as there is a growing global consumer trend which rejects GM crops. The threat of negative environmental impact and risks of contamination also suggest that genetically modified crops will undermine Thailand's potential to further develop sustainable agricultural practices such as organic farming.*






Photo: Greenpeace Thailand



*Since Thailand is a net-exporter of food and an extensive source of biodiversity, possible negative impact from the introduction of GM seeds is a serious concern shared by the global community.*
*We strongly urge the Thai government to withhold its endorsement of GM seeds, and to consider supporting other promising technologies such as marker-assisted plant breeding and agro-ecological production methods. Under the current global context of climate change and food security concerns, research and expansion of ecologically sustainable production should be encouraged by the state.*
*Yours sincerely,*

- *Dr. Vandana Shiva: physicist, ecologist, winner of the Right Livelihood Award in 1993, founder of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology and Navdanya*
- *Dr. Tony Weis: Associate Professor, Department of Geography, The University of Western Ontario, Canada, as well as author of The Global Food Economy: The Battle for the Future of Farming (Zed, 2007)*
- *Dr. Michel Pimbert: Director of the Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience, (CAWR), Coventry University, U*
- *Dr. Michael Antoniou: Head of the Gene Expression and Therapy Group, Faculty of Life Sciences, UK*
- *Dr. John Fagan: Professor of Molecular Biology, Department of Physiology and Health, Maharishi University of Management, Iowa, USA*
- *Dr. Carlo Leifert: Professor for Ecological Agriculture, Newcastle University, and Academic Director of Stockbridge Technology Centre, Cawood, Selby, UK*
- *Dr. Vyvyan Howard: Emeritus Professor of Nano Systems Biology, Centre for Molecular Bioscience, University of Ulster and Managing Director of QuanToxPath Ltd, Coleraine, UK*
- *Dr. Nora McKeon: Lecturer at Rome Three University, Italy. She ormerly held a position in the FAO, author of various books such asStrengthening Dialogue with People's Movements: UN experience with small farmer platforms and Indigenous Peoples (with Carol Kalafatic, UN NGLS 2009)*
- *Professor Peter Newell: Professor of International Relations at the University of Sussex, Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange (School of Global Studies), UK*
- *Dr. Thierry Vrain: former genetic engineer and soil biologist with Agriculture Canada and former supporter of GM crops who now promotes awareness of their possible danger*
- *Dr. Steffen Boehm: Director of the Essex Sustainability Institute, University of Essex, UK*




Photo: Greenpeace Thailand



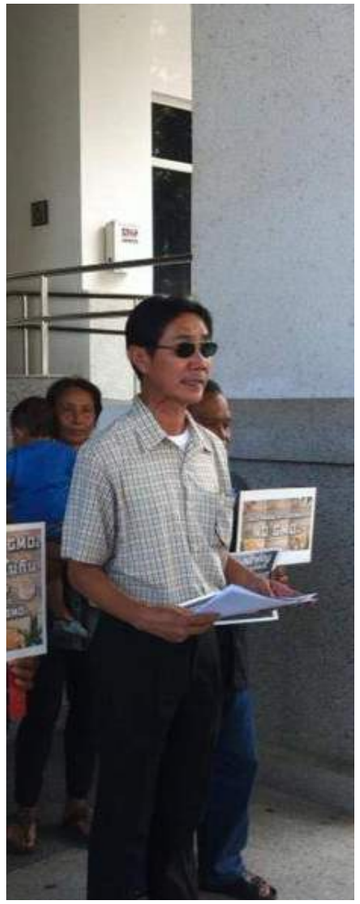



Photo: Greenpeace Thailand






Photo: Greenpeace Thailand

- *Dr. Robin Broad: Professor of International Development, School of International Service, American University, Washington, DC, USA*
- *Dr. Philip McMichael: Leading scholar in the field of global agricultural and food system and chair of the department of development sociology, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Cornell University, USA*
- *Lim Li Ching: Third World Network and Senior Fellow with the Oakland Institute, USA. Co-editor of the book Biosafety First and lead author in the East and South Asia and the Pacific (ESAP) sub-global report of the International Assessment on Agricultural Science, Technology and Knowledge for Development (IAASTD) (2009)*
- *Dr. Megan Blake: senior lecturer and director of the MA in Food Security and Food Justice programme, department of geography, University of Sheffield, UK*
- *Dr. Peter Drahos : Professor in Law and the Director of the Centre for the Governance of Knowledge and Development in the Regulatory Institutions Network (RegNet), College of Asia and the Pacific, at the Australian National University, Canberra. He also holds a chair in Intellectual Property at Queen Mary, University of London.*
- *Dr. Tushar Chakraborty : Member of Governing Body & EC, State Council of Biotechnolgy , Government of West Bengal and Principal Scientist & Molecular Geneticist, CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Biology, Kolkata, India*
- *Professor Terje Traavik : Special Consultant, GenØk-Centre for Biosafety, Norway and Professor Emeritus of Gene Ecology and of Virology, Faculty of Health Sciences, UiT – the Arctic University of Norway*
- *Dr. Frøydis Gillund : Researcher, GenØk – Centre for Biosafety, Norway*
- *Dr. Ben Richardson : Associate Professor in International Political Economy, Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick, and author of Sugar: Refined Power in a Global Regime (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)*
- *Dr. Raj Patel, research professor at the Lyndon B Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin, USA, and author of various books including Stuffed and Starved: Markets, Power and the Hidden Battle for the World's Food System*
- *Prof. Dr. Joan Martinez-Alier : Professor of Economics and researcher at ICTA, Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona, Spain and author of Ecological Economics: Energy, Environment and Society (1990)*

* The names are chronologically ordered and the most updated list of names can be found at *www.biothai.org.lt* should also be noted that the views expressed by these individuals do not necessarily reflect the views of their institutional affiliations.




Photo: Greenpeace Thailand



Paul at seed event

# Australia– Byron Hinterland Seed Savers

**People's initiatives for seed conservation, responses to defend seed**

BYRON HINTERLAND SEED SAVERS:
Local Seed Saving Group
Rasa Dover - Paul Crebar

Since seed companies became established in Australia (approximately 1887) the hybridizing of seeds has become more common and many of our old heirloom varieties have been discontinued and lost as a reliance on modern day supermarkets and corporate seeds grew.

This reliance has resulted in only selected varieties being sold and has historically led to a reduction of seed keeping and sharing throughout communities until the more recent times with the surging seed saving movement. This reliance that continues today is threatening the bio-diversity necessary for our future food security, and is prevalent throughout any modern day supermarket where food diversity is extremely limited and people's knowledge of food becoming alarmingly narrow.

This has now greedily grown to global corporations such as Monsanto and Nestle (to name a few) attempting to patent seeds that are not seed producing, sell them and know that more seed must be bought with each new season thus increasing their profits. This increases the costs of growing food for farmers and gardeners, which ends up costing the consumer more to eat which is selfish and negligent behaviour worthy of being charged as crimes against humanity. Breaking the natural life cycle in the name of profit is a reflection of the lack of integrity that such organisations hold and awareness of these actions must be known throughout the wider community.

It must be noted that in Australia, particular disgust is currently being expressed to the corporation Monsanto, who are viewed throughout communities with deep negativity for the crime's they are committing against humanity. It is becoming common knowledge of their actions of legal harrassment to farmers in rural India that has led to a huge amount of suicides. People are increasingly becoming aware that they are responsible for the crime of suicide seeds (sterile and non-seed producing), genetically engineered food producing seeds which are dentrimental to human health, and patenting seeds that are the birthright of human beings all over the world. There is an increasing awareness of genetically modified food and although there is lots more support needed, groups are forming to push for all GM Food to be labelled accordingly. Protest marches against Monsanto are common and growing in regularity.

This corprotisation of seeds has led to less saving of seeds and less diversity available for future generations which in opposition those currently joining the seed saving movement are now actively working against.

One of these groups the Byron Hinterland Seed Savers was founded in 1990 by Rasa Dover at her property in Goonengerry, N.S.W. Asked by the founders of the Seed Savers Network, Jude and Michel Fanton, Rasa established the local seed saving network, which today stands as one of over 100 currently operating in Australia under Michel and Jude's 'Seed Savers Network'. This provided Jude and Michel time to concentrate their efforts on creating documentaries and educational resources to assist farmers and gardners throughout the world to save seed and become aware of the danger posed from corporations selling seeds and our potential reliance on these corporations. This led most notably to concentrated efforts in Japan and Pacific Islands with the release of the film 'Our Seeds' which has inspired seed savers worldwide to keep this age old tradition of seed saving and sharing thriving. Today the movement is growing thanks to this message that is being spread far and wide across global communities.

Understanding the consequences of inaction regarding seed saving, Rasa honourably accepted the opportunity to establish a seed saving network in the area and became a passionate seed saver overnight. Her garden has since been a seed saving and sharing garden with multiple events held and seeds, cutting and plants shared throughout the community on a regular basis. She operates a thriving roadside stall which sells seeds and plants and this attracts many gardeners eager to learn to establish a home garden for themselves. Rasa's passion leads her towards sharing knowledge with visitors and the community about seed saving and optimal conditions to grow the plants she shares. This has seen many perennials become abundant throughout gardens within the community.

Paul Crebar joined Byron Hinterland Seed Savers as a co-leader after visiting Rasa's garden in March 2013. Paul has taken the responsibility of developing promotional communications and developing local partnerships with other aligned organisations who can assist to grow food security in the region. Paul further assists in expanding the scope of the local network with his passion for biodiversity by attracting families and youth through a range of activities and events in the community, including workshops for schools.

The group's drive is aimed at highlighting the precarious position that our seeds are in caused by a reliance on corporation seeds and the simple actions that can ensure future seed diversity. This will minimise any associated future food security problems that come with handing the responsibility of food production over to profit driven corporations. We realize the importance of retaining as many of the varieties of seeds that still exist, especially food seeds and getting these growing in as many gardens as possible. With the loss of variety in plants and seeds globally reaching an alarming rate importance is placed on the know-how and importance of saving seeds and planting locally adapted food sources in the community for the benefit of future generations.






Rasa & Wheelbarrow «

SeedSavers_featured1 »

Paul & the children »

*Seasonal events are held in different and diverse gardens where people of all ages are encouraged to bring plants, cuttings, tubors, and especially their extra seeds to freely share among those in the community. Extra attention is put on older thriving varieties that have become accustomed to the local environment and weather patterns. Included in these events in a communal picnic and short talks about the global seed saving movement with respects and acknowledgement paid to the work of global citizens such as Vandana Shiva, Helena Norberg Hodge and Jeffrey Smith to name a few. These actions we believe are leading to food security within our local community with increased biodiversity and more food grown in home gardens. These events are sharing knowledge and awareness about the actions both negative and positive happening on this planet so as a community we can act together in the interest of ourselves and the future inhabitants of this land.*

*Further promotion is undertaken via our Facebook page; Byron Hinterland Seed Savers which provides photo's and inspiration on seed saving, growing, drying, picking and storing of seeds. It further allows a place to form local community connections and inform the community about upcoming events. Byron Hinterland Seed Savers is just one group operating in the Byron Bay Shire (NSW) where there is a renaissance of people power pushing for local food production and security. There is a growing interest in biodynamics, organics, food diversity, sustainability, local production and local sourcing, and seed saving. More people are becoming aware that now is the time to act so that future generations of our community have control of an abundant and healthy food supply within their community. The aware people of the community do not want to form a reliance on negligent corporations who disregard both human and planet health in their profit driven actions based around seed and food production.*

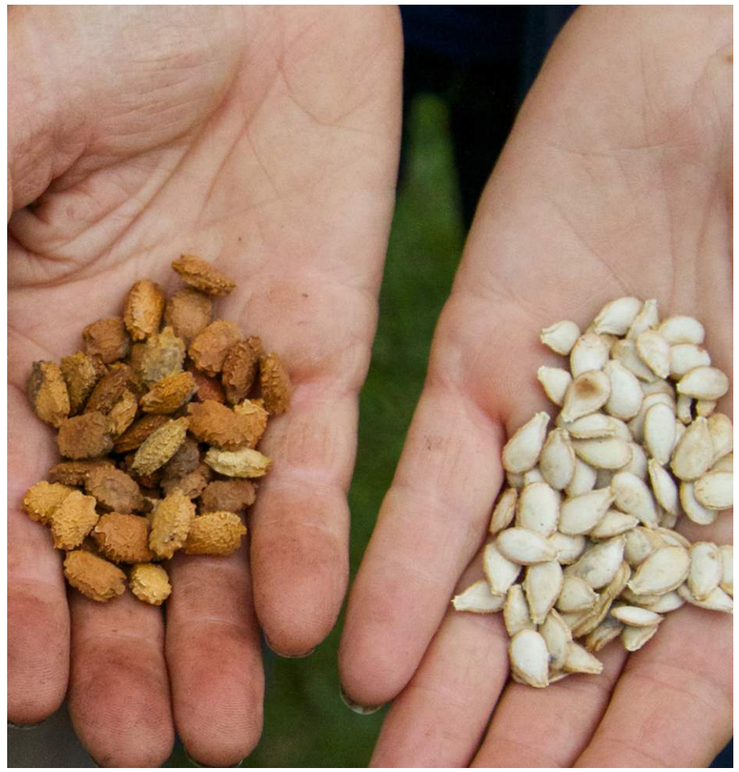


*Looking forward the group hope to set up an online seed exchange allowing access and easability to save and share seed varieties throughout Australia. This in turn has the potential to create an abundance of local food throughout communities in Australia wherever they may be. This in turn allows people to have the basic right of access to clean, real and nutritious food not tarnished by the experiments and greed of corporate organisations.*

*Byron Hinterland Seed Savers*
*Home Garden: 186 Repentance Creek Road, Goonengerry NSW 2482 Australia.*

*Tel.: 02 6684 9498*

*Rasa Dover*
*Paul Crebar*








# Australia – Seed Freedom Food Festival

**Introduction**

Seed Freedom Food Festival was established with the aim to celebrate, inform and inspire South Australians about organic food, local food, growing your own food and the worldwide need to save seed.

The first Seed Freedom Food Festival took place in Adelaide city, South Australia on Saturday 27th September 2014 at The Market Shed on Holland St (an existing organic, local, ethical and sustainable market space) and was an immense success with over 1,000 people attending on the day.

**Background**

SFFF was founded by Keitha Young (née Haycock) following her studies of Organic Farming and Agroecology at Dr. Vandana Shiva's Earth University on Navdanya farm. With a core team of 3 others, Victoria Meyer, Amber Chapman and Leo Abello-Rode, and dozens of volunteers, they pulled off the not-for-profit festival with a lot of dedicated meetings and a spending budget of under $1000.

## Objectives

As well as our mission statement to celebrate, inform and inspire South Australians about organic food, local food, growing your own food and the worldwide need to save seed, some of the organisational team's objectives that inspired the festival were:

- To empower South Australians with the knowledge and confidence of not just how, but why, to grow their own organic food and save seed.
- To create a culture of seed saving that is "as normal as brushing your teeth".
- To demystify and educate the public on the myths of organic that are predominant in mainstream media and to be a part of the process of making organic produce the norm again.
- To raise support and awareness for the bounty of local organic farms, farmers markets and organic businesses in South Australia.
- To highlight the importance of eating locally grown organic food.
- To encourage community within the city and greater Adelaide area - encouraging localised seed swap and food swap groups.

- *To share the joy of connecting with the earth and each other – to demonstrate that growing food organically and saving seeds is not only good for the health of the earth and its creatures, but also good for human health – physically, mentally & emotionally!*

- *To create a GM-Free event that educates on the issues surrounding GMOs in Australia and the world.*

## The Festival

Seed Freedom Food Festival 2014 included:

1. A Speakers stage
   Featuring 15-25 minute talks by and on:
   - Dr. Vandana Shiva (via video address) on 'Why Seed Freedom, Food Sovereignty and Earth Democracy?'
   - Dr. Saamdu Chetri (via video address) Director of Bhutan's Gross National Happiness program, "GNH in Bhutan – a nation going 100% organic'
   - Jude & Michel Fanton, founders of Australia's National Seed Savers Network, "A global perspective on seed"
   - Lolo Houbein, author of One Magic Square 'grow your own food in one square metre'
   - Sarae Adampoulos, president of Organic Federation Australia SA
   - Ariella Helfgot, 'Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Change in Developing Countries'
   - Leo Abello-Rode & Ed Wilby, 'Intentional Communities in SA'
   - Jo Staniforth, 'Setting up and running community gardens in Adelaide'
   - Alistair Martin, creator of Ripe Near Me ap, 'Support local food from down the road'

2. Two Workshop areas
   With workshops by and on:
   - Jude & Michel Fanton, 'The Abundance of Seed – how to save your own seed'
   - Karen Montgomery, 'Principles of seed propogation using recycled materials'
   - Nadja Osterstock, 'Permaculture design for backyard gardens'
   - Simon Ardill, 'Traditional and Sustainable fruit tree pruning'
   - Nat Wiseman, 'Urban Farming in Adelaide – tools and techniques'
   - Adam Voysee, 'Herb extraction and steam distillation'
   - Remedy Bliss, 'The ancient art of fermentation'
   - Jessica Sanguesa, 'Introduction to preserving fruit and vegetables'
   - Niko Jah, 'The importance of growing fruit trees from seed'
   - Steven Hoepfner, 'How to make seed bombs'

3. Information stalls
   The following organisations and not-for-profits had stalls at the festival and all work towards raising awareness about food sovereignty, organics and GMOs in SA and Australia. They reported back positively with high levels of interest, petition signings and new recruited members from festival attendees on the causes they were sharing.
   - OFA: Organic Federation of Australia SA
   - SAGFIN: South Australia Gene and Food Information Network
   - AFSA: Australia Food Sovereignty Association
   - Fair Food Adelaide
   - Friends of the Earth Adelaide
   - March Against Monsanto, Adelaide
   - Transitions Film Festival Adelaide
   - Walyo Yerta Community Garden

4. Retail stalls
   Supporting local and organic farms and businesses such as Wagtail Urban Farm, Greenseeds certified organic seedlings, Beach Organics, Roseneath Organics and many more...

5. Food stalls
   10 food stalls with all organically sourced ingredients and GM Free.

6. Other
   - The Seed Swap and Food Swap tables were a surprisingly huge success with festival attendees encouraged via our Facebook page to bring along backyard homegrown produce to swap as well as their own saved seeds. A huge diversity of goods and seeds passed through on the day by the guidance of 'Seed Swap Australia' a grassroots local seed swap group.
   - A Raffle of organic food and gardening goods with 100% of money raised from it going to The Hummingbird Project's "Living Soil Saves Lives" project.
   - A Seed Mandala was created during the day by festival goers, and to close the festival it was ceremoniously dismantled with all the seed turning into seed bombs and/or given away for free to attendees.

## Future Goals

Seed Freedom Food Festival will take place again this year, Saturday 26 September, with an aim to continue the high calibre of speakers and workshops on offer and long term plans are to expand the event out into the Adelaide parklands for even greater numbers. There are tentative plans to create an official website (there is only a Facebook page at present) and to potentially become a not-for-profit organisation. We will also join the Global Movement for Seed Freedom.




Seed Freedom Food Festival 2014





## Conclusion

*Seed Freedom Food Festival 2014 proved to all of us involved in its coordination that Adelaide was ready to "reclaim the food chain", to return to the land and organics, to localise their lifestyles and to create community. We viewed it as an immense success and we're hopeful for the future of seed freedom and food sovereignty in SA and Australia. We hope to continue to celebrate, inspire and inform so that the ripples of good food and good farming may continue on rejuvenating the older generations and teaching the younger ones.*

Seed Freedom Food Festival
Adelaide, South Australia.
Established Saturday 27th
September, 2014
www.facebook.com/
seedfreedomfestivaladelaide



# Seed Freedom in Asia - Pacific



## Right for Seed and Water – A Campaign for Alternative Development Model in Srilanka

Seeds, which farmers over the ages grew in their own backyard or farmlands, are now the core of a debate over a proposed new Seed Act in Sri Lanka which farmers say would force them to import seeds from powerful seed companies in the world like Monsanto, Bayer or DuPont. Dr. Shiva called for a rejection of the Seed Act and a campaign for an alternative development model in Srilanka. Thousands of farmers marched in June 2014 against the proposed Seed Act, which would rob farmers of their seed freedom. The struggle against the Seed Act has been strengthened and continues today. A direct outcome of the Seed Freedom tour in Srilanka has been that 2 key farmers' representatives from Srilanka were sent to India for one month in September to learn and share knowledge on agro ecological methods at the A-Z of Agro Ecology and take part in the Seed Freedom Strategy meeting at Navdanya. The farmers' organizations also came to learn how to set up a People's University on Agro ecology based on the model of the Earth University at Navdanya.

Vandana Shiva visits Sri Lanka – Videos and Articles
*http://seedfreedom.in/dr-vandana-shiva-visits-sri-lanka/*

Sprouts Seedsavers gathering and Seed-Declaration sharing, with Real Food Network



## Our Seeds Our Future: Strengthening Indonesia's Food Sovereignty – August 2014

At the request of local communities and farmers, the Seed Freedom Movement through Dr. Vandana Shiva was invited to Indonesia to strengthen the movement Food Sovereignty in Indonesia and to counter the increasing monopolization of the food system by a small group of corporations.

In collaboration with grassroots Indonesian communities and organizations such as Mantasa, Kehati Foundation, KBAR KEDRI and Slow Food Bali, Navdanya International has launched a collaborative project OUR SEEDS, OUR FUTURE, which seeks to embrace the involvement of a diverse range of society, starting with the support of farmers, women's groups, fishermen, indigenous people, local food producers, along with the informed general public who are concerned about the future of food in Indonesia and who want to strengthen and preserve food sovereignty and security in Indonesia.

An outcome of the upcoming OUR SEEDS, OUR FUTURE program in Bali has been the creation of a local seed initiative, entitled BENIH BALI which will encompass a public awareness and education pro- gram about the importance of local seed production, with responsible supporting programs in Bali for improved seed conservation, adaptation & innovation programs, including an island- wide seed network, seed library, and seed bank. BENIH BALI will represent a "next step" in developing more programs initiated by and on going by IDEP, with collaborative support from numerous other organizations.

Mantasa






## Educational Gardens - Dr. Vandana Shiva Visits Green School

*http://tulisan.greenschool.org/2014/08/27/dr-vandana-shiva-visits-green-school/*

Educational Gardens - Green School

## Launch of Campaign in Indonesia and Australia against GMO Banana Biopiracy

*http://seedfreedom.info/campaign/no-gmo-banana-campaign/*



Educational Gardens - Green School



## INDIA - Mumbai Rooftop Garden - Session on "Soil, Seeds, & You", December 2014

Report and Photos: *http://seedfreedom.info/mumbai-rooftop-garden/*



The Hummingbird project



The Hummingbird project

## INDIA - Sugarcane and Gur Festival Inauguration, January 2015

Report and Photos:
*http://seedfreedom.info/sugarcane-and-gur-festival-inauguration-photos-articles/*






Navdanya

## KURANDA, AUSTRALIA

Sprouts Seedsavers gathering and Seed-Declaration sharing, with Real Food Network – Call to Action 2014:
*http://seedfreedom.in/events/kuranda-sprouts-seedsavers-gathering-and-seed-declaration-sharing-2/*



Real Food Network



## NIMBIM, AUSTRALIA

Seed Saving Strategies (for the local Nimbin Bioregion), with Nimbin Farms & Food Security Hub – Call to Action 2014:
*http://seedfreedom.info/events/seed-saving-strategies-for-the-local-nimbin-bioregion-4/*




Nimbin Farms & Food Security Hub

## ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA

'Soulful Seed Saving' - Workshop with Jude & Michel Fanton, organised by Seed Freedom Food Festival – Call to Action 2014:
*http://seedfreedom.info/events/soulful-seed-saving-workshop-with-jude-michel-fanton/*



Seed Freedom Food Festiva



# Canada – Jodi Koberinski

photo: Gem Corn

## State of Seeds in Canada 2014: Federal Agriculture Policy Overhaul Seeks to Entrench Monocultures

Canada's Harper Government has undertaken a massive overhaul of agricultural regulation over the past few years, including the introduction of 2 omnibus bills- an approach foreign to our country's long standing parliamentary democracy- to "modernize" our regulatory environment.

These changes will exacerbate the already declining access Canada's farmers have to open pollinated varieties. Bill C-18 was adopted in 2014 and ushers in the UPOV 91 era in Canada. The Safe Food For Canadians Act (SFFCA) takes 14 separate agriculture and food Acts, including Canada's organic regime, and brings them together under one piece of legislation. Simultaneously, the Seed Act is undergoing a separate overhaul as it is being folded into the SFFCA. Canada's agroecological movement is taking steps to address policy barriers by building alternate markets, cultures and approaches to seed sovereignty.

## The Context

In Canada, the Canadian Seed Growers Association represents the commercial growers with a $2.7M a year budget for the organization. CSGA represents 130 certified seed growers whose market is $5.6B annually. The acreage for pedigreed seed in Canada, at 1.3M acres, is essentially the same as it was in 1994. Soy, wheat, and to a lesser degree canola acreage has gone up over the past 15 years, while barley and peas have declined[13]. This trend shows a move toward soy and wheat acreage and away from food crops.

The Canada Organic Trade Association (COTA) completed an Ecological Seed Market Study in late 2014. The paper did not distinguish between open pollinated (OP) and hybrid (F1) seeds and value of OP in the market. Many organic vegetable growers use hybrid seeds in Canada, though the availability of OP varieties is increasing and the number of small seed companies serving Canadian farmers and gardeners is also increasing[14]. The study found that organic growers purchase $9 million in vegetable seeds per year, while ecological growers purchase $19 million, for a total estimated vegetable seed market of $28 million annually. Organic and ecological field crop growers use a great deal of saved seed, upwards of 60%, varying by crop. The organic and ecological field crop seeds market is worth $20.06 million annually, and another $30.09 million value in saved seed





planted. If organic field crop growers were to purchase only organic seed while maintaining their seed-saving practices, the market for organic seed would increase 300%.

In Canada, producers can save and replant seed protected under the Canadian Pant Breeders' Rights Act (PBR) if it is for their own use only. Producers cannot save and re-sell seed protected by PBR, according to the CSTA. Such policies have favoured hybrid development and biotechnology over open pollination and public breeding approaches. Under the new C-18 rules, saving and trading seeds becomes even more problematic. Much of Canada's production is not covered by PBR, though efforts are underway to increase the number of species governed by PBR.

Four plant species –wheat, maize, rice and potato– account for 60% of Canadian caloric intake.

The average Canadian potato lost 100 per cent of its vitaminA content, 57 per cent of its vitaminC and iron, and 28 per cent of calcium over the last 60 years[15], a trend attributable to a loss in diversity and breeding for processing uniformity.

Canada's once rich crop genetic diversity has been decimated, with only a fraction still available to farmers. About 86% of the 7,098 apple varieties documented as having been in use between 1804 and 1904 have been lost, along with 95% of the cabbage, 91% of the field corn, 94% of the pea, and 81% of the tomato varieties which no longer exist[16].

While the fastest growing market in agriculture is organic, 95 per cent of the seeds that grow Canada's major food crops are bred for uniformity, "high performance" conditions, and routine application of synthetic inputs rather than for agroecological production. Most often, these seeds are hybrid, and in soy, corn, canola and sugar beets, they are also genetically modified for RoundUp tolerance and prophylactic bT expression. Canadian organic farmers too often must work with seeds that are bred for chemical fertilizers, crop "protection" or agri-toxins, and large-scale mechanical planting and harvesting. They also face contamination from GMO crops in seed sources, as evidenced in the past with canola and flax.

photo: Roberta Rossini



## Regulatory changes: more of the same

Canada's government continued consultations in 2014 on proposed changes to varietal registration (VR) in Canada. The government's declared agenda is an "emphasis on innovation, competitiveness and market development". The current VR system is designed to prevent fraud, support seed certification, foster international trade, and enable tracking in the marketplace. The renewed mandate for the "modernized, streamlined VR system" being implemented in 2016 is to "promote innovation in variety development, improve competitiveness, and facilitate producers' timely access to new varieties"[17], according to the government's consultation documents. Gone is the language of farmer protection.

Changes to the Seeds Act are also underway as part of the government's regulatory harmonization efforts. The new focus on "market driven" registration in combination with the loss of merit in assessing new registrations means that lines of value to farmers that aren't as profitable will disappear at a much higher rate under the proposed VR systems than the alarming rate at which varieties are disappearing.

VR and the changes to the Seed Act will encourage investment in more, not less, hybridization and biotechnology, and will do nothing to support development of open pollinated varieties or varieties adapted to local, agroecological conditions. The Canadian government issued a directive in 2013 that expressly prohibits Agriculture Canada scientists from taking a plant through to the Varietal Registration level- which means the public will continue to pay for the germoplasm development efforts at our few remaining research stations, and the promising strains go to the private sector to commercialize. This not only removes one mechanism for our public breeding to pay for itself (in royalties back to Agriculture Canada for its AC varieties), it is a massive transfer of the public commons to private ownership.

Publicly funded plant breeding at the Cereals Research Centre in Manitoba (CRC) has historically produced most of Canada's cereal crop varieties, which are the foundation for Canada's multibilliondollar grain industry. Roughly 50 percent of wheat and oat acreage in Canada is seeded to varieties developed at the CRC, with a farm gate value of close to $2.5 billion, according to Industry Canada's statistics.

The Harper Government closed the CRC in 2014, and is eliminating all public funding for spring wheat breeding to pave the way for private sector investment. Agriculture Canada will no longer support new breeding nor allow the current work to proceed to the final stage of producing varieties farmers can buy. It is a paper exchange piracy. And yet research has also shown that private breeding is less economically efficient: $25 million in annual public investment in wheat produces can generate the same yield increases produced by $80 million in private money in canola breeding.[18]
If the changes to variety registration rules proposed in 2013 are adopted, companies will be able to deregister older varieties that no longer provide them with royalties. This will force farmers to choose among fewer and more expensive varieties.

With public breeders out of the equation, the rate at which less profitable OP varieties come to market will undoubtedly decline in favour of IP supported hybrid and biotech registrations.Canada's highlyregulated seed system is constructed of policies that impact research and development, production, distribution, and sale. In 2014, The Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security's Policy Working Group published its review of four key frameworks governing vegetable and field crop seed: the Seeds Act; Organic Products Regulations; intellectual property regulations; and, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. The Working Group prepared a detailed analysis of the impacts of these frameworks on biodiversity, ecological production, and public access to seed.

Their analysis revealed that the regulations governing seed in Canada is oriented towards largescale conventional production. Proprietary research and development meets the needs of some producers and markets, yet there are troubling impacts on the development of agroecological seeds.

The Seeds Act, a fundamental piece of legislation, was implemented to safeguard farmers and the food industry against the circulation of poor quality seed. Some believe these regulations remain critical to ensure seed quality. However, others contend that the system favours large-scale conventional farming, limits biodiversity and under-serves organic producers. Similarly, laws designed to protect plant breeders' rights and reward investments in developing seed varieties that perform well in conventional farming operations, can create the conditions for narrowing biodiversity and limiting farmers' capacity to save seed. These impacts go against the aims of The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, to which Canada is a signatory. As such, Canada has two pieces of legislation that have conflicting objectives[19].
Canada's current policy direction for VR and the Seed Act are barriers to seed sovereignty. Many heritage cereals grown by ecological farmers do not fit the definition of a "variety" (i.e. distinct, homogeneous, uniform, and stable). Recommending committees in the variety registration process have not involved the organic sector, and the evaluations don't include indicators for ecological farming. Performance trials are almost exclusively conducted under conventional conditions. Data from merit assessments under these conditions is not particularly useful for ecological growers.
Farmers are concerned that the trend towards deregulation, loosening the standards of the variety registration system, and permitting the deregistration of older varieties, would remove the checks and balances that provide farmers with good quality seed[20].

Sisters of Providence Greenhouse 2014 photo «

*It seems to me that when our agricultural system isn't working for most farmers we should be looking for something different to fix it, but Bill C-18 is more of the same. It increases the power of large corporations in relation to family farms. It increasingly ties Canadian agriculture into a globalized, price-based commodity market. It encourages the long-term trend toward bigger farms and fewer farmers.*

*I don't think the sky will fall if Bill C-18 is passed, but it will be one more incremental step in a policy march that I think is failing Canadian agriculture.*

*What is the alternative? Bill C-18 is called the agricultural growth act. Imagine for a minute if each of you, as a member of this committee, sat down in your constituency with a group of farmers and people interested in food policy and said to them, "The government wants to write an agricultural growth act. What do you think should be in it?" Do you honestly think that anyone would speak up and say to bring Canadian law into conformity with UPOV 91? Would someone put up their hand and say, "Why don't we make it easier for foreign corporations to access farm credit programs underwritten by Canadian taxpayers?" It seems unlikely.*

*I can think of many things the Canadian government could do to promote agricultural growth, none of which are in Bill C-18. Why not look at ways to grow the number of farmers?*

*Brent Preston, The New Farm, testimony to the Standing Committee on Agriculture, October 28, 2014*

*Overall, the tone of this bill politicizes control over seed, and we see that as a concern. The need to protect global food security and biodiversity requires us to enshrine farmers' rights in more than a small exception to this legislation.*

*Jennifer Pfenning, Chair, Organic Council of Ontario, testimony to the Standing Committee on Agriculture, October 28, 2014*

Canada's ecological and family farmers expressed concerns in 2014 in opposition to Bill C 18, the Agriculture Growth Act, including extending the terms of protection of plant varieties from 15 to 20 years; expanding the scope of protection so that royalties collected on IPRs could be applied not only at the sale of seed, but elsewhere in the value chain; permitting breeders to apply for protection for "essentially derived varieties"; that is, varieties that are derived from and retain the essential characteristics of protected varieties; and inclusion of language in UPOV '91 for the farmer's privilege to be revoked or adjusted at the discretion of national governments[21].
The Discussion Paper concludes:

"Be it through patenting, PBR, or another framework, IPR systems essentially encourage the development of proprietary seeds. These seeds, which are increasingly GE/GM, are most profitable to seed companies supplying large-scale, low-diversity, capital-intensive farming operations...

"The regulatory frameworks for seed production and distribution in Canada are multifaceted and, at times, at odds with each other. In an effort to deliver quality assurance for farmers, the Seeds Act limits biodiversity and can under-serve organic producers. Similarly, as a signatory to The Treaty, Canada engages to take action to preserve biodiversity, increase in situ conservation, and protect the rights of farmers to save seed. However, the pending adoption of UPOV '91 may undermine this engagement by promoting proprietary plant breeding and limiting farmers' capacity to save seed."[22]

**As elsewhere in the world, Canadians are organizing around unjust laws and creating ways to reclaim our commons.**

## Seed Banks

In addition to the few remaining public seed banks managed by Canadian governments or institutions, a growing number of citizen-run, collective, and cooperative seed banks are springing up across Canada in the wake of the renewed attention to seeds. Independent projects like the Populuxe Seed Bank[23] in Alberta start with a handful of varieties of seeds, and grow to over 200 heirloom and open pollinated varieties. Populuxe's model of exponential growth occurs as other dedicated growers donate their seeds for preservation to online and place-based banks.

BC Seed Sanctuary houses a large and diverse seed collection for most kinds of food and herbs protected in a proper storage building. The project relies on many plant "custodians" across the country who tell us how the varieties do in their particular climates. With over 900 varieties in their living gene bank and the project in its 11th year, the Sanctuary is featured in the films "Gardens of Destiny" and "Tableland".

The Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, located in Ontario, also run a Seed Sanctuary. The order operates a monthly seed saver group with access to their glass greenhouse to propagate seedlings, gardens, and part of a barn refurbished for seed sorting, storage and activities. Carol and Robert Mouck began working to establish the Heirloom Seed Sanctuary with the Sisters in 1999. They worked with about 400 seed varieties they saved from Foxfire Farm in Napanee, Ontario since 1974. Recently the Heirloom Seed Sanctuary has joined the CRAFT (Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training) Kingston network to offer an internship to a young person interested in learning about seed saving[24].




Sisters of Providence Cate Henderson, Sister Alda Brady with Kate Green from USC Canada (2012 photo)









## Seed Libraries

The Toronto Seed Library (TSL) was initiated in November 2012 by the Occupy Gardens Toronto collective and students from the University of Toronto and York University. Together a growing cooperative of individuals and organizations, seed savers, gardeners, farmers, educators, librarians, policy makers and food lovers of all varieties are creating a free, selfperpetuating seed library system. In 2013 TSL established 6 branches, attended dozens of events, collected, processed and shared thousands of packs of seeds and seed saving knowledge.

In 2014 TSL expanded to 14 branches and have attended over 50 community events, including 'literaseed' workshops inside the Toronto Public Library, a 'how to start a seed library' Webinar with the Ontario Library Association.

TSL has inspired countless seed libraries near and far, while distributing over 50 000 seed packs to thousands of gardeners across Toronto, Canada, and around the world.

## Educational Resources on Seed and School Outreach

The seed savers in Canada are working with gardeners' groups, school garden programs, and community gardens to infuse the neo urban gardening culture with seed saving at its roots.
Groups range from traditional organic/gardener outreach organizations like the Canada Organic Growers to the Permaculture GTA group of Toronto area urban youth focused on community development as a precondition to farming and gardening in the city.

Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace is a long standing supporter of international efforts in food sovereignty.
The 2014 campaign, Sow Much Love, draws attention to the similarities the global south and Canadians share when it comes to the food system. The group has developed curriculum-ready materials for Canadian schools, and has engaged in the conversations on UPOV 91.
A number of training videos and books authored by and for Canadian seed savers are populating the internet, seedy Saturdays (seed exchanges), and farmers' markets across the country. Organic sector groups have developed an online seed sourcing databases[25].

Sisters of Providence Greenhouse 2014 photo



### Bauta Family Initiative on Seed Security

*This $4 million dollar, multi-year project of USC Canada is a civic engagement project funded by a family foundation created from profits generated within Canada's food system. This groundbreaking initiative is helping fund dozens of projects in communities across Canada that are seeding the agroecological seed movement through grant making, skills sharing, and primary research and development.*

### Civil Society organizes in opposition to C18 and UPOV 91

*Bill C 18 united the food systems movements in opposition of the corporate take over of our seed supply, and put seeds "on the map" for many groups whose mandates are extensive but whose resources are not. Food Secure Canada took a lead role alongside the National Farmers' Union to educate Canadians and organize opposition to the Bill. FSC joined the Organic Council of Ontario, Canada Organic Growers Association, the Canada Organic Trade Association, and select farmers in presenting to the Canadian Senate hearings on the Bill and its impacts on Canada's farmers and our seed sovereignty. Countless civil society organizations stepped up to support comments on the proposed legislation.*

Seed Research in Manitoba for the Bauta Initiative, 2014

### Eastern Canada Organic Seed Growers Network and the BC Seeds Gathering 2014

*These biannual conferences took place in the fall of 2014 in support of regional networking and training for seed growers, community leaders, and farmers from eastern Canada and from across BC respectively. The Eastern Canada and west coast events both showcase innovative practices in seed cultivation, harvesting and storage to an educated audience.*

*Note*

*[13] Canada Seed Growers Association AGM 2014 Director's Report*

*[14] The Market for Ecological and Organic Seed in Canada: Trends and Opportunities 2014, Marie-Eve Levert, Canada Organic Trade Association 2014. COTA's initial environmental scan brought to light a severe shortage of data on organic and ecological seed in Canada. The scarcity of information constrained this study and its results.*

*[15] Discussion Paper on Seed Policy, Policy Working Group, Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security, March 2014, USC Canada.*

*[16] Seeds of Diversity, USC Canada web publication 2014*

*[17] Government of Canada presentation at the Canadian Seed Trade Association AGM November, 2014, http://cdnseed.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/English-Variety-Registration.pdf*

*[18] Glen Tait, Push to private plant breeding shameful, Western Producer April 17, 2014*

*[19] The context and issues within each of the four regulatory frameworks and a full analysis, please see www.seedsecurity.ca*

*[20] Discussion Paper, Seed Policy in Canada, Policy Working Group, Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security, March 2014*

*[21] National Farmers' Union documents on Bill C-18, press releases www.nfu.ca, 2014*

*[22] Discussion Paper, Seed Policy in Canada, March 2014*

*[23] http://www.theseedbank.net/*

*[24] CRAFT offers extension supports, internships and staff positions to new farmers throughout Ontario.*

*[25] http://www.seeds.ca/seedfinder and http://findorganicseed.ca/index.php/en*



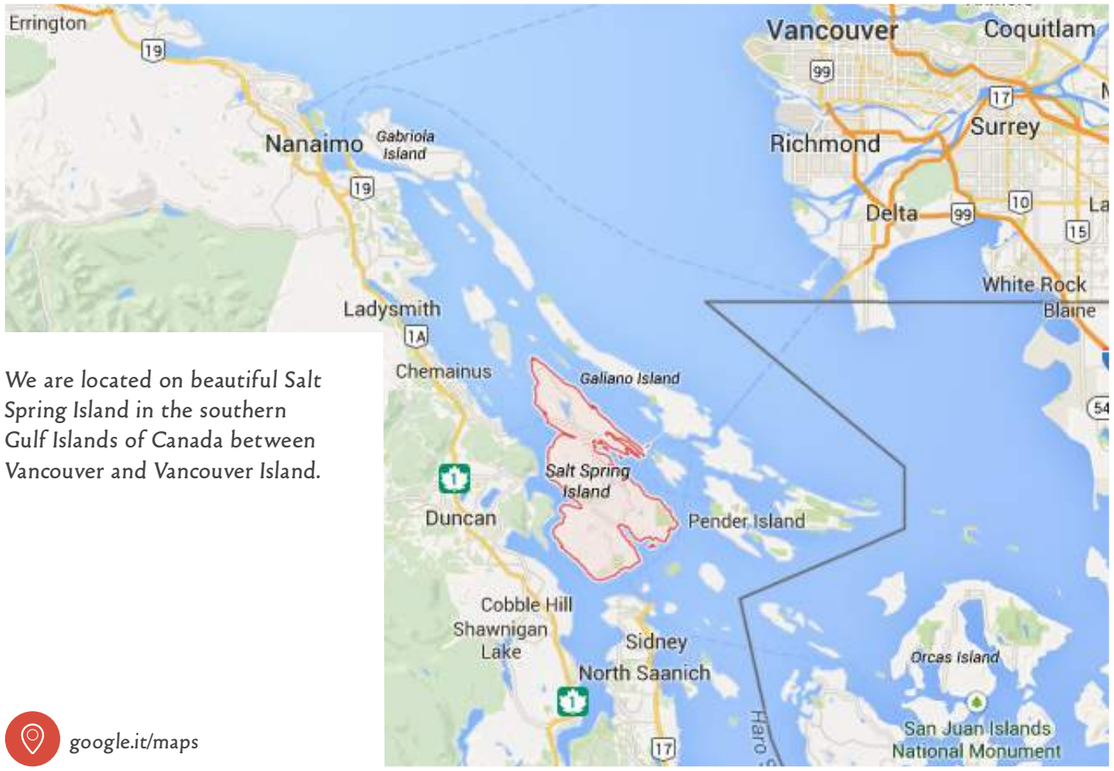
# Canada – Salt Spring Sanctuary Society

*The Salt Spring Sanctuary Society was formed in 2003, becoming a charitable organization dedicated to the health and vitality of the earth through the preservation and promotion of heritage seeds. It is committed to maintaining, evaluating and keeping databases for all the edible, medicinal and useful crops that can be grown in Canada.*

*We are a volunteer-run board mostly consisting of farmers and community folks interested in seeds.*

salt spring seed sanctuary

ybertaud9.wordpress.com/organic-propagation/




*We are located on beautiful Salt Spring Island in the southern Gulf Islands of Canada between Vancouver and Vancouver Island.*

google.it/maps

## What we do:

1. *We work to increase awareness of food security issues including endangered seeds, biodiversity, GMOs and resilient communities.*
2. *We offer educational opportunities such as seed saving workshops.*
3. *We operate a seed library in our community.*
4. *We assist other communities in starting seeds banks and libraries.*
5. *We recruit seed growers across the country.*
6. *We recruit lifetime members for only $20!*
7. *We share seeds with our members and ask for some in return (Bulk Me Up program).*
8. *We publish an annual newsletter for 500 members and 3600 people on our mailing list.*

# USA – OSGATA (Organic Seed Growers And Trade Association)

## Protecting Organic Seed and Organic Farmers, Organic Seed Growers and Trade Association (OSGATA)

### Protecting Organic Seed Integrity

Genetically engineered (GE) crops have quickly become a major feature in the American landscape since the deregulation and commercial acceptance of the first GE crop in 1994. The biology of gene flow is undeniable: pollen and seeds move beyond farmers' fields, via natural and human-aided processes. There is no exception for crops that are genetically engineered.

Since that first approval, eight GE crops have been deregulated by the USDA and subsequently adopted within commercial agriculture: alfalfa, canola, corn, cotton, papaya, soybean, sugarbeet, and squash (Cucurbita pepo); GE potatoes and apples have also been recently deregulated by the USDA, but it remains to be seen if they will be embraced by the marketplace.

Most of these GE crops contain genes that provide the individual plant with resistance to pests or herbicides, but hundreds of other novel GE traits, from drought tolerance to higher vitamin concentrations, are in the laboratory and field test stages. Prior to commercialization in the U.S., GE crops are typically field tested for several years in open environments, allowing for additional opportunities for cross-pollination and/or seed mixing. Concerned organic seed growers wishing to buffer their crops from potential contamination sources are further disadvantaged here, as many of the GE crops in the trial stage are considered confidential business information.

GE contamination within the organic seed sector is especially harmful to the organic industry. For that matter, GE contamination in conventional seed, which may be allowed in organic operations, is equally damaging. Pure uncontaminated seed is the base of the global food supply.

Once the integrity of organic seed has been compromised, the integrity of the entire organic system will follow. Furthermore, the reproductive nature of seed negates the concept of low-level contamination.

Plants grown from contaminated seed continue to act as avenues for release of contaminated genes.

Genetic engineering is an excluded method under the National Organic Program (NOP), as outlined in section 205.105. However, unlike other defined seed contaminants (for example, presence of weed seed) there are currently no definite thresholds for GE presence in organic and non-GE seed.

Testing requirements to ensure that organic seed is free of genetic contaminants also do not exist. Rather, the NOP dictates production standards for certified organic crops rather than certifying the end product.

Complicating the issue, organic seed integrity does not reside within the boundaries of any single nation. The global nature of the seed and food commodity trade ensures worldwide travel of GE traits. An international response is needed to adequately address the threat of potential continued GE contamination. While there is presently no labeling or tolerance laws within the U.S., several countries have set tolerance levels pertaining to GE contamination of non-GE, including organic, foods. For example, the European Union has a 0.9% threshold for approved varieties and zero tolerance for non-approved varieties; Japan rejects food products with GE content above 5%.

Our lack of in-country tolerance thresholds for GE works against the ability of organic farmers in the U.S. to compete in the current international marketplace.

If farmers attempt to market crops that are not approved for export, or have adventitious presence above allowable levels, they face entire shipments being rejected by import countries.

Contamination of non-engineered seed stocks in the U.S. has further global implications, beyond complicating our trade relationships. GE contamination can affect the seed resources and agricultural systems of developing countries. When we export contaminated seed to these nations, as either seeds for planting or as bulk products comprised of viable seeds, we run the risk of contributing to the spread of GE contamination.



This is especially of concern in centers of crop diversity like Mexico, the ancestral home of corn. Loss of regionally adapted varieties to GE contamination constitutes a monumental and irreplaceable loss of unique genetic diversity.

How do we mitigate future contamination in order to protect our shared genetic resources?

OSGATA's policy on seed purity is designed to be consistent with the expectations of genetic purity within the organic seed market, while also aiming to protect our genetic heritage for generations to come. OSGATA's Policy on Organic Seed Contaminated by Genetically Engineered Seed, ratified by the membership, states that GE contamination of organic seed constitutes irreparable harm to the organic seed industry and undermines the integrity of organic seed: Any detectable level is unacceptable.

Some companies and governments are considering, or have considered, higher allowable thresholds of contamination. Such considerations are harmful to the organic markets.

International controversy over GE food, the increasing demand and continued growth in the organic market sector, and variable regulatory regimes across the globe beg for reliable sources of pure seed now and in the future.

To meet this increasing market demand, we must acknowledge that avoidance of GE contamination is a shared responsibility between growers of organic crops, non-GE conventional crops, and GE crops, as well as the GE seed technology owners. Best management practices designed to reduce the risk of contamination should be embraced by all agricultural sectors in order to ensure the integrity of organic seed.

In 2014, the Organic Seed Growers and Trade Association (OSGATA) produced the first comprehensive, peer-reviewed resource on mitigating contamination, Protecting Organic Seed Integrity: The Organic Farmer's Handbook to GE Avoidance and Testing.

The handbook offers pertinent guidance on seed contamination avoidance and testing protocols for the following at-risk crops (those with USDA-approved GE counterparts which are currently in commercial production): corn, soy, cotton, alfalfa, papaya, canola, sugarbeet, and squash (Cucurbita pepo). The handbook is free to organic farmers as a hard copy and digital download available on www.osgata.org.

www.osgata.org





## The Costs of GE Contamination

It must be noted that the ease in which GE contamination can infiltrate the traditional seed supply puts unfair social responsibilities and unreasonable economic burdens on farmers wishing to avoid GE technology. When GE contamination does occur, organic farmers do not have access to an established system to recoup financial losses.
Issues surrounding who is liable for contamination and the subsequent economic losses cloud the potential for recourse. In the meantime, organic farmers unfairly bear the burden of seed and crop contamination by GE sources. Avoidance measures and testing costs are part of the organic farmer's damages. Frequent testing to ensure seed integrity, as well as the loss of seed to testing, and any discarding of contaminated seed lots is an unfair cost for organic farmers to shoulder. Additional costs have been borne and will continue to apply to preemptive confinement measures to avoid GE contamination within organic seed production systems. Measures such as geographic isolation for seed crops, vigilance in removing at-risk volunteers, and using dedicated equipment contribute to additional time and labor.
Organic farmers also face diminished prices and marketing turmoil if they are forced to reroute contaminated crops from their intended organic markets. Furthermore they run the risk of straightout blanket market rejections, especially on an international scale in dealing with more sensitive markets. This could mean loss of income, and even loss of their entire livelihood. Loss of consumer confidence, either on an individual basis or industry-wide, is another possible repercussion in light of GE contamination of organic crops.
Another difficult-to-calculate cost accrued is the potential loss of the genetic integrity of seed stocks upon which farmers are dependent. The permanent loss of choice in growing, as well as eating, organic and non-GE foods is virtually impossible to quantify in terms of economics.
This is in addition to the risks of legal liability these growers face.

www.osgata.org



## Liability in the Face of Contamination

Another burden that organic growers face is the risk of legal liability for patent infringement if their crops become contaminated by GE crops. To protect farmers, a lawsuit -Organic Seed Growers & Trade Association et al. v. Monsanto- was filed in 2011 on behalf of 83 individual American and Canadian family farmers, independent seed companies and agricultural organizations whose combined memberships total over one million citizens, including many non-GE farmers and over 25% of North America's certified organic farmers.
Plaintiff-farmers had sought Court protection under the Declaratory Judgment Act that should they become the innocent victims of contamination by Monsanto's patented gene-splice technology they could not be sued for patent infringement.
Following an oral hearing in January of 2012, Judge Naomi Buchwald, of the federal district court in Manhattan, NY, sided with Monsanto in honoring their motion to dismiss. On July 5, 2012 the plaintiff group filed a brief with the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in Washington, D.C., asking the appellate court to reverse the lower court's decision dismissing protective legal action against agricultural giant Monsanto's patents on GE seed.
The oral argument was heard on January 10, 2013, and a ruling was issued on June 10, 2013.
Ultimately, American farmers were handed a partial victory in the OSGATA et al. v. Monsanto lawsuit. The three-justice panel presiding over the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in Washington, D.C., issued a complicated ruling ordering Monsanto not to sue American farmers whose fields were contaminated with trace amounts of patented material, which the Court defined as 1%.
On September 5, 2013, the plaintiffs appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court in order to attain full protection for American farmers. On January 13, 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a decision in OSGATA et al. v. Monsanto. Farmers were denied the right to argue their case in court and gain protection from potential abuse by the agrichemical and genetic engineering giant, Monsanto.

www.osgata.org







# USA – Seed Broadcast

People and seeds have long been intertwined in a complex field of relations. Throughout history plants have cycled from seed to seed and humans have interjected their desire to be a part of this process, selecting, storing, and growing out these plants year after year for millennia. This relationship was fed with an intention towards care and resiliency, to nurture not only people, but also a polyculture community of the familiar and an intentional community of plants, animals, humans, among the earth. Relatively recently this intention has shifted towards engineering botanical processes to build mono-agricultural empires, create populations of dependent passivity, and dominate the more than human.

seedbroadcast.org/

Since 2011, SeedBroadcast has been examining these territories through performative engagements as artists, farmers, gardeners, teachers, and collective operatives, while rethinking the term agri-Culture. Project concepts and methodologies are founded in a space of the grassroots, where culture, creativity, collaboration, and agency are coupled with open/free-source processes, seeds, agroecology, rhizomatic networks, and most importantly the relationships and stories that bring these all together.

During 2014 programming, SeedBroadcast initiated Seed Story Workshops and SWAP. These two new projects grew with local, regional, and national partners to extend the reach of Seed Story Broadcasting potential, while facilitating the active participation of communities from the inside out.

SeedBroadcast also continued to engage local and regional agri-Culture and seeds through the Mobile Seed Story Broadcasting Station (MSSBS) as it traveled across New Mexico and Southern Colorado. The SeedBroadcast agri-Culture Journal grew tremendously in 2014, with Spring and Autumn editions which brought together seed wisdom from backyards, gardens, and farms locally and globally. It was a year of wisdom, support, and action, globa-locally!

The Mobile Seed Story Broadcasting Station (MSSBS) spent 2014 in partnership with regional seed libraries, farmers, gardeners, schools, and at public events recording and broadcasting seed stories, sharing resources, pollinating open-source seed networks, and blogging from the field. The blogging is instrumental in reporting these events and honoring the efforts of these communities and individuals in their food and seed sovereignty efforts. This is also the first platform for broadcasting Seed Stories. Mobile Seed Story Broadcasting Station (MSSBS) Blog can be found at: http://seedbroadcast.blogspot.com

The 2014 regional MSSBS tour took us to seed exchanges, seed libraries, agri-Cultural gatherings, and out to peoples' farms and gardens across New Mexico and Southern Colorado. We partnered with organizations and individuals to present the Mobile Seed Story Broadcasting Station where we distributed open-pollinated seeds, recorded seed stories, and broadcast seed stories. Locations included, our home base of Anton Chico, as well as, Mora, Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Tucson, Mancos, Dolores, Ridgway, Telluride, and Westcliff. Throughout these travels, we met people from all walks of life and all ages excited about the creative capacity of seed stories and interested in cultivating seed stories in their own lives and communities. Here are some images and seed stories from our 2014 Mobile Seed Story Broadcasting Station Tour.

SeedBroadcast van



Here are some selected Seed Stories from the Mobile Seed Story Broadcasting 2014 Tour.

You can also find complete 2014 Seed Stories online at:
*https://soundcloud.com/seedbroadcast*

Camillo, a Santa Fe Public School Student from the Schools Special Planting Day at New Mexico Land Office:
*https://soundcloud.com/seedbroadcast/camillo-shares-his-story-of-sunflower-seeds-and-the-wind*

Sylvie Ortega, gardener and seed saver from Mora, NM:
*https://soundcloud.com/seedbroadcast/sylvia-ortega-shares-her-story93*

Brita Sauer, ABC Seed Library founder and librarian at Juan Tabo Public Library in Albuquerque, NM:
*https://soundcloud.com/seedbroadcast/librarian-brita-sauer-talks*

Michael Gorospe, a South Valley farmer from Erda Gardens, Albuquerque, NM:
*https://soundcloud.com/seedbroadcast/michael-gorospe-tells-a-seed-story-remembering-his-fathersaving-seeds*

Renee Apodaca, Albuquerque BioPark Volunteer in Albuquerque, NM.
*https://soundcloud.com/seedbroadcast/renee-apodaca-shares-her-dream-of-taking-over-the-familyfarm*

Kukunaokala Begay, a farm intern at Tomten Farm in Telluride, CO:
*https://soundcloud.com/seedbroadcast/kukunaokala-begay-shares-his-seed-story-of-belief-prayerand-corn*

*In early 2014, we were invited to present SeedBroadcast at Luna Community College in Las Vegas, NM. This opportunity allowed us to explore yet another collaborative and generative Seed Story process where we cultivated group conversations around seeds and seed stories. This led to the fruition of Seed Story Workshops. We were invited by New Mexico Land Office and Santa Fe Public Schools, the Santa Fe Children's Museum, Institute of American Indian Arts, and Native Seed/SEARCH to lead Seed Story Workshops with their students and programs.*

*Seed Story workshops are an expansive frame for building capacity through collaboration and solidarity, while enabling others to learn how to reach out into their communities to support seed stories. During these workshops we share the SeedBroadcast video, Letter from a SeedBroadcaster, and Seed Stories we have recorded. We then circle round for conversations about Seed Stories. After this, we have participants go through a series of creative exercises, writing, drawing, and telling stories. Then at the end, participants record each others' stories and share them back with the group.*

*This very simple, yet profound work has led to several expansive collaborations across the country and world, from New Mexico to Arizona, and Cleveland, Ohio to India. It has also opened up a deep partnership with the Institute of American Indian Arts to assist in the creation of their community Seed Story Library.*



seedbroadcast.org/

*Here is a Seed Story of Listening and Thanks by Elizabeth Pantoha from our Seed Story Workshop at Native Seed/SEARCH:*
https://soundcloud.com/seedbroadcast/elizabeth-pantoha-shares-her-seed-story-of-listening-andthanks

*Another of SeedBroadcast's various dispersal, broadcasting, and collaborative tactics is the bi-annual SeedBroadcast agri-Culture Journal, a newspaper we cultivate, print, and distribute throughout the year. The intention of this journal is to activate a forum of exchange to intensify the discourse around seeds, food, and grassroots action. Contributors include farmers, gardeners, activists, artists, cooks, educators, and others concerned with the state of seeds and food. In 2014 we printed 7000 copies of the Spring and Autumn editions and distributed these freely around New Mexico, through the MSSBS and through contributors. We also share these as downloadable pdf's on our website at:*
http://www.seedbroadcast.org/SeedBroadcast/SeedBroadcast_agriCulture_Journal.html

*Finding ways to build collaborative partnerships beyond our region has led us to a new experimental platform called SWAP. The kick-off for this project occurred in the heart of corn country, in Iowa.*
*It was in partnership with an organization called Exuberant Politics and directed by local farmer and artist, Carolyn Scherf. SWAP shared the technological Mobile Seed Story Broadcasting Station structure as an experimental pop-up "grow-kit" to interrogate agri-Culture and local issues. Local community members used it to record seed stories, bring awareness to issues of GMO, pesticide drift, seed saving, and help inspire local open-source networks. Events took place in Iowa City, 94 Decorah, Ely, and Cedar Rapids. Carolyn blogged from the SeedBroadcast social media network and she sent raw Seed Story recordings back to us in New Mexico to edit and broadcast.*

*Here is one of the Seed Stories from Iowa Farmer, Laura Krause talking about the challenges of producing open-pollinated, organic corn seed in GMO laden cornbelt.*
https://soundcloud.com/seedbroadcast/laura-krouse-talks-about-open
*SeedBroadcast web platforms, with lots of information about our activities, project photos, Seed Stories, videos, partners, and resources:*
http://www.seedbroadcast.org
http://seedbroadcast.blogspot.com
https://soundcloud.com/seedbroadcast
https://www.facebook.com/seedshare

SeedBroadcast
*Anton Chico, New Mexico, USA*
www.seedbroadcast.org

# USA – The Hummingbird Project/Cleveland Seed Bank

Saving Seeds in the American Midwest For us, it began in India. Specifically, it began at Navdanya. We had traveled there on behalf of our international permaculture non-profit, The Hummingbird Project, and were collaborating with Dr. Vandana Shiva to teach local farmers about soil health and the benefits of organic agriculture. It was during this collaboration that we learned about the 100+ seed banks Dr. Shiva had founded throughout India, and were able to witness, firsthand, the importance of seeds. As we continued to work with the local farmers, we saw that not only were they suffering from degraded soil and all its attendant issues, but that they had also, to devastating effect, lost control of their seed supply.

The Cleveland Seed Bank was directly inspired by these experiences. Upon our return to Ohio we couldn't stop thinking about India's lack of access to quality, open-pollinated seeds – only to realize before long that a similar system was developing here at home. The urban farm movement was growing, but plants were rarely, if ever, grown from locally sourced seed. In fact, there was no reliable source of locally adapted seeds anywhere in the Cleveland region. This was deeply troubling and needed to be addressed. A new arm of our organization, dedicated to seeds, became necessary.

Cleveland was an ideal environment for a project of this sort. The city boasted a vibrant local food movement with more urban farms and markets each year, but no one seemed to have linked "local food" to "local seed." Carlo Petrini's comment in the 2012 Seed Freedom Report summed up the mindset, "It seems that public opinion, which is generally not very interested in anything related to agriculture but instead very interested in everything related to food, does not consider the two issues as being connected."

We needed to tap into that interest, that enthusiasm, and use it to bridge the gap between food and its source. Between food and seed.

The seed bank was officially founded in the summer of 2013, with the goal of inspiring, educating, and growing a community network of seed savers. Such a network would, over time, develop the regionally adapted seed supply that Cleveland so desperately needed. That was our starting point, and as we moved forward from there, it became obvious that to develop this fledgling community we needed to provide three things: 1) an initial supply of open-pollinated seeds 2) the knowledge needed to save them and 3) a space in which to exchange them.



McHugh and Kennedy work with rural Indian farmers to create viable agricultural practices. Photo credit The Hummingbird Project

After receiving donations from various seed companies (all signers of the Safe Seed Pledge) our next step was to develop a forum for exchange that would make those seeds available to the community. A partnership with the Cleveland Public Library soon arose, and the "Seed Library at Cleveland Public Library" was born.

In addition to this traditional seed library, we wanted to establish a digital, independent exchange space online. We imagined a "members area" where local growers could post offers and share or swap seeds on their own terms. No existing web program provided this function, but one of the people working with us on our website was self-proclaimed "cyber hacktivist" Meitar Moscovitz. He wrote a new, open-source WordPress plug-in that enabled community members to join the seed bank and post offers just as we had envisioned. Moreover, his free open-source program has had a positive ripple effect far beyond Cleveland – it has been downloaded over 600 times and been translated into 3 different languages!

Our focus since then has been on education and community building. We host seed saving workshops to expand know-how, as well as seed swaps and film screenings to spread awareness, including the Cleveland premiere of Open Sesame: The Story of Seeds. The community's respons has been highly enthusiastic, and the range of people getting involved with the movement has been very encouraging. In addition to older gardeners (for whom seed saving was once a way of life), we are seeing an encouraging degree of interest from younger generations. It seems that, as soon as Clevelanders are old enough to own gardens, they are old enough to care about them. It is our hope that such a diverse community will secure the project's stability for the present and help ensure its resilience over time.

We have good reason for optimism. The "Seed Library at the Cleveland Public Library" already extends over 5 separate branch locations and the online seed exchange currently has over 250 members. We view this response as a testament to the passion and engagement of the people of Cleveland. Urban farmers, gardeners and all sorts of growers are getting involved in the movement. It is deeply encouraging. Are there challenges to be reckoned with? Absolutely. In the summer of 2014, news broke that the Simpson Seed Library in Mechanicsburg, PA had been shut down by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture for violating the state's Seed Act of 2004.

# CLEVELAND SEED BANK




Cleveland Seed Library - Photo WKYC-TV

The Seed Act was commercial in nature, and, as the library was not selling seeds, it had not seemed applicable. Nonetheless, the library was told, there were concerns about mislabeling, as well as the potential for cross-pollination and the growth of invasive species. The term "Agri-terrorism" was even used, and the seed library was closed.

Since that time, several other states have followed Pennsylvania's example, and the crack down on seed libraries through the misapplication of commercial seed laws has accelerated. The awareness that this issue could potentially spread to Ohio has loomed over us for months.

But we are not sitting idly by. Instead, we have been working to overcome the problem before it even occurs. We have signed the petition to legalize seeds, and have spread awareness of the issue at all of our events, and through all our social media channels. Moreover, and most importantly, we have arranged a meeting with the Ohio Department of Agriculture to amend seed legislation in our state. This meeting will occur at the end of February 2015, and by the time this report goes to print, we hope to be well on our way towards establishing seed legislation in Ohio that is both just and rational.

Such an accomplishment would not be without precedent.

In mid-January a bill called SF 132 was introduced to the Minnesota State Legislature.

If passed, it would exempt certain organizations, such as seed libraries, from Minnesota seed law. This is a move in the right direction, and we feel that there is much to be hoped for – in Minnesota, in Ohio, and across the United States.






# USA - Hawaii Home Rule – Center for Food Safety

Source: http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/video/2519/cfs-videos/cfs-hawaii/3689/hawaii-home-rule

## What's Happening?

Hawaii is ground zero for the outdoor experimentation of pesticide-promoting plant technologies, genetically engineered to withstand heavy spraying of toxic chemicals.

On Oahu, Kauai, Maui, and Molokai, chemical and biotechnology companies like Monsanto, Syngenta, Dupont, Dow Chemical, Bayer, and BASF are using prime agricultural land, taking advantage of Hawaii's isolation and year-round growing season, in order to field test crops that have been genetically engineered to withstand greater applications of pesticides.

Despite public health concerns and contamination of natural resources, the State of Hawaii has taken no action to regulate the activities of biotechnology companies performing open-air testing on genetically engineered seed and synthetic pesticides.

## So, What's Home Rule?

Kauai, Maui and Hawaii Counties have asserted their county's authority to create policies that address these issues and protect the safety and health of their residents and land. Otherwise known as "Home Rule," Hawaii has shown the world just how important this kind of political power is in the movement to create more safe and sovereign food systems.

Hawaii Home Rule




### How have the Chemical Companies Fought Back?

Hawaii Home Rule

On Kauai, residents organized to pass Ordinance 960, a measure that requires large argichemical companies to disclose the pesticides they are spraying and observe buffer zones around schools, homes, and hospitals. The chemical companies responded by suing the county rather than telling the community what they are doing.

The citizens of Hawaii Island passed a law prohibiting new GE crop production to protect the island's biodiversity and local farmers from genetic drift. The chemical companies are suing Hawaii County.

On Maui, residents passed a citizen's ballot initiative at the polls – calling for a temporary moratorium on GE crop production until human and environmental health impact assessments are completed. The chemical companies are now suing Maui County.

Read more – Take Action: http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/video/2519/cfs-videos/cfs-hawaii/3689/hawaii-home-rule



# Latin America – Javier Carrera

Translated by Harriett Barham

## SEEDS OF IDENTITY AND RESISTANCE
## Autonomous experiences in Latin America

**Javier Carrera**
**Red de Guardianes de Semillas (Network of Seed Guardians)**

Welcome to this brief and by virtue of necessity, incomplete tour of the seeds of Latin America. From the North to the South of the continent one can observe two of the most important centres of plant domestication on the planet: Mesoamerica and the Andes. The legacy of agricultural diversity left by the farmers of these zones is so high that it is only comparable to one other place on earth - Southeast Asia.

Long before the European invasion the American people had far reaching and well travelled trade routes, which favoured the expansion of crop areas and the adaptation of plant species to varying local conditions, thereby creating new varieties. In addition to the incredible continental biodiversity that resulted from this process, species from Asia, Africa and Europe were added to the mix following the multiple invasions of the region.

American agriculture suffered massive deterioration from the 15th century onwards due to the destruction and abandonment of the local systems of food production. These systems had evolved locally over the course of thousands of years, and many were exemplary in terms of levels of food production, sustainability and resilience. Replacing these ancestral techniques with European methods resulted in the majority of cases in the gradual loss of land, aquifers, wild flora and fauna, forest cover, and the genetic diversity of the crops. This then led to poorly adapted systems that are profoundly inefficient and very rarely emulate the productivity of the cultures in the European glacial plains, which remain the unattainable model of these systems.

The abandonment of native foodstuffs was gradual, and only became complete for many regions in the last two decades of the 20th century. Prior to this time they coexisted and mixed with newer products brought over by immigrants from the 'old world, creating a sort of hybrid culinary culture of high nutritional value, commonly known as 'Creole cuisine' in many Latin American countries. Not all ancestral products became part of this colonial diet, and were therefore relegated for the consumption of the poorer classes and indigenous groups. These foods were often easy to produce and of high nutritional value; grown either in small gardens alongside houses and maintained by the women, or on marginal land such as small enclosures, roadsides, or fallow land. Some non-native products introduced by African slaves and immigrants of Moorish descent also became part of popular sustenance. Their consumption by the middle and higher classes remained low as they were often considered to be "indians' food" or "the food of the poor". Foods such as grain amaranth, tomatillos (husk tomato), mung beans and oca were often considered as such; however, other native foodstuffs like corn, the common bean and Zapallo pumpkins (squash) were equally appreciated in the kitchens of the gentry.

From the mid 20th century onwards, with the arrival of the so-called Green Revolution and the introduction of the new agro industrial model, there was a profound change in the way food and diet was approached in the region, with a move towards emulating the 'global diet' imposed by the United States of America. This new diet was seen as a cultural identifier of the higher social classes and the white population, which in turn led indigenous and rural families to leave behind their traditional diets in favour of this new model. In an attempt to demonstrate their changing social status and modernity even the Creole cuisine of the upper classes was abandoned, first in favour of French cuisine, and later the agro industrial diet. In the 70's the genetic erosion and loss of agro-biodiversity was already high and this loss only continued to accelerate in the decades that followed. The 80's and 90's were particularly detrimental in the region as there were no movements fighting to protect agricultural diversity, the subject went unmentioned in the media and the public was yet to become conscious of the problem at hand.



Towards the end of the 90's, social movements across the continent became extremely active, achieving change in various domains and pushing a significant percentage of the population to become more politically active. They put value back into 'the indigenous', rewrote history and questioned the prevailing development models in search of a way to reconstruct social identity. Slowly but surely, food and its production methods became an important aspect of this struggle. This new Latin American identity that was being created had food at its heart, and its impact was multi-faceted, from historic identity and gastronomy to adequate nutrition, agro-ecological production methods, food-sovereignty and land and water rights.

It was in the midst of all this that civil society movements specifically concerned with the future of seeds were seen to spring up in each and every country. Seeds that are laden with significance: they are the first link in the food chain - a visible and living example of cultural heritage - they represent the gift of life and the promise of a future. So linked are they to the production, preparation and consumption of food that seeds always draw attention and provoke an emotional response in Latin American cultures. As seed are the bearers of such powerful symbolic value, many movements around the continent seek the political protection of both seeds and food diversity, especially in the face of the renewed assault of the Green Revolution which since the 90's has resulted in the massive introduction of a new generation of agrochemicals and genetically modified seeds. The increasing public awareness surrounding food has clashed with the expansion of the agro-industrial model and led to intense confrontations. These clashes have since overflowed from the agricultural domain and become involved in a much larger debate concerning two very different views in relation to: ways of life, development models, supply chains, economic systems and what the ultimate goal of society is meant to be. Agro-ecology and Buen Vivir (Good Living) have sprung up as two broad political ideologies, impossible to encapsulate in a singular definition and under constant development . Despite being decentralised, these new ideas have deeply rooted identities and have managed to expand across the continent, finding advocates and defenders in each and every country and even becoming the focal point for the new national constitutions in the cases of Ecuador and Bolivia.

Agro-industry has been undertaking its own fight to promote the image of the benefits of industrial capitalist progress through continuous media campaigns and alongside permanent lobbying and the infiltration of government. Their businesslike tactics are often illegitimate but have allowed for their continued expansion into the fields and kitchens of the continent. The concentration of economic and political power, land grabbing, water privatisation, the aggressive introduction of mining and heightened state repression are but some of the characteristics of a political atmosphere which favours large corporations (often built on foreign capital invested into the country either directly or through local entrepreneurs); seeds are but another of these related issues.

Not all Latin American countries signed the international treaty UPOV 91 relating to the intellectual property rights over plant varieties. However, in practice, all governments on the continent are attempting or have achieved the implementation of laws which follow the basic principles of said treaty:

- Grant intellectual property rights covering seeds.
- Create a national list of approved seeds following a list of criteria that favours industrial seeds.
- Ban or limit the circulation of seeds that do not appear in said listing, in other words all non industrial seeds.

Due to social protest in various countries over the course of the past few years, state policies have grown to allow for the limited circulation of peasant seeds, also known as Creole or even folkloric seeds. However such policies have shown to be inadequate in slowing genetic erosion and continue to favour industrial seeds.

In the majority of cases the introduction of genetically modified (GM) crops goes hand in hand with the implementation of these guidelines, as part of a comprehensive model designed to replace peasant seeds with industrial seeds.
In the last 20 years political activism and the protection of free seeds has been carried out by two types of actors:

- Peasant and indigenous organisations with wide appeal and social presence.
- Non Governmental organisations and individuals, scientists, chefs (cooks), experts and activists that counsel social organisations and speak publicly about the issue.

The struggle has centred mainly around the issue of transgenic crops: to stop them entering regions they have yet to be legally allowed into (Ecuador, Peru, the altiplano of Bolivia), and to denounce their effects and attempt to remove them from regions where they have already become established (Costa Rica, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Brazil and Chile). The struggle surrounding the UPOV 91 treaty and its serious long term effects on agro-biodiversity has received less emphasis thus far, partly due to the fact that the short term effects have yet to be visible, except in a few cases such as that of Colombia where uncertified seeds are being destroyed by police forces.

The other front line in the fight for seeds is more practical: the work to recover, multiply and increase the circulation of free seeds.

From the 60's onwards, state run agrarian or mixed research institutes have been up and running in all the countries of the continent, with dedicated seed programs. They tend to be similar in many ways, from their names (INIAP, INDA, INA) to their origins and objectives. From their beginnings they have had a double mandate: to collect, catalogue and store specimens of national agricultural diversity (and send them to the global north) and also to create local hybrid varieties of certain commercially interesting crops that would work within the agro industrial model of the green revolution. The creation of said institutes was largely driven and financed by the Rockefeller Foundation, with the backing of the Ford Foundation and the IDA, as part of a North American strategy to expand a model based on monoculture, agrochemicals and mechanisation which relied on seeds specifically adapted to said system.

Thanks to these institutes, germplasm banks in the United States have been able to get their hands on an enormous variety of seeds from Latin América; unfortunately the same cannot be said for the people of the countries from which they originate. In many cases, access to the guarded collections in these germplasm banks has been difficult if not impossible for local producers, as programs for the return of germplasms are limited where they do exist at all. The financing of these centers is uncertain, hovering between government aid or control and self-financing through the sale of seeds and other services. In practice this constitutes a risk to the collections, some of which have been irretrievably lost due to a lack of resources.

This leaves no answer to the growing demand for free and organic seeds on behalf of the population. To respond to said demand, seed groups have been organising across the continent, generally made up of autonomous networks, founded and coordinated by ordinary citizens, that bring together families of independent seed producers. These families are called Semilleristas (Seedists), Cuidadores de Semillas (Seed Caretakers) or Guardianas de Semillas (Seed Guardians). These networks tend to be based around decentralised and horizontal organisational models, with a particular emphasis on communication and group meetings; although some have chosen to take the route to become registered charities along with the bureaucratic load that that implies.

The autonomous networks don't receive permanent financing but base their work on consistent volunteering efforts by their members to maintain the production and distributions of seeds. By keeping their administrative body to a minimum their bureaucratic requirements are almost nonexistent, yet despite this, in some cases they have achieved impressive results not only in recovering, reproducing and distributing seeds but also through their positive influence on society. The scarcity of access to resources has meant that each individual network has developed their own strategies, striving for the best possible efficiency to achieve their objectives.

For the purpose of this report we have undertaken case-studies of five Latin American networks if this type, through interviews with the local coordinators. All of these national networks are part of a growing continental network. We began with two very broad questions:

1. Which strategies have been the most successful in promoting the freedom of seeds and the use of free seeds?

2. What concrete threats has seed freedom faced in your country?

Let us allow for these voices to express themselves, from the North to the South of Latin America:



## Chile

Valentina Vives Granella, National coordinator, Red de Semillas Libres de Chile (RSLChile, Chilean Network for Free Seeds)

http://semillaslibres.cl/

RSLChile began as recently as 2011, however in that short time its growth has been rapid, thanks in part to the high level of interest surrounding seeds and ecological production in Chile.

### 1. Which strategies have been the most successful in promoting the freedom of seeds and the use of free seeds?

The network is currently made up of seven regional groups: the 5th region (Valparaíso), the metropolitan region (Santiago), Maipo, Biobío, Wallmapu, Willi Mapu and Chiloé, all differing in many aspects. Some have implemented formalized policies whilst others remain more informal, but all are part of both the national and continental network. The activities of each individual network depend on the interests and duties of its members and coordinators. The Wallmapu network for example has strong ties to the Mapuche culture and the international Slow Food movement, and many of its activities are linked to foodstuffs with a cultural and territorial identity. The Biobío network is more technical and based around educational aspects whereas in Valparaíso there are fewer protocols and structures and their activities are focused on production practices and permaculture. For example the "Movimiento Cerealero" (Cereal Movement), where producers come together towork in partnerships to save ancient varieties of seeds, which unites the entire chain of production all the way through to the commercialisation of the final product. The national network is nourished and sustained by this diversity of actions and interests. Until now local efforts have remained informal, but the hope is to begin formalising them in January 2015.



Members of these networks are natural people (in legal terms), whose very participation is a vote of confidence in our work, and who devote their time, energy and work to the network. It is difficult to ascertain exactly how many people are currently members; there are approximately 60 active members whilst around 100 more identify as 'seed friends' and participate in a more peripheral manner. RSLChile enjoys a diverse membership - in terms of age, position and daily tasks - all united by a commitment to seeds as the source of the food from which human beings flourish (physically, spiritually, socially, culturally, etc.). As of yet there is no formal membership, although the hope is to implement this in 2015.
The main and most effective act of RSLChile has been the organization of Seasonal Meetings (Encuentro Estacionales). Since being introduced in 2012 they have taken place approximately once every three months, in a different locality or region each time and with a wide variety of attendees, attracting crowds of between 25 and 150 participants.

Other activities also take place within these meeting spaces, such as seed exchanges, workshops, exhibitions and discussions. These events retain a very human and informal feeling with a line-up subject to change at a moment's notice, people gather in circles with the simple goal of sharing experiences and visions, learning and immersing the collective in love and kindness for seeds and the Earth. The meetings are generally organised on the basis of petitions from the people of a specific region, and many of the local networks grew in this way, thanks to the enthusiasm generated by such meetings. They are the catalysts of the movement.

RSLChile doesn't have banks or houses of organised seeds to fall back on, there is one in Copequén in the 6th region, but its reach remains only local. The central coordination office currently has a collection of low profile seeds which is open to the public, and members of the network are aiming to organise their own seed houses once the local outposts have been formalised, hopefully in 2015.

It is very difficult to quantify the quantity and variety of seeds that are being worked with, there is no plan to create a national registry of seeds - each local network is considered responsible for their own records and expected to coordinate their work with others free seed centers around the country.

RED SEMILLAS LIBRES CHILE

photo: Red Semillas Libers Chile

Highest in demand are horticultural seeds, followed by medicinal seeds and then native tree varieties. At times requests come in for provisions of seeds by the kilo: mostly for legumes, cereals and fodder crops.
The recovery strategy for seeds has been the promotion of native and creole (local) varieties, the network avoids importation when producing in large quantities. They work to adapt foreign seeds to local conditions before promoting their use. Another essential strategy has been constant communication, through both email newsletters and social networking sites.

Their relationship with public organisations and NGO's has been very important: spokespeople and coordinators from the networks give talks and participate in forums at schools, universities, communities and local government. They achieve political advocacy through participating in the creation of proposals at a civil society level.

Finally, RSLChile has decided to legalise an administrative body which would be able to provide services, collect financial funding and build formal alliances with other institutions. This would be in the form of a Service Cooperative going by the name of Semilla Austral (Southern Seed). In the medium to long term, the hope is that it would support the formation of cooperatives within each local (or bioregional) network.

The impact RSLChile has had within the country has been enormous, finding their own space within important spheres of political debate and generating an increasing level of interest within the population, especially with young and indigenous peoples.

## 2. What concrete threats has seed freedom faced in your country?

Currently our greatest worry is the Law on Plant Breeders Rights and the Protection of Seeds and Traditional Practices (Ley de Derechos de Obtentores Vegetales y de Protección de las Semillas y Prácticas Tradicionales) which is under review to bring it in line with the international treaty UPOV 91. The aim is to reorganise the entire public system in relation to seeds in accordance with the application of this treaty, which would be a national catastrophe in terms of germplasm and traditional agricultural practices. We consider this to mask the true nature of the reforms, although the law does make some simple strategic concessions to include peasant seeds, ultimately it is but another implementation of the UPOV 91 and the Codex Alimentarius.
Another issue up for debate is certification. In Chile, a participatory organic certification does legally exist; however its application is messy and bureaucratic, and doesn't work well in practice. It is for this reason that we maintain that there are no certification systems in place that truly belong (and include cultural identity) and that are easy to use.

Equally at issue is the inherent contradiction that exists between what is being said by the Chilean government on the one hand, and its actions on the other. It declared this year dedicated to Familial and Peasant Agriculture and the government has called for panels and committees to promote organic agriculture, yet in practice the entire public apparatus only increases the use of synthetic packages, which leads in turn to the use of industrial seeds and agrochemicals. A vicious cycle of dependency is being promoted, which has already caused untold damage (cultural and biological erosion, land loss, water contamination and much more).

On a wider level the state is abandoning the agricultural credit sector and handing it over to private banking. This only makes the conditions of indebtedness that much harder for rural populations and farmers, and ultimately favours land grabbing.

The Chilean state has yet to end its aggressive push towards an agro exportation model. The strategy most in vogue currently is to link (or for want of a better word, chain) rural workers to this model through 'clusters' and 'clubs' of producers, who act as intermediaries for contracts with large companies and supermarkets, which in reality imposes increasingly tough and unjust conditions upon the producers.

Overall however, the greatest threat is without a doubt the social apathy which seems to characterise our society, the lack of collective action which in itself is a product of the social repression our people experienced during the very long dictatorship years - the wounds of which are far from having healed.






Red de Guardianes de Semillas
Sembrando para el futuro

## Ecuador

Javier Carrera, Red de Guardianes de Semillas (Seed Guardians Network)

www.redsemillas.org

The Seed Guardians Network (RGS) was founded in November 2002, although plans for its creation were in the pipeline from 2000 but still in search of funding. Resources were hard to come by as the issue had yet to gain as much recognition as it has today, so four friends declared the network founded after an afternoon spent talking shop in a small cafe in the village of Tumbaco, Ecuador, with no economic support at all.

Throughout its history the RGS has maintained certain essential characteristics: independence in its decision making, horizontal organisation and hierarchy in its governance, and an emphasis on practical and radical agro-ecological work.

photo: Red de Guardianes de Semillas Ecuador

## 1. Which strategies have been the most successful in promoting the freedom of seeds and the use of free seeds?

At the top of that list would have to be the governance model of the network, which differs from a more traditional organisational model. The main decision making body which fulfills legislative functions and general planning, is the Assembly of the network which comes together once a year. All members have a voice in this space, including the most recently joined, however only members who have been recognised as Seed Guardians - for their knowledge, honesty, commitment and outreach work - have the right to vote. There are currently around 100 Guardian members at this time, but on average only half of these members are able to attend the yearly meeting. 60% of them are women, and only 30% of members have completed a degree in higher education. In any case, it is very rare for the Assembly to call a vote as the majority of decisions are made by consensus, following a discussion around a seated circle.

Since 2012, the Assembly decides upon which lines of work to pursue, which are then put into practice over the course of the year by coordinating committees. These come together as and when needed, and are staffed by members who have a particular interest in the subject (interest groups). There is a Counsel tasked with protecting the good name of the network, promoting respectful relationships amongst members and generally upholding the network's culture. A culture which is recognised for its ecological radicalism, the excellence of its work and the human quality of its members and social processes.

The members of the network are natural persons (in legal terms), although they may represent families, organisations or communities. Each member has complete autonomy: the network is simply a space for meeting, exchanging and for the coordination of projects involving several members. The network continually strives to promote the identity and work of its members, empowering them at both a local and national level; the individuals are the key actors, the stars of the show.



These organisational characteristics are important, as it is thanks to them that the RGS has achieved such incredible results with such minimal economic resources. There is no central planning, the network acts more like a river into which smaller streams converge, bringing with them the interests and autonomous actions of their members. A river which flows slowly or speeds up depending on the prevailing conditions, which overcomes obstacles in its path in often unexpected ways and whose course is rewritten with each and every step. But most importantly, a river which never fails to move forward towards its ultimate goal: the construction of a more just and fair society in harmony with Nature.

In terms of the seeds themselves, the most relevant and successful strategies have been:

- Seed exchanges at national and regional meetings.
- Group trips to the estates of Guardian members, which promote a deeper unity within the group.
- The dynamic distribution of seeds: The National Centre for the Coordination of Seeds (the seed house for the network) maintains a catalogued collection of seeds, the main objective of which is not to act as a reserve but to get the collected seeds back into circulation fast, as we believe that the best seed bank is the earth itself. The catalogue is published on the network's website. The centre receives requests for all kinds of seeds, and in cases where they are unable to immediately respond from their own stock, they search out other members who may be able to step in. Members can obtain seeds following the seed credit model, by which they commit to returning 300% of what they originally took without other cost. To allow for the seed bank's collection to continue to grow the returned seeds don't necessarily have to be of the same species. The general public can also buy or exchange seeds and in some cases donations are made. The centre cares for its collections through germination tests and uses specially adapted storage and cataloguing techniques which are overseen by one or two permanent staff members and up to five volunteers.
- Seed recovery campaigns: each year one endangered native species in need of rapid multiplication is chosen and seeds are sought out amongst members of the network. These are then multiplied in the vegetable gardens and larger plantations of the members to be later distributed to the public, ensuring that those who receive the seeds are equally committed to multiplying and distributing them even further. Alongside the seeds themselves, information is also distributed concerning the growth characteristics and use of the species. So far there have been recovery campaigns for the Jícama or Yacón (Smallanthus sonchifolius), the Mauka (Mirabilis expansa), the ancient Manabí maize of the tropical lowlands and the Jatunzara of the, and a three bean locally known as Porotón (Erythrina edulis). 2015 is the year of the Penco (Agave americana). Since 2013 the Recovery Campaigns have been linked to the Slow Food movement's 'Ark of Taste', as members of the network are also part of its national committee.
- The production of guaranteed quality seeds for sale: In the past two years we have been actively working on a system which includes: the creation and implementation of a Participatory Guarantee System designed specifically for the production of organic seeds, the development of adapted production protocols for seed species which are in high demand, and the training of specialised personnel for the production of seeds of guaranteed quality within said system. We hope to be able to supply organic producers around the country with a selection of high quality and locally adapted seeds in the near future.
- To facilitate connections: both our members and the general public frequently write to us in search of a specific seed, the advice of an expert, or a particular piece of information. The network's social coordination forwards such demands to all members, collecting and redirecting all answers as well. Thanks to this, the network acts as an enormous bank of knowledge, products and services, all interconnected for the common good of the Ecuadorian people, and time and again it has proved its worth. For example, we recently compiled a database of experts in native bees and located a lesser-known native plant (the Ratania), all with the help of the network.

Beyond their practical work with seeds the RSG has developed complementary strategies to further broadcast their message, which with time have become permanent processes forming part of their own direct lines of action:

- Education: The network allows its members the possibility to broadcast and co-organise all types of educational events relative to practical ecology and somehow related to seeds. They have previously organised certified courses in permaculture, urban gardens, edible forests, ancient agroecology, food history, alpaca fibre uses and patrimonial cooking, amongst others. The educational branch of the RGS is called the Ecoversity of the Equatorial Andes (Ecoversidad de los Andes Ecuatoriales, www.ecoversidad.redsemillas.org) and works semi autonomously although it continues to act under supervision from the network's Council. Ecoversity events must all meet a high standard in terms of the issues they cover and their methodology, whilst also being practical and fun. Education within the agroecology sector is essential for the development of new models to allow free seeds to continue to evolve.
- Commerce: Through the management of various small markets and shops, the RGS has been acting as a living laboratory since 2011 - developing methods, evaluating proposals and getting to know products - in a solidarity-based market culture directly controlled by its members, both as producers and consumers. The logic behind this tactic is that free seeds won't blossom much further from the tiny niche within which they are barely surviving at the moment, if the public doesn't considerably increase the consumption of their fruits. So far they have developed their own accounting methods, customer service culture and product management model, although without a doubt their most widely recognised achievement was the creation of the Participatory Guarantee System "Ecological Flower" (Flor Ecológica). A simple visual system easily understood by the public, it promotes unity between the producers themselves and also in their relationship with consumers. We consider that the seed producers who invest so much time in their professional development and in the selection of their seeds for optimum quality, deserve to have their work supported by the public through the purchase of their seeds. To be a Seed Guardian is to be a craftsman of the highest level. Furthermore, we believe that the current economic problems don't stem from economic exchange as such, which is both necessary and sacred, but from the manner in which the economy has been seized and continues to be controlled by groups of power. We believe that it is our duty to take back such spaces.
- Consultancy and outreach: members of the RSG have been providing consultancy services for more than a decade, concerning anything from practical issues to social and political concerns for individuals as well as private enterprises, rural organisations and state agencies. They also openly participate in the public media, often through interviews and always with the aim of promoting the issue of seeds and environmental awareness.

Publications: the RGS formerly published a magazine, called Allpa (earth in Kichwa) but printing stopped after number 9. It was well regarded in Latin America for the quality of its content and graphics, which were within reach of and well received by the general public. In 2015 it has returned as a digital magazine, hoping to reach a wider audience in the spanish speaking world. Previous copies can be read and downloaded for free at www.allpa.redsemillas.org and the digital magazine is hosted at www.allpachaski.com.

### 2. What concrete threats has seed freedom faced in your country?

The greatest threat at the moment is the possibility of the Ecuadorian state implementing a new seed law along the lines of the UPOV 91 treaty, although Ecuador didn't actually sign the treaty itself. A couple of years ago a similar proposal was made by the Minister for Agriculture Livestock and Fishing, centering around support for the industrial seed industry and only leaving a minimal window of action for free seeds that fall under the "folkloric seeds" denomination. This proposal was in competition with four others from various different state agencies, including one put forward by a civil society participatory committee made up of over 2000 people belonging to social organisations. Known as the COPISA law, this last proposal protected free seeds in a variety of ways, including limiting the field of action of industrial seeds, making clear the dangerous exception that these seeds represent and the need to control them. None of the proposals were accepted by the National Assembly, which has yet to comment on the matter, but it is suspected that they will draw up a law combining elements from the different proposals, but probably favouring the agro-industrial model. The often heard discourse from the government remains the same: that to be competitive and increase productivity the certification of seeds is essential, as if low agricultural productivity was entirely due to low quality seeds, when in reality depleted soils and inadequate production systems are to blame. They talk of allowing participatory guarantee systems to exist, but designed and controlled by one or more state agencies. Furthermore, during a state visit to the European Union, the President of the Republic offered to remove the current constitutional ban on the patenting of ancestral knowledge.
The implementation of this model worries us because it could render the work that the Network of Seed Guardians currently does, illegal, or at best impose a bureaucratic burden which would make our work much harder. The current government has given the State excessive amounts of control over the processes of civil society.

The other great concern is the possible legalisation of GM crops. The government has on various occasions shown its support for such crops and the need to change the constitution to allow them, as in its current state (approved by 80% of the population in 2008) transgenics are only allowed to be planted in the country in case of emergency and after approval from the National Assembly. On more than one occasion the debate has reached the media, who unfortunately also support the agro-industrial model, as does the country's scientific community. But the opposition has been strong, from social organisations to scientists and cooks, and at the moment the topic is largely dormant.





photo: Bloque Verde

## Costa Rica

Fabián Pacheco, Bloque Verde (1) (Green Bloc)

http://bloqueverde.blogspot.com/

The Green Bloc (Bloque Verde) is an organisation made up of students, academics, farmers, and citizens in general who all self identify as ecologists. Their actions have been fundamental not only in slowing the advances of transgenic crops in Costa Rica, but also in promoting the use of free seeds, agroecology and food-sovereignty.

### 1. Which strategies have been the most successful in promoting the freedom of seeds and the use of free seeds?

The most important strategy has been the organisation of Festivals. They unite culinary art grounded in local agro-biodiversity with cultural identity and traditions. The aim is to revalue traditional knowledge, recover seeds and the cultural information they carry, and to return said seeds to their ancestral territorial origins. The Festivals, which happen on a bimonthly basis, also serve to revitalise local economies and since 2005 more than 30 have taken place.

Secondly, and on a more practical level, we organise technical training courses within communities. As well as the chosen discussion topics other knowledge is shared, concerning best practices following seed harvesting, reproduction tips and techniques, and basic plant genetics for seed producers.

Thirdly, and partly as a result of the previous two processes, we have been working on the creation of seed Houses. Three of these centres are already well established and work to protect and distribute collections of seeds. Currently many people linked to the movement are dedicating parts of their gardens to the production of seeds, which then supply these Houses.





Moving on to our political agenda, in the past few years there has been much work on the Declaration of GMO Free Territories (Declaratoria de Territorios Libres de Transgénicos) which has successfully collected signatures from 75 municipal councils declaring themselves Free From GMO's (this represents 92% of municipal councils in the country). The Festivals were an important platform for the promotion of this proposal, linking it to the enjoyment and pleasure of food, autonomy and cultural identity. The anti-transgenic movement was first launched in 2005.

As well as signing the Free From GMO declarations, there is also a push for zones which have representative populations of important seeds to declare themselves as Sanctuary Districts for Farmer's Seeds (Cantones Santuarios de Semillas Campesinas). These sanctuaries can then develop their own agendas for activities.

The most notable example is the Municipality of Talamanca, an important territory due to the presence of indigenous communities and because 70% of the land remains covered in native forest. They celebrate the Talamancan day of the Rural Seed, a large festival which has received national recognition.

Ultimately, what has helped us most in this campaign is having understood the art of how to capture people's attention and win their solidarity: the colours and enjoyment of food, music, and the pleasure of communal activities. Happiness. This is what has roused such enthusiastic participation from the population, creating such a rich network of activists focused on ecology and social justice.

## 2. What concrete threats has seed freedom faced in your country?

The approval of the UPOV 91 law is of great concern to us, it came within a larger framework, including other complementary laws, as part of the free trade treaty with the USA in 2011. Another worrying issue in the introduction of genetically modified corn as a grain to be used for animal feed and in the production of industrial foodstuffs. There is no control over the use of this grain, which renders our bio-security vulnerable as they could be being planted.
Monsanto attempted to have genetically modified corn recognised as a seed, but was unsuccessful thanks to the citizen marches which took place, and in which we took part.







Costa Rica produces genetically modified cotton seeds and soy for the export market, but they are not authorised for use within the country. However, this remains a permanent concern. There are also experimental transgenic crops of maize, pineapples, bananas, rice and tannia (locally known as Tiquisque; Xanthosoma sagittifolium). To date there have been no requests to sow these genetically modified crops for their commercial use within the country.

The total area covered by transgenic crops, both experimental and for export, stood at a little over 630 acres in 2013.

Phytosanitary Protection Law n.° 7664 which allows for the growing of genetically modified organisms in the country has had two amparo applications filed against it before the Constitutional Chamber. One of them was presented by members of the civil sector (farmers, ecologists and a deputy from the Legislative Assembly) in December 2012, and the other was brought forward by the Ombudsman's office in May 2013. Basically, both appeals maintain that the law is unconstitutional as it doesn't take into account any environmental impact studies and because it restricts civil society's access to technical information. According to the Constitutional Chamber, the state won't be able to give authorisations for the introduction of GM varieties until the appeals in question have been resolved, and until that moment all new requests for the sowing of such seeds will remain paralysed.

1. In the writing of this article two sources were used: one direct interview with Fabián Pacheco, and the article "Situación de los cultivos transgénicos en Costa Rica" (the Situation of GM Crops in Costa Rica) by Fabián Pacheco and Jaime E. García González, published in Acta Académica 54 (May 2014): pp 29-60, reproduced with the authorisation of the author.



## Guatemala

*Ronaldo Lec Ajcot, Instituto Mesoamericano de Permacultura (IMAP) (Mesoamerican Permaculture Institute)*

https://imapermacultura.wordpress.com/

*The IMAP was founded in 2000 to act as an incentive for Guatemalan society to construct sustainable ways of life, emphasising work with seeds as one of their main lines of work.*

### *1. Which strategies have been the most successful in promoting the freedom of seeds and the use of free seeds?*

*We have worked hard to promote seeds in various ways:*
*For years we have been giving workshops and classes on the creation of community seed banks, including the necessary production techniques. There aren't many organisations working on this issue in the country.*

*We have our own seed bank. Our aim is not to store seeds there, but to channel and redistribute them. We consider the land itself to be the best place to store seeds. In the seed bank seeds can be bought, sold or exchanged, we even give seed credit and make donations (particularly to schools).*
*We have been criticised for selling seeds, with people having argued that seeds belong to everyone, but we realized that when something belongs to everyone, unfortunately nobody truly takes care of it. We have struggled for many years now with how to attach economic value to native and Creole seeds, as a way to incentivise farmers and peasants in their production. We*



photo: IMAP



came to the conclusion that the best way was through their sale. This way producers who enjoy working with seeds can earn a living choosing quality seeds. The other interest we have is in responding to the demand from the organic and alternative agriculture movement, who had no source of seeds from within the country until we began our work.

The IMAP seed bank is supplied by around fifty members, woven into a network. It is currently economically self sufficient, although it needs more producers to respond to the increase in demand.

As a result of the workshops that we provide, six new seeds banks have sprung up across the country. They are linked to both the IMAP and the Network for Guatemalan Food Sovereignty and Security (REDSSAG, Red de Seguridad y Soberanía Alimentaria de Guatemala), a collective that brings together agroecology movements across the country. The largest is the Cachualón Seed Bank which gathers 200 producers.

Another important field of work is the cultural appreciation of the seed, of the knowledge tied to the seeds themselves, the identity, the history and the cuisine. We continually organise workshops to teach about the preparation of native plants for cooking, especially the highly nutritive varieties such as chaya (Tree spinach), amaranth, chia and cacao.
Lastly, we take part in markets and agricultural fairs organised by the REDSSAG.

photo: IMAP

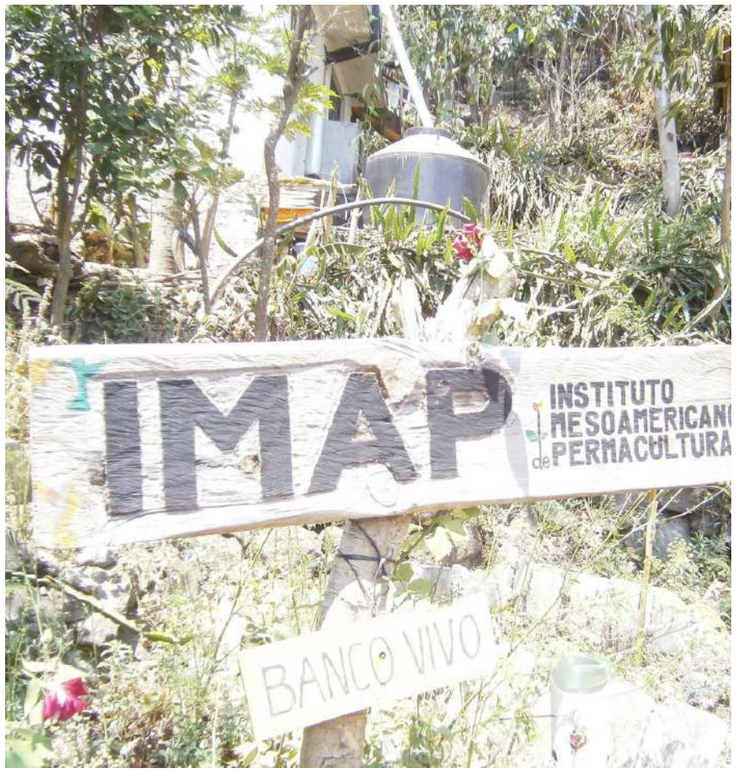
IMAP

## 2. What concrete threats has seed freedom faced in your country?

Native and creole plants are often devalued. This is part of an environment of loss of culture and local identity which we have been experiencing for decades now.
The model of the green revolution, oriented towards export agriculture, is being imposed and promoted by the state along with universities, cooperation agencies and the large capital business sector.

The established trade laws and the free trade agreement with the United States (TLC) have caused a complete loss of food-sovereignty in the country. Despite this, maize, the nation's main sustenance crop, has not been heavily affected by the model as most of the maize destined for human consumption is produced by rural families.

One serious problem caused by the TLC is that Guatemala can only produce 10% of the seeds that it needs without being sanctioned for unfair competition. Monsanto produces many of the country's seeds (information from the ICTA, http://www.icta.gob.gt/). Guatemala voted against the law which enforced the UPOV treaty guidelines (http://seedmap.org/guatemala-say-no-to-upov/) but in practice the law will come into effect if the country wishes to remain part of the TLC and not pay sanctions. Currently the law has been temporarily repealed, although not entirely withdrawn, and the pressure for it to be applied is surely mounting. We hope to be able to negotiate as Costa Rica did, to allow for some protection of small scale producers.




There is an increasing monopolization of the seed sector with Monsanto buying up seed businesses and there are even rumours circulating that the Agricultural Science and Technology Institute of Guatemala (Instituto de Ciencia y Tecnología Agrícola de Guatemala) may be privatised, and that Monsanto hopes to buy it.

The farming of GM crops is not legally approved in the country, although there have already been trials with commercial crops, so far without permission.

In Guatemala land distribution is very inequitable, one of the worst cases in the hemisphere, which directly impacts food-sovereignty.

Lastly, we are suffering the effects of climate change and this will have a tremendous effect on seeds.

photo: IMAP



# semillas de vida

**México**

Adelita San Vicente Tello, Seeds of Life Foundation (Fundación Semillas de Vida)

http://www.semillasdevida.org.mx/

The Seeds of Life Foundation is a civil association founded in 2007, it focuses on the quality of seeds and the knowledge linked to them, in particular relating to Mexican maize and the plants associated with its growth.

## 1. Which strategies have been the most successful in promoting the freedom of seeds and the use of free seeds?

In Mexico we have found it very helpful to ground our work in rural history, which dates back at least 8000 years. For the countrymen who have inherited from this long tradition, it seems only logical for seeds to be free, as they have worked closely with them for such a large part of their history. It is for this reason that despite the impulse given to the green revolution in the country, less than 25% of the maize sown today is hybrid. To that, we can add the climatic diversity of the country, which has made it harder to standardise production with uniform seed types.

Our work has centered around our support for rural organisations in their different seed-linked activities. Generally we help them to identify and find the varieties of seed which would be best suited to their local environment, through a diagnostic test based on the different types of maize and their associated plants in the ancestral model of mixed crop system known as "Millpa". It is necessary to understand that in Mexico maize is by far the most important crop, our ancestors developed the plant from its wild relatives and still today not only is it eaten here in Mexico, but we still speak and think of food production in terms of maize.

We also support rural plant breeding processes. For example, in certain zones there has been a massal selection of the maize, a process which looks at the whole plant in the context of its growth.

Another essential strategy is the organisation of Seed Fairs, of which there are around 65 every year. At these fairs seeds can be exchanged and sold, and it is up to the farmers to decide what they wish to sell or exchange. This autonomy concerning their economic decisions is an essential aspect of keeping the flow of seeds in their hands and under their control. We have also worked to recover the cultural identity and the traditions associated with seeds. A good example being the blessing rituals of the seeds, community activities in which syncretism is achieved between christianity and ancestral spirituality, a balance between the pre hispanic, colonial and modern.

We continually chat with other organisations about the issue of seeds, covering all aspects of the issue: practical, social, cultural and political. It is interesting to observe how seeds can trigger other processes.

We are also working with vegetable seeds, which are important in Mexico because they are currently dominated by corporations. There have been successful examples of rural production of these seeds, but only on a small scale.

Mexico is the only country whose gastronomy has been declared a Heritage of Humanity. We are capitalising on this event to push forth the issue of culture, the association of the seed with our food heritage, as well as singling out rural seeds as an essential part of the search for better nutrition. As part of our political agenda we have joined the Sin Maiz no hay País campaign (No Maize, No Country) (http://www.sinmaiznohaypais.org/).






Although many of us who work here at Seeds of Life were not born in the countryside, as peasants or farmers, we have become accustomed to growing part of our own food from seeds, as part of a personal transformation on the way to achieving global change.

One very positive aspect of Mexico is that over 50% of the territory is in the hands of social partners: communities and ejidos, as a result of the agrarian reform initiated during the Mexican Revolution. This brings us great hope, as to have a rural population that owns and is settled on its land is a requisite for the successful conservation of rural seeds, with the goal of achieving Food Sovereignty. Perhaps thanks to this fact, when the National Council for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (Consejo Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad) organised a national collection of maize, they found today a greater diversity than was seen in the 60's at the very beginning of the green revolution.

The next meeting of the global Committee for Biological Diversity will take place in Mexico in 2016.

## 2. What concrete threats has seed freedom faced in your country?

Mexico has been one of the largest development centres of the green revolution since its very beginnings as many Mexican agronomists, now in their seventies, all studied under this ideological framework in the USA.

photo: Sin Maiz no Hay Pais



State institutions have been shut down by the state, and there is now a strong campaign on behalf of transnational corporations to introduce hybrid seeds across the country, including in zones with climates that would be unsuited to said crops.
The biggest lasting damage came from shock of the arrival of the transnational corporations 20 odd years ago, with the Free Trade Agreement with North America. Since then our government has been worn down by said transnational corporations, seeking to help them prosper and benefit, often to the detriment of the Mexican population.

The contamination from GMO's in Mexican maize is a very real issue, but for now the damage remains reversible. The production of GM crops is not currently legal in the country, and from the 5th July 2013 by legal order, the Mexican government has been unable to grant such permissions. For now it is only a precautionary measure for the duration of a trial which was initiated by the Collective Action group (Acción Colectiva) and to which 53 social groups, including 20 rural and indigenous organisations, have joined fighting against the government agencies and transnational organisations (Monsanto, Pioneer, Dow, Syngenta, Dupont) who are responsible for the expansion of GMO's in the country.





## Conclusions

Latin American cultures have a profound respect for seeds and a natural inclination to defend their freedom, a character trait inherited from their agricultural ancestors and their long history of struggles for their own freedoms, well being and justice - struggles which have left an indelible mark on society across the continent.

The strategies developed by the different movements are diverse, and although they all respond to the realities of a specific nation or cultural region, without a doubt this cross-pollination of ideas and experiences will be of great benefit to all. On the other hand the strategies used by the agricultural industry are uniform. The threats identified in the different interviews all point to a single strategy that is being used to introduce industrial seeds on the continent, although it may present some local variations it is in essence the same:

- the appropriation of ancestral knowledge and of biodiversity
- a seed registry and a ban or restriction on the use and circulation of free seeds
- massive introduction of GMO's
- monopolised domination of the seed sector by well know transnational corporations in the field, through lobbying and infiltration of the government as well as a mediatic assault of the population to further their interests.

The future of seeds on the continent depends on a variety of actors: governments, rural and indigenous organisations, business groups, intellectuals, academics, agronomists and politicians. But without a doubt it also depends on a host of new actors, such as the independent networks of Caretakers and Seed Guardians, who have been able to adapt, recover and promote seeds, winning the heart of the people in the process and who continue to fight tirelessly for our food and the future wellbeing of humanity, one seed at a time.

# Seed Freedom in America



## Canada – April 2014

## Launch of Satya Graha against Bill C-18

As part of the Global Movement to Reclaim Seed as Commons, International Call for non co-operation and civil disobedience against laws such as Bill C-18 which will rob Canadaian farmers from their right to save and exchange seeds and further corporatize the food and agricultural system.

Vandana Shiva sows seeds for the future:
*http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/penney-kome/2014/04/vandana-shiva-sows-seeds-future-1*

Dr. Vandana Shiva:
Fighting the GMO giants
*http://pialberta.org/content/dr-vandana-shiva-fighting-gmo-giants*

Activist Vandanda Shiva calls for 'satyagraha' against federal Bill C-18
*http://blogs.edmontonjournal.com/2014/04/12/activist-vandanda-shiva-calls-for-satyagraha-against-federal-bill-c-18/*

VIDEO - Vandana Shiva in Edmonton, April 11, 2014
*http://youtu.be/gPreph9dtT8*

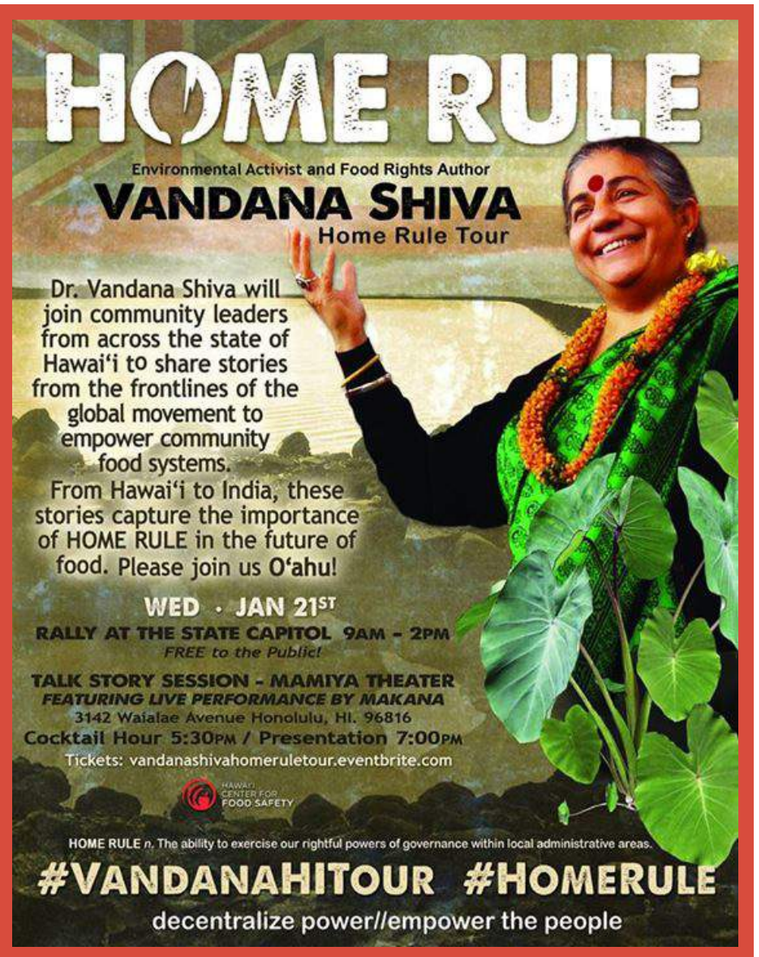


NORBERTO DUARTE AFP



## The Vandana Shiva Home Rule Tour – USA, Hawaii – January 2015

Conferences Videos
*http://www.navdanya.org/blog/?p=1973*




## PORTLAND OR, US: Help Make Portland Come Alive with YES ON 92 lawn signs! with Oregon Right To Know – Call to Action 2014:

*http://seedfreedom.in/events/help-make-portland-come-alive-with-yes-on-92-lawn-signs/*








## Fraley Lecture Opposition – Iowa, USA

Source: *http://seedfreedom.info/fraley-lecture-opposition-iowa-usa/*

A group of graduate students at Iowa State attended the Robert Fraley lecture on Oct. 15 to listen to his speech that was given in celebration of the World Food Prize. Out of the six students that came to silently protest, 5 wore gas masks and signs over their bodies that read messages like "Support Food Democracy." The sixth student wore a banana costume with a sign that read "keep me GMO-free."

"Our inspiration for doing the silent protest is in reaction to the recent email to Iowa State students in April of 2014 that offered volunteers $900 in return for consuming GMO bananas that were supposed to help increase vitamin A levels. Students have gathered together to discuss this topic, and are looking forward to doing other events in opposition of Iowa State's involvement in this GMO banana research".

—

NO GMO BANANA Campaign was launched on October 2nd by The Global Movement for Seed Freedom to raise awareness about GMO bananas (expand on vit.A modification) being based on Biopiracy.

Tests on humans carried out in Iowa are corporate props whose real aim is the rapid commercialization of pirated GMO bananas. If the Iowan trials are deemed successful, then the GMO bananas patented and issued from these tests will be used in Uganda and other developing countries.

## Seed Freedom Mobilization Tour of Latin America

In the wake of increasing assaults by biotech lobbies and unjust laws, the networks in Ecuador and Costa Rica invited Vandana Shiva and the Seed Freedom team to speak at conferences of the Latin American Alliance for Seed Freedom and Food Freedom, and conduct workshops and exchanges with Women Seed Guardians and farmers of Latin America as well as university students and seed savers and networks. They invited the Seed Freedom Movement to create a global solidarity for their movements, integrating them into the Global Citizens Response and thus help strengthen the movements. The Latin American Seed Freedom mobilization tour has led to a strengthening of disparate movements working on diverse issues to come together. The Free Seeds Network of Latin America made up of over 200 organizations, Bloque Verde, The Seed Guardians Network, The Global Alliance of Rights of Nature are all now core partners of the Seed Freedom movement.

As a follow up to the Seed Freedom mobilization tour, the 2 agronomists Mr. Fabian Pacheco and Permaculturist and Seed Saving Expert Javier Carrera are coming for capacity building and knowledge exchange with Navdanya farmers in India and Navdanya International farmers and European movements in Itay in Sep-Oct 2014.
Moreover, The members of the Bloque Verde and Seed Guardians Network of Costa Rica are visiting Navdanya India in September 2014 for the steering committee meeting to discuss strategies for the next phase of the Seed Freedom movement. Joint actions, campaigns research and seed rescue missions have been planned for the next phase of the Seed Freedom Movement.

Other Key outcomes:

- The SF mobilization tour of Ecuador, Costa Rica, (and meetings with presidential candidates in CR) Brazil, Peru and Mexico. Seed brought into the center of discourse at the Rights of Nature Conference in Ecuador in Jan 2014 as well as the Permanent Tribunal on RON presided by Vandana Shiva.

- The movement for creating GMO Free Zones resulted in over 90% of Costa Rica GMO Free.

- Columbia RES 9.70 put on hold

- Chile seed law rejected

- Support to the movement against gmo maize in Mexico by joining permanent people's tribunal , providing testimony for the class action suit that has put an interim halt on trials and offering solidarity through public meetings.




## Costa Rica – January 2014

Report with Photos, Videos, Articles:
*http://seedfreedom.info/seed-freedom-mobilization-tour-of-latin-america-costa-rica-january-2014/*

Vandana Shiva with Rural Women Network of Costa Rica



## Mexico – April 2014

Permanent People's Tribunal against GMO Maize , support the movement against GM Maize and testimony for the class action suit that has put an interim halt on trials and offering solidarity through public meetings
(Photo source:
*http://www.lacoperacha.org.mx/vivimos-democracia-trasngenica-vandana.php*)

Report with Photos and Articles:
*http://seedfreedom.info/seed-freedom-mobilization-tour-of-latin-america-mexico-april-2014/*

With René Sánchez Galindo and Adelita San Vicente



## SAN JOSÉ, COSTA RICA - Demonstration in front of Constitutional Court – Call to Action2014, with Bloque Verde: Report [Spanish]:

*http://seedfreedom.in/es/costa-rica-ecologistas-ganan-batalla-contra-los-transgenicos/*



Bloque Verde






Let's celebrate diversity

# Austria – Arche Noah

## EU seed marketing law: It's time for the diversity perspective!

The current reform of European seed marketing legislation opens a window of opportunity for systematic improvements in the area of agro-biodiversity and farm-saved seeds. After the rejection of the Barroso proposal by the European Parliament, the Juncker Commission gets a second chance to come up with a sound piece of legislation. Civil society hopes that they will seize that chance. ARCHE NOAH will continue its efforts for the mainstreaming of both plant and actor diversity.

By Iga Niznik, Advocacy Officer at ARCHE NOAH, The Seed Savers in Central Europe.

On May 6, 2013 the draft for a new EU seed marketing regulation was launched despite huge public protest. If the new EU seed regulation had been adopted, it would have meant huge administrative hurdles and hefty limitations for biodiversity and farm-saved seeds. It would have threatened local varieties, ignored costumers' and seed users' freedom of choice and imposed agribusiness interests.

The seed regulation was tailored to serve corporate interests, restricting non-industrial plants to tiny and bureaucratic niches. Whereas the conventional varieties were foreseen to be marketed without limits, heritage plants were to be doomed to small bags, small quantities, small operators, a "region of origin" norm or totally forbidden. The message of the law was clear: Diversity and farmers' seeds must be an exception; industrial crops must be the rule.

I am using the conjunctive and the past tense: For now small scale farmers, producers and consumers can give a sigh of relief! After a huge wave of protest arising from different European Member States -to our knowledge, at least 900.000 signatures against the seed marketing regulation have been collected-, the European Parliament rejected this very proposal in the first reading in March 2014.

In response to this, the newly installed Juncker Commission confirmed in December 2014 that they will not continue working with the rejected proposal. They might withdraw it and replace it with a completely new proposal, or, instead, modify the failed text[26]. In any case, we can expect a more or less new proposal for the reform of the seed marketing law. This presents the opportunity for the Juncker Commission to come up with a sound piece of legislation which could translate to a sustainable, systematic and future-oriented reform: Today's EU seed and plant reproductive material marketing law can be regarded as a dinosaur from the 20th century.

First of all, the industrial standard for crops must change from mandatory to voluntary. The "biodiversity-as-exemption" approach puts the cart before the horse. In a future-oriented legislation, biodiversity, heritage plants and farm-saved seeds must be allowed to become mainstream. According to the FAO, over the course of the twentieth century, we have lost about 75 percent of the world's agricultural diversity. And the loss continues; every day, plant varieties disappear forever. Plant lovers are not the only ones who should worry about this: plant diversity is fundamental to the food security of all people on Earth. Diversity is a treasure chamber. It ensures that our agriculture can adapt to changing environmental conditions and challenges, such as climate change, diseases and pests. It gives plants the ability to flourish under extreme conditions and in remote areas – in short, anywhere where humans want to live and eat.

Secondly, the legal basis of the legislation must be reconsidered. The legislation's legal basis has a detrimental impact on its main orientation. Today's existing legislation, as well as the rejected proposal, have as their legal basis the Common Agriculture Policy—and, therefore, its focus on increased productivity. This is odd, as increasing productivity is an outdated mantra from 20th century war times. In fact, today in Europe, we face not food shortage, but rather food waste and obesity. In the "underdeveloped" parts of the world, food scarcity is a distribution problem, not a productivity problem. Thus, we propose to make the seed marketing law reflect its name and actually make it a marketing law, with the internal market and the environment as its legal basis. In addition to that, one cannot protect biodiversity by increasing productivity, right? Because of this, we also demand the limitation of the legislation's scope to the anonymous market. Private exchanges of seeds which are in the public domain must remain outside of the scope of this legislation – be they free of charge or not.

Thirdly, a future oriented seed marketing legislation must enable a true and fair competition on the market. Today, we face a very worrying situation in which, according to studies, concentration is very high. For example, in Europe, only 5 companies own 95 percent of conventional vegetable varieties. Both the legislation in place, as well as its proposed replacement, constitute barriers to plant innovation, with greatly detrimental effects on seed users and consumers. Indeed, no competitive, differentiated and demand-driven seed market could possibly emerge under the currently applicable and proposed terms. This is due to very burdensome and limiting rules which make it incredibly difficult to enter the market. A start-up would be virtually forced to give up its efforts to enter the seed business. It is thus imperative that a future oriented seed marketing legislation allows fair and free competition between different private quality schemes, as well as offer incentives for small and biodiversity-oriented breeders and producers. Farmers, home gardeners and other seed users must not be forced to become customers of the industrial seed producers.

ARCHE NOAH is going to make every effort to put the diversity perspective on the table of European decision makers. As a seed savers organisation based in Austria and Brussels, our mission is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity, regenerating forgotten old varieties and promoting their availability in the market. "This time it's different", the Juncker Commission promised at the beginning of their term. In light of the unquestionable need for an ambitious reform of the EU seed and plant reproductive material marketing legislation, civil society hopes that the European Commission will grasp this historic opportunity to build a well-grounded, sustainable and irreproachable piece of legislation.

Learn more: www.arche-noah.at

Note

[26] There has been no formal decision at the time when this article went to press

ARCHE NOAH

# Croatia – Biovrt - u skladu s prirodom

The main goal of Biovrt -u skladu s prirodom (Bio-garden - in harmony with nature, NGO)- is to work on education and promotion of life in harmony with nature by raising awareness on sustainable development.
We promote biodiversity conservation, ecological and organic food production and knowledge of all plants in general.

## Activities:

### Conservation of biodiversity

In the last 9 years we have been planting a lot of old and rare varieties, constantly exchanging seeds with people from Croatia and beyond.
Through writings, columns and lectures we are constantly encouraging people to find the old types of seeds in their environment and to maintain them. Our President, Silvija Kolar-Fodor is the author of most of the content published on our website, but she also writes columns about organic gardening, life in harmony with nature and seed saving for popular newspapers and blogs («24 hours» - "Garden and home"/'Naturala.hr', 'Ve ernji list'), where she often mentions the necessity of preserving the old varieties, especially of forgotten fruits and vegetables.

I held many lectures around the country, in cooperation with many associations and other organizations. Topics:

- How and why to have an organic gardenSeeding techniques
- Seeding techniques
- The importance of preserving old varieties of seeds
- Organic gardening as a source of health, independence and inspiration
- Growing, collecting and storing of domestic seeds

### "School of gardening"

A program of workshops in organic gardening, conducted for the third year in Silvija Kolar-Fodor's garden(s). Participants are coming from across the state.

### Workshops for other organizations

(Gredica Vara din, GSR Rijeka..) - about organic gardening and seed saving.

### Seed exchanges

In collaboration with other organizations, we organize and participate in many seed exchanges, often after lectures. Since 2012, NGO Biogarden has conducted 22 lectures and participated in 22 seed-exchanges.

### Open door day

Every year in our gardens since 2012: lectures and garden tour for the public.

### Links:

Website: www.biovrt.com

Naturala.hr Blog:
http://www.naturala.hr/naturala-kolumne-o-autoru/autor-silvijakolarfodor-159.html

Vecernji list Blog:
http://blog.vecernji.hr/silvija-kolar-fodor

Lectures:
http://www.youtube.com/user/xeenaa13

School of gardening:
http://www.biovrt.com/article-category/Skola-vrtlarenja.html



Seed Saving Workshop

Workshops for other organizations:
http://www.biovrt.com/article/Odrzana-radionica-Skupljanja-sjemenja-u-Cudesnim-v.html

Activities 2014
http://www.biovrt.com/article/Biovrt-pregled-aktivnosti-2014.html

Activities 2013
http://www.biovrt.com/article/Biovrt-pregled-aktivnosti-2013.html

Activities 2012
http://www.biovrt.com/article/Biovrt-u-skladu-s-prirodom-pregled-aktivnosti-2012.html

Facebook group Biovrt. With more than 11 800 members, beginners and experience gardeners exchange advices, knowledge and seeds:
https://www.facebook.com/groups/330625128170/



School of Gardening »

Open Door Day »







Apple varieties at the Seed Festival

# Germany – Open house e.V.

Our activities in the past years where mainly focused on the annual seed festival in February. The idea is to convert our region from a center of GMOs to a center of diversity.

This aim we try to achieve via information about heirloom seeds and diversity. During the festival we offer lectures about these issues. We also show exhibitions of heirloom varieties like apples, corn, wheat, beans and others. For this event we invite seed savers from all over Germany. Also other people connected with heirloom seeds join the festival.



By the time the seed festival became very popular not only in our region, it became the biggest in Germany. Some other groups like permaculture groups and friends of the earth are inspired of the event and start more and more small seed festivals all around in the south of Germany.
We have the impression that many free time gardeners love to buy seeds and grow heirloom vegetables in their garden. Our concept to invite for a whole day of diversity makes the people to stay, listen to the lectures, view the exhibitions enjoy the atmosphere. They are really interested not only in the seeds but also in the information about political aspects, like seed laws, land grabbing and so on.
Last year Vandana Shiva visited the festival and the hall was overflowing. Up till now we invited always in the same place, because we think by repeating the concept year after year we reach more people. But after Vandana Shivas visit we had to find a bigger hall to have enough space for all the visitors.

We cooperate with a urban gardening group “stadtgärtner” from Nurnberg, with whom we invite now common activities and seed swap become even more important issues during the festival.
We are very happy that this February Peliti the seed saver organization from Greece is enriching the seed festival not only with their seeds but also with their music.

Seed Festival »

Potato Exhibiton at the Seed Festival »



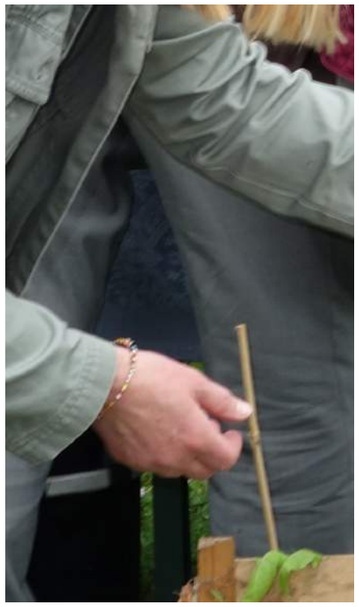



Heirloom varieties of our region

*We also collect local heirloom varieties and grow and propagate them in our garden to keep them alive and to give them to gardeners who are interested. To spread the word we give lectures about heirloom varieties, the work of women against GMOs and for diversity and workshops about how to get your own vegetable seeds.*

*Very important for us is the work of our seed ark. It is a group of people who meet regularly to exchange their seeds and experiences concerning seed harvesting, cleaning and growing heirloom varieties. In winter we usually meet indoors but in summer we visit each other in our gardens and we also visit interesting nurseries. In this way we learn more about seed keeping and propagating the diversity in our gardens. The seed ark is growing from year to year.*

Seedark members swapping plants







# Greece – Peliti

Aris Pavlos

## Brief Summary of Activities

PELITI (www.peliti.gr) is a Greek Non Governmental Organization for the protection and dissemination of Traditional Seeds, otherwise known as Farmers' Seeds. These are freely reproducible Common Goods belonging to the Public Domain.
All seeds are distributed for free. The work is offered on a volunteer basis. The publications are sold and this income, along with the donations, supports the basic expenses. Until recently Peliti had a staff of 4 part time employees. Due to the economic crisis in Greece, since June 2013 everybody has become a volunteer, with PELITI's work continuing as before.
Peliti's main actions include seed collection and distribution, a seed bank with 2000 accessions, annual seed festivals – local, national and international - publishing of relevant books and guides, providing environmental education for school children and for communities, action for a just legal framework on seed marketing through co-operation with other European organizations.

## The Challenge

Farmers were the first breeders. During the 10.000 years since agriculture begun, they domesticated wild plants to make available to us their conveniently harvested edible relatives. Traditional farmer seeds are saved by farmers on their farms (in situ) and replanted the following year. Traditional seeds are COMMON GOODS, as they are not covered by intellectual property rights or patents. On a legal and on a practical basis anybody can save seeds from the ripe plant and replant them and their ownership is collective and decentralized. Farmer varieties disappear if they are not cultivated because they return to their old wild status.
If we lose them we have to repeat the work performed over the last 10,000 years of agriculture. FAO has estimated that 75% of traditional varieties have been lost.

Today, another kind of seeds-Industry seeds are prevailing in many countries, while traditional seeds and seed saving knowledge by farmers is being lost. These prevailing Industry seeds cannot be 118 saved by the farmer either for technical and/or legal reasons as they are covered by intellectual property rights, or patents. Ownership is private and centralized as 10 companies cover more than 70% of the sales of the global seed industry market.

This global loss of traditional seeds applies also to Greece. For example, only 1% of wheat varieties and 2-3% of vegetable varieties cultivated 50 years ago is still in cultivation according to N. Stavropoulos the first director of the Greek National Seed Bank created in 1981. Greece being part of the EU has to follow European legislation. Existing legislation supports the commercialization of industry seeds through registration to a catalogue and puts restrictions to the circulation of farmer seeds .
A farmer cannot sell seeds unless registered, but registration criteria are suitable ONLY for Industry seeds. There is a separate catalogue for traditional seeds which includes strict geographical and quantitative restrictions. Actually European legislation treats traditional seed as an exception and kicks farmer's seeds out of the market stopping their evolutionary journey. European agricultural subsidies also discriminate in favor of Industry seeds. A farmer cannot obtain a subsidy or a reimbursement for crop loss, unless his/her seed is registered.

The outcome of legislation and policies is a heavy concentration of the seed supply creating an oligopoly which gradually increases prices and puts the small scale farmer into debt. The seed market in Greece, shares the characteristics of the European one where 95% of the vegetable seed market is covered by 5 companies and 74% of the corn seed market is covered by 5 companies. In Europe, from 2000 up to 2009 the seed prices increased by 30% on the average.

Greece is a cradle of biodiversity with a very high number of species and a large number of endemic ones. For this reason in 1981, FAO subsidized the creation of a seed bank in the city of Thessaloniki which now-due to the economic crisis is underfunded and does not work properly.
The goal of modern seed guardians towards decentralized "ownership" of seeds as Common goods to find the seeds before they get lost and to find the people with the relevant knowledge in order to pass both the seeds and the knowledge to a wider number of cultivators and to the younger generations.



εναλλακτική κοινότητα "Πελίτι" για μια αρμονική συνύπαρξη

Annual Peliti Festivals

# Peliti Activities

- A Greek seed-guardian association based on volunteer work, which was started by Panagiotis Sainatoudis in 1995, 20 years ago.
- In the year 2000 a network of cultivators from all over Greece was created. These seed guardians save traditional seeds and preserve the purity of a variety, replant them and are willing to distribute seeds FOR FREE to anybody who is interested to acquire the lost knowledge and use it. Every year Peliti publishes a book (in greek) which includes an extensive list of the varieties offered for free by each cultivator in each geographical area of the country. It also includes names of people who preserve rare animal breeds. Contact details of each cultivator-seed guardian- are given so that any interested person can contact them and ask for seeds and for the relevant knowledge for their planting and/or preservation. The book also includes various articles related to biodiversity.
- In the year 2006 Peliti started a network of local Peliti groups in different geographical areas of Greece. Lately these local groups have reached the number of 16. Each one of them consists of 15-20 people. All these people are volunteers who share the Peliti vision. They save and distribute seeds, organize public events about seeds, they visit schools to give speeches and plant seeds with the children and create school gardens. In schools cultural tools such as short theatrical representations are also being used. Many school teachers now in Greece cooperate with Peliti and continue the seed education on their own. Seeds are planted and then the seedlings are offered to the community during a public event.
- Peliti published the book "The Traditional Vegetable Cultivation and its Secrets". It is about an organic cultivation method that has been developed by a farmer of Peliti's network (no fertilizers, no pesticides, no manure – control by irrigation). It is what we can call "indigenous knowledge". The book will be translated in English soon.



- Since 2002, April 7 has been defined as the "Day dedicated to Seeds". During that day Peliti's local teams organize events (seed distributions and exchanges, speeches about the importance of local varieties..) all over Greece.
- For the period between October and February of each year Peliti replies to thousands of letters from people who are asking for seeds of traditional varieties.
- Peliti has already established a Seed Bank. There are already 2000 samples of traditional seeds gathered from all over Greece. At this stage the seeds in the bank are being evaluated with the help of the Peliti seedguardian network. It should be noted that Peliti considers that seed banks are indeed a precious treasury. This ex-situ type of preservation is considered complementary to Peliti's other priority which is actually the on farm preservation of agricultural biodiversity by decentralized networks of local farmers (in situ preservation) who continue spreading this indigenous knowledge to the current and to the next generations. As plants are living organisms who coevolve with humans and environmental conditions, as traditional varieties have the possibility to adapt to changing climatic conditions due to their wide genetic base, Peliti insists in creating renewable networks of cultivators who are interested in propagating agricultural diversity, climate change adaptation and environmentally friendly agriculture.





Annual Peliti Festivals

- Traditional varieties and seed saving in Greece are now propagated in many areas thus promoting both agro-biodiversity and a non intensive type of agriculture more environmentally friendly than intensive chemical agriculture which is imposed by the use of Industry seeds.
- Several other seed saving NGO's have emerged in Greece and are now promoting the same vision. For example two Peliti volunteers started in 2012 a youth seed saving effort in Athens (Dryades)for keeping the purity of the varieties. They have already created a network of 400 young people who are interested in learning how to keep and how to propagate a variety, most of them on their city balconies.
- The annual Peliti festivals which started in 1999, blend culture with increasing awareness about agricultural biodiversity. These festivals have been particularly successful during the last few years after they were transferred to the village of the Peliti headquarters in the so called Peliti land (6000 square meters of land offered by the municipality where seminars and festivals take place). Especially during the day of the festival, each spring, 3.000- 7.000 persons visit the village where the land of Peliti is located in order to participate in the seed distribution, the music and the dances. As Peliti strongly believes that the seed as a natural resource is both natural and cultural, culture and spirituality is always included in the events.







Annual Peliti Festivals

- The festival is an opportunity for the farmers that support the Peliti's network to meet and exchange information, seeds and knowledge. It has been confirmed that this meeting strengthens the relationship between these farmers. It is also an opportunity for other farmers and visitors, to get familiar with the network and the qualities of local varieties, having the possibility to get information and knowledge directly from farmers that already cultivate local varieties. They can also take local variety seeds for free Entrance to the festival is open to all visitors and it is for free.
- In 2012 and 2013 the annual seed festival was followed by an international conference on seed saving-promotion of traditional varieties, seed legislation. The premises of Peliti in the village of Mesohori, Paranesti area, were visited by seed guardians from many countries: Bulgaria, Turkey, France, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Portugal, Austria, Romania, Tunisia, Morocco, Holland, Slovakia, Spain, Tunisia, Morocco, Venezouela, Australia and India. The festival in April 2015 will also be international.
- Peliti participates in international networks that share similar goals. In 2014 we participated in a series of events in Greece and in Europe on the efforts to change the European legislation related to the marketing of plant reproductive material: We participated in the seed exchange outside of the European Parliament at the invitation of

Via Campesina at the legislation seminars in Vienna at the invitation of Arche Noah and at a Conference in Brussels organized by DEMETER INTERNATIONAL, entitled "WHO WILL BE THE OWNER OF SEEDS". Legislation was our major topic throughout the first half of 201. Our actions included informing European commissioners, Greek MEPs, Greek MPs and citizens with letters, personal contacts, films, booklets and public events.With our active participation in a pan-european network of seedkeepers coordinated by the Austrian organization Arche Noah, we played a decisive role in the positive outcome of the European Parliament's decision (who rejected the proposed bill for the Plant Reproductive Material – March 2014).

- In April 26, we held Peliti's main annual event in the land of Peliti in Messochori Paranestiou, with more than 4.000 visitors attending from various places around the country and abroad. This event was the starting point of the 1st International Solidarity Caravan for Seeds that left from the land of Peliti on 18th April 2014, travelled through Greece, Italy and arrived in south France, Kokopelli's base, expressing solidarity for Kokopelli and all farmers who keep their own seed. The Caravan was co-organized by Seedfreedom, Navdanya International and Kokopelli. Accompanied with music, events, speeches, seed offerings etc the Caravan sowed happiness and optimism.
- In October 2014 we re-started the construction of a building that started in 2010. We named the building "Peliti's seed house" and it's purpose is to host part of Peliti's seed collection, as well as host exhibitions for students and others and also workshops on traditional varieties. The building will be inaugurated in April 18th 2015 by Dr Vandana Shiva during the 2015 Peliti festival celebrating the 20th birthday of Peliti. The construction will be financed by national and international crowdfunding.





## Our Vision

We at PELITI take the view that we must assume responsibility for what is happening at the personal and global levels. It is a vital imperative that our vision of the world shape developments. Accordingly, each one of us must contribute to the solution in whatever way we can. It is our responsibility to focus on positive action. When we do this, everything improves: it is like magic. During the numerous environmental education events we explain that everybody has the capacity to use their knives and forks as levers for the achievement of a better model of agriculture and an improved state of the planet . This positive philosophy impregnates the Peliti Association, the motto on the website being (in Greek) "Do not lament the darkness, turn on a light". Peliti works for positive action promoting the personal responsibility of each one of us for implementing our vision for a better world based on low input agriculture and on democratic sharing of the earth's gifts by keeping seeds in the COMMONS.



Navdanya international

# Italy – Navdanya International

**SEED SOVEREIGNTY in ITALY**
**Maria Grazia Mammuccini***
**Navdanya International**

In recent decades, and in the Italian context also, the advent of a model of "industrial" agriculture characterized by hyper-productivity has resulted in the loss of biodiversity and native seeds: the increasingly mass-use of "commercial" seed varieties quickly supplanted the "old" local varieties and, in the early '900, Italy as well as Europe, has lost 75 percent of the genetic diversity of agricultural products.
The seed legislation has greatly facilitated this process. In Italy and in the EU's context, seeds are in fact subject to a special system which in Italy is dictated by the so-called "seed law" (L. 25 November 1971, n.1096 and subsequent amendments). The Act establishes, among other things, the National Register of Varieties which, at the Community level, flows into the Community Catalogue of Vegetable Varieties. The basic mechanism for seed activity of the European Community is homogeneous in all member countries, that is to say that the seed of a variety may not be commercialized if the same variety has not been registered in the National Register or in the Community Catalogue of Vegetable Varieties.

The varieties for which registration is sought must have some very specific characteristics: they must be distinct, stable, sufficiently homogeneous and must have a satisfactory agronomic value or use. The local varieties cannot have, by their nature, all these characteristics simultaneously. In fact, a definition of local varieties states that they have "... a large genetic basis, are difficult to improve, in terms of agronomic value, in the respective zones of adaptation, as they are the result of a sort of recurrent simple selection, implemented by the farmers for a long period of time". Thus it is mainly because of the regulations in force that the local varieties are likely to disappear and be completely supplanted by other commercial varieties.

With this regulatory framework small seed companies as well as whole national seed collections and institutions of the sector have been purchased at comparatively modest prices by large agrochemical corporations. For these corporations the seeds are just one of the items of their sales package of materials for agriculture and chemistry, and is another strategy of vertical integration of the global market for agricultural goods of mass consumption for food or other uses.

Public funding for development and conservation of seeds has steadily declined and has now reached levels so low that even the largest collections of seeds are in danger and are increasingly dependent on the so-called public-private partnerships. These partnerships allow private companies that sell seeds to further expand their control of world stocks of seeds on the base of their patents. While public seed collecting institutions are compelled to put their seeds for disposal for free, private companies are free to choose not to participate in this free trade system and abuse it for their own interests. In addition, each new step taken towards the concentration of seed stocks in the hands of private firms leads to a reduction of seed varieties and to a reduction in the number of breeders and scientists who maintain these stocks.

As this strategy on seeds to support a model of industrial agriculture was gaining momentum also in Italy, strong counter tendencies have simultaneously developed in the agricultural and food sector.
In fact, the characteristics of the Italian territory, which are mainly hilly and mountainous, 194 and especially the choice of enhancing local agro alimentary products and their bond with the territory, have favored, since the late 90's, the development of diverse farming models at the regional level, based on the protection of biodiversity where local varieties and seeds are not only a collective heritage, but also a real point of reference for cultural, social and agricultural identity of the country, and have an economic value and are fundamental for safe and healthy food.

For this reason Italy led the way in establishing regulations based on the Convention on Biodiversity after it was ratified in 1992 and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (2001). Tuscany was the first region to legislate in this area, in 1997, enacting a law to protect indigenous genetic resources (LR n. 50/97), and was also the first region in Italy that, based on the precautionary principle, legislated in 2000 to ban the cultivation of GM crops in its territory contributing substantially to the foundation of the European Network of GMO-free Regions.

In 2003, in line with its commitment on sustainable food and agriculture issues, the Region of Tuscany, at the initiative of Governor Claudio Martini, hosted in Florence the constitutive meeting of the "International Commission on food and agriculture" chaired by Vandana Shiva and composed of some of the leading experts in the world of alternative food systems.
The Commission, with support from the Region of Tuscany, elaborated and disseminated proposals for an alternative to the current food system based on diversity, locality and sustainability which first resulted in the "Florence Declaration" and subsequently was the basis of the Commission's first "Manifesto on the Future of Food" , followed by the "Manifesto on the Future of Seeds."

The Region of Tuscany committed to fulfilling the principles contained in these two documents, and among the first initiatives approved a regional law LR No. 64/2004, which allows the circulation of seeds at the local level and identifies even more effective tools for the conservation and enhancement of local varieties. This law has a symbolic economic value well beyond the regional level. Indeed, it may be the first brick of a system of rules that, while accepting the principle of the European single market and free trade, introduces mechanisms to protect rural communities and their intellectual property against the aggression of large companies, today widely favored by the mechanisms of standardization at the national and supranational level and by the current regimes of intellectual property protection.

Based on its experience of the previous regional law (1977) and on principles contained in the most important international documents, the Regional Law L.R.n. 64/2004 has as its main objectives:

- The protection of its heritage of landraces and local varieties not only from an economic and scientific perspective but also a cultural one. The extinction of a part of indigenous genetic resources would be a loss not only of a unique and unrepeatable heritage, but it would undoubtedly affect the culture and traditions of a population, linked also to its rural and agricultural traditions. In addition, the conservation of biodiversity in the agricultural and the zootechnical fields is strictly linked to policies to enhance quality and typicality of the agrofood productions.

- The landraces and local varieties belong to the natural heritage of farming zootechnical and forestry interest of Tuscany, being part of the natural elements that characterize its territory and certainly constitute certainly an asset. The landraces and local varieties are therefore a natural heritage of Tuscany and as such the region guarantees the collective use through the tools provided. Thus this system has basically a two-pronged approach, one of which addresses the protection and the other the enhancement of the local genetic heritage.



This same regional law contains other closely linked tools for the protection and defense of landraces and local varieties. These are:

- The Regional Directories (Repertori Regionali). These consist of a database of local Tuscan varieties and landraces. The local varieties and landraces listed and described in the repertories have been entered by universities, research institutes, farmers associations, individual citizens (currently the local varieties registered are about 750, of which over 600 are at risk of extinction). The inclusion of a local variety or landrace in the Directory is subordinate to the presence of the characterization of the same, both from a morphological point of view (sometimes genetic), and from the point of view of the link with the rural culture and with the agricultural and zootechnical local tradition.
- The Regional Germplasm Bank for the ex situ conservation of local varieties at risk of extinction of the regional repertory.
- The Farmer's Custodians, farmers implementing in situ conservation in the areas of origin of the varieties listed in the repertories.
- The conservation and security network, created to include in the network the Regional Germplasm Bank , the Farmers Custodians and other entities who may be interested for various reasons in the conservation of a particular local variety threatened with extinction. The other entities in the network can have motives other than purely scientific ones, such as cultural, gastronomic or linked to the boosting of tourism for the development of a depressed area.

The network is, above all, a place where one can try to implement all the actions aimed at ensuring "sustainable use" of agricultural, zootechnical and forestry resources. The participants in the network - Farmer Custodians, Sections of the Bank and others – undertake activities of conservation, both in situ and ex situ, of local endangered varieties and put them back in circulation within the network itself. The importance of circulation and exchangeof seeds among farmers is essential for the conservation of biodiversity and the preservation of local varieties from extinction. In this regard, in accordance with the law on seeds, non-profit circulation and exchange of seeds are allowed inside the network, in "small amounts", and in well-defined geographic areas in order to maintain and reproduce.

The tag which stipulates "Made from local variety / landrace - Tuscan Regional Law 64/2004 and that can be affixed to the label of a product as is or transformed, actually obtained from local varieties or landraces at risk of extinction.



Its purpose is the protection of the right to information and consumer choice whereby the consumer knows that purchasing the product contributes to the protection of biodiversity values.

This is how Tuscany has protected local varieties from patents of multinational corporations and has sanctioned, for the first time on a legal level, collective ownership of local varieties and in fact also the principle of seeds as a common good. This major work of recovery of varieties and local seeds has also provided an innovative path for scientific research methods through a participatory approach to open collaboration among farmers, local communities and researchers and is fertile ground for practicing a new system of knowledge for addressing the ongoing environmental and climate crisis, based on integration between scientific and traditional knowledge and investment of public resources to support a new research system capable of producing innovation for the common good.

The conservation of local varieties has also offered a real opportunity for small farmers to boost local circuits of production and consumption through direct sales, even with innovative organizational forms of short chain, such as markets, shops and purchasing groups in solidarity, supported at Regional level and by local institutions. These initiatives provide both sources of income for small farmers and opportunities for citizen-consumers to rediscover the traditions and local knowledge. But above all this innovative ruling, has reaffirmed mass selection conducted over the centuries by farmers and the value of the work of those (old and new farmers) that have not surrendered to industrial agriculture and, with their passion and dedication, have maintained, especially in mountainous and disadvantaged areas where intensive agriculture was almost impossible to set, a reservoir of biodiversity that is now a heritage of the whole community.

Other Italian regions have taken up the example of Tuscany's experience with the L.R 64/04, pending national legislation that would give full effect to the principles of the FAO's Convention on Biodiversity and International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.
Six other regions besides Tuscany have legislated on agro-biodiversity: Lazio in 2000, Umbria in 2001, Friuli Venezia Giulia in 2002, Marche in 2003, Emilia Romagna and Basilicata in 2008. Many regions that had not yet passed laws, however, work with specific programs and projects on agro-biodiversity. Almost all regional laws provide tools such as: directories / regional registers of local landraces and varieties; regional banks of germplasm; growers / farmer custodians; the storage and security network (bank of germplasm- Farmers Custodians), the enhancement of local landraces and varieties (seeds, products.....)

There are many bodies, including research Institutions working on agro-biodiversity and preserving a priceless heritage of varieties and local seeds.
In particular: the Network of Research Facilities of the Council for Agricultural Research (CRA) under the Ministry of Agriculture (from the data presented to the National Conference on Biodiversity in Florence in 2010, there are numerous accessions: 8,380 varieties of fruit, 5,202 of vineyards, 15,970 forest species, 16,410 of cereals, 110 of vegetables, etc..), the network of facilities of the National Research Council (Consiglio Nazionale della Ricerca - CNR) headed by the Ministry of University and Scientific Research (data indicates 80,000 varieties in the seed bank, 1,860 variety of fruit, 2,500 olive trees, etc..); finally, many universities and other research institutions, at the national and local level, work on varieties and local seed in relation with the regions and local authorities.

Unfortunately most of these research institutions suffer from a chronic lack of public funding that is seriously putting at risk a priceless heritage of local seed varieties and the work of many researchers over the years have ensured the recovery and maintenance of such assets.
In the wake of the legislation of the regions that in recent years have worked on varieties and local seeds, there have been novel changes at both national and community level regarding the marketing of seeds of conservation varieties. In 2007 the Italian seed law was modified with the introduction of innovative concepts and tools to enable the marketing of conservation varieties in Italy, in the absence of clearer rules at the community level.

www.navdanyainternational.it/

Subsequently the European Commission, after years of intense debate, finally pronounced on the marketing of the seeds of conservation varieties of agricultural species (or open field) and of the tuber potato seed (blocked since 1995) and further regulatory changes are under consideration.
It is clear that the regulation of conservation varieties puts into question the entire regulation of the production and distribution of seeds, with the aim of strengthening the rights of farmers, preventing the formation of monopolies and strengthening the capacity of local communities to conserve and enhance biodiversity through social interaction.

Of recent note at the national level, at the initiative of Hon. Susanna Cenni, is the bill for the protection and enhancement of agricultural and natural biodiversity, presented to the House of Representatives some two years ago and which brings to the national level the labor and the tools implemented by the regions in recent years. It provides, among other things, for the protection of intellectual property of local varieties and the possibility of movement and exchange of seeds. The law has now been approved unanimously by the House's Agriculture Committee in May 2012 and is currently waiting to conclude the parliamentary process.

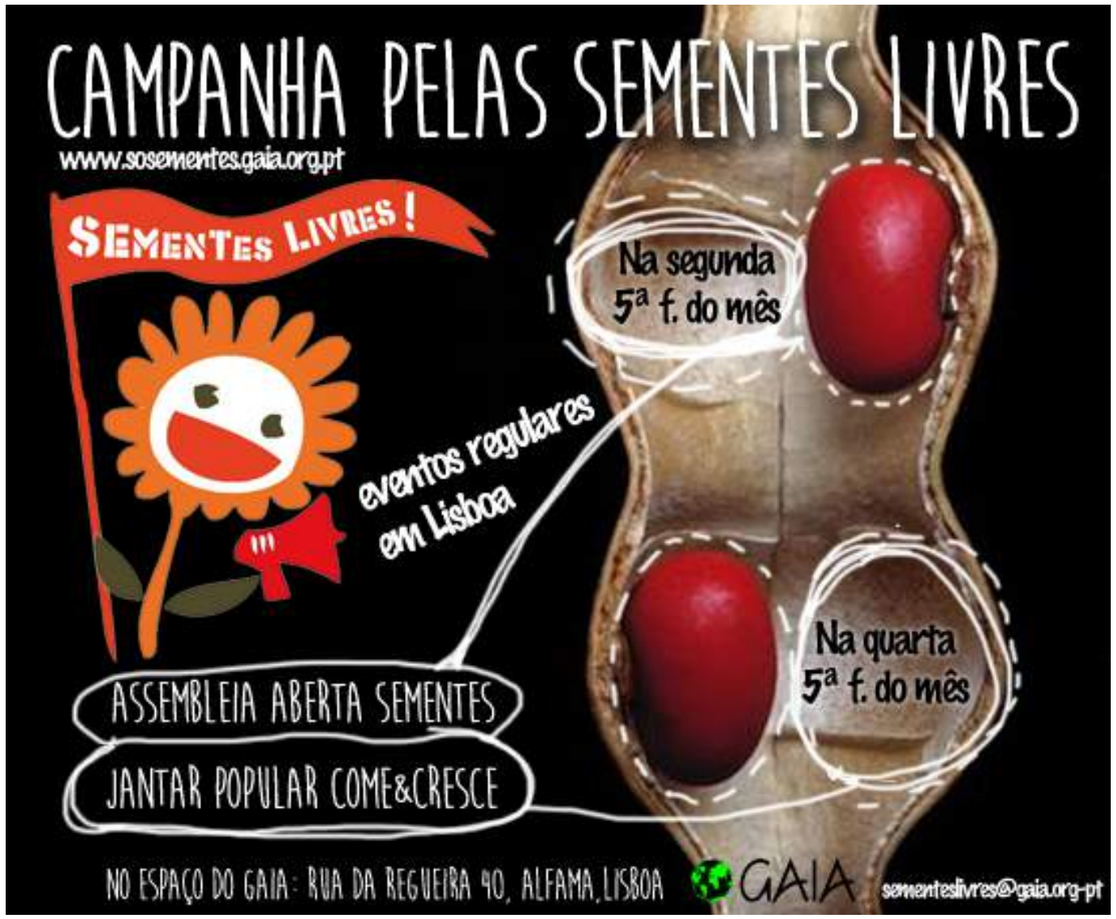
But one of the most valuable results, partly as a consequence of these innovative regulatory instruments is that, beginning with Tuscany, the experiences of farmer guardians spread like wildfire; the "Fierucola" of the seeds and the Association of Farmers Custodians (Associazione Agricoltori Custodi) were the first networks of local seeds and custodian farmers and today they are flourishing, even at a national level, with important experiences in this direction such as, among others, the Network of Rural Seeds (Rete dei Semi Rurali) and the Association of the "Women in the Field" (Donne in Campo).

In all these years an enormous heritage of varieties and local seeds has thus been accumulated in our country, thanks, firstly, to the commitment of the farmers guardians that, together with researchers, technicians and local communities, who found in Local Authorities and Regions in particular the basic support to implement activities and tools that can now be available to all farmers and to the society as a whole.

This heritage is now a fundamental value for the future of agriculture and food. The current crisis is making unequivocally clear the failure of the industrial model of agriculture pursued in all these years by the multinational agribusiness. Indeed, today the companies most affected by the crisis are the monocultural industrial companies, while those more resilient are the diversified and multifunctional organic farms based on biodiversity and local markets and for which varieties and local seeds are the fundamental basis for their work and to produce safe and healthy food for all. It is therefore necessary that all those who have worked in recent years to preserve and maintain the local seeds are able to form an alliance to integrate their work, making it known to all citizens and to find innovative and creative solutions to make local seeds available for everybody. For all the farmers who want to plant them, for the many urban and peri-urban gardens that are spreading in many cities, for school gardens, for family gardens and for all the people who, even simply with a jar, want to contribute to help save native seeds.

This is why the Alliance to promote the global campaign "Save our seeds" and to declare seeds as common goods, promoted by Vandana Shiva, can be an extraordinary opportunity to give strength to the work that we have conducted together in these years and to create a more extensive solidarity network to save, preserve and disseminate varieties and local seeds also in our country.

*Maria Grazia Mammuccini, former director of ARSIA, Tuscany's Regional Agency for Development and innovation in farming and forestry from1995 to 2010.
She is coordinator of the Scientific Committee of the Italian Foundation for Research in organic and biodynamic agriculture (FIRAB) and Vice-president of Navdanya International in Florence.
www.navdanyainternational.it




# Portuguese Seed Sovereignty Campaign – "Campanha pelas Sementes Livres" Founded January 2011

Inspired and powered by GAIA – Portuguese environmental action group Partnered by the environmental organisations Campo Aberto, MPI and Quercus, and by the Portuguese Stop GMO Platform Supported by close to 100 associations, collectives, cooperatives, farms and community gardens in Portugal.

Image of the Campaign

**Report by Lanka Horstink – Campaign Coordinator March 1, 2015**

## Acting for Seeds in Portugal

The idea for a Portuguese Seed Sovereignty Campaign was born at the October 2010 European GMO-free Regions Conference, where members from German advocacy organisations warned against the imminent threat to seed freedom posed by the upcoming unified European Seed Law.
A few months later a network of national campaigns was formed under the umbrella name "European Seed Sovereignty Campaign" and in April 2011 the first international action was undertaken. At that time the Campaign's main objective was to halt the upcoming European Seed Law, but whenever possible we also worked towards additional objectives such as the promotion of ecological farming, food sovereignty and an end to patents on seeds and to the use of GMO's in food and farming.

In Portugal we strove from the beginning to create a network of organisations, groups, collectives and individuals that share the mission of keeping seeds free. The idea was that the Campaign would act as a self-organised movement, but with an organisational core guaranteeing a basic operational structure, such as a website, mailing-lists and campaign materials. Very soon we had five organisational partners and close to one hundred collective subscribers, besides thousands of individual supporters. With this momentum we managed to create enough noise to put seed freedom issues on the Portuguese public agenda, where it remains today.

## Portuguese context

Portugal presents a very different picture from the North of Europe, sharing some characteristics with the Global North and others with the Global South. It is undoubtedly a developed country, with all the facilities that most Westerners are used to, and with some very innovative products developed in-house. But not all the sectors have caught up, nor all of the regions and their populations. Agriculture in Portugal is an example of this paradox. Farming activities still occupy half of Portugal's territory, but contribute little to the country's income (< 3%).
Possibly partly due to the rugged terrain in the Centre and North, and the difficult access, agriculture here is still largely small-scale: 75% of farms are family farms under 5 hectares. However, half of these farmers are over 65 years old and the business farms, that only represent 2% of all farms, are buying up the arable land (especially in the Alentejo and Algarve, the Southern regions, where the land is flatter and monoculture becomes an option) and are currently managing around 25% of the farmed land. In Portugal there is a real threat of drastically losing food sovereignty, already quite precarious considering that Portugal currently has to import 20% of its food necessities, a number which is growing especially for cereals and oil seeds, partly due to the EU quota system.
Agriculture is also not sustainable economically: almost none of the small farmers are able to live exclusively from their production. And if the older farmers are not replaced, the 2 million hectares of arable land that have already been abandoned could expand even further with the risk of the countryside becoming entirely deserted. There is also a tendency to abandon vegetable cultivation for meat production, especially bovine and swine, which does not favour biodiversity nor food sovereignty. Although Portugal presents ideal soil and climate conditions for organic agriculture, so far this constitutes only 3% of all farming activities.

2012 Fortnight of Action: "seed freedom mural"





Like other countries from the European Union, Portugal's agro-biodiversity has suffered significantly with the promotion of intensive, specialised and large-scale farming methods that were the EU trademark in the '80s.

Although Portugal's older and less schooled farming population coupled with the rugged terrain in much of the territory and recent environmental legislation has slowed down the industrialisation process, the assault of fast-food and supermarket chains on rural areas have facilitated the abandonment of traditional plant species and animal breeds. Many farmers only produce a small fraction of their food needs and for many vegetables prefer to buy commercial seeds and breeds. Most of them have little knowledge of the negative effects of pesticides and herbicides and the only reason they are not more used is economic.

Still, Portugal has an enviable agro-biodiversity compared to the Northern European countries.

All over the country there are farmers who do endeavour to save their traditional seeds, sometimes for generations. And for over 10 years, the main Portuguese seed savers association, Colher para Semear, has worked hard to catalogue and reproduce the Portuguese seed treasure trove.

They are currently preserving over 2.000 traditional edible plant varieties. Unfortunately, the rate of disappearance of traditional varieties surpasses that at which the still very small number of seed savers can preserve them. The older farmers very often take both varieties and the knowledge associated with their cultivation and use, almost literally to the grave.

Old pumpkin varieties at the annual Seed Savers Meeting

# PORTUGUESE SEED CAMPAIGN – Strategic approach

## Demands

- The right to produce our seeds from our own harvests, to re-sow them and to give or sell them to others;
- The exemption of open pollinated varieties from registration, regulation or certification, to be freely exchanged and marketed;
- The promotion of regional crop varieties by supporting in situ conservation and the men and women who save and select natural varieties;
- The protection of local and traditional knowledge, culture and gastronomy associated with regional plant varieties;
- The banning of genetic technologies and patents on plants and plant genes in food and agriculture;
- Agricultural policies that promote low-impact, low-input agriculture instead of subsidising industrial crops with high energy and chemical inputs.

## Objectives

- Contribute to building national and international resistance to unfair laws that restrict or eliminate the autonomy of peoples in determining their own food and agricultural policies and that remove common resources from the public domain.
- Support and promote the international appeal to end patents and intellectual property rights on life and to end genetic engineering in food and agriculture.
- Support, empower and promote a national network that preserves and defends traditional seeds, knowledge and gastronomies.

## Strategy

- Inform and activate
- Empower and decentralise
- Put pressure on institutional decision-makers
- Grow the movement
- Keep the knowledge up to date and widely shared

## Evolution of the Seed Campaign in Portugal

Our strategic approach has varied somewhat from year to year since 2011, since we were forced to follow the agenda set by Brussels, the threat of a European Seed Law being imminent.
Nevertheless, the two main pillars of our action strategy have always been to:

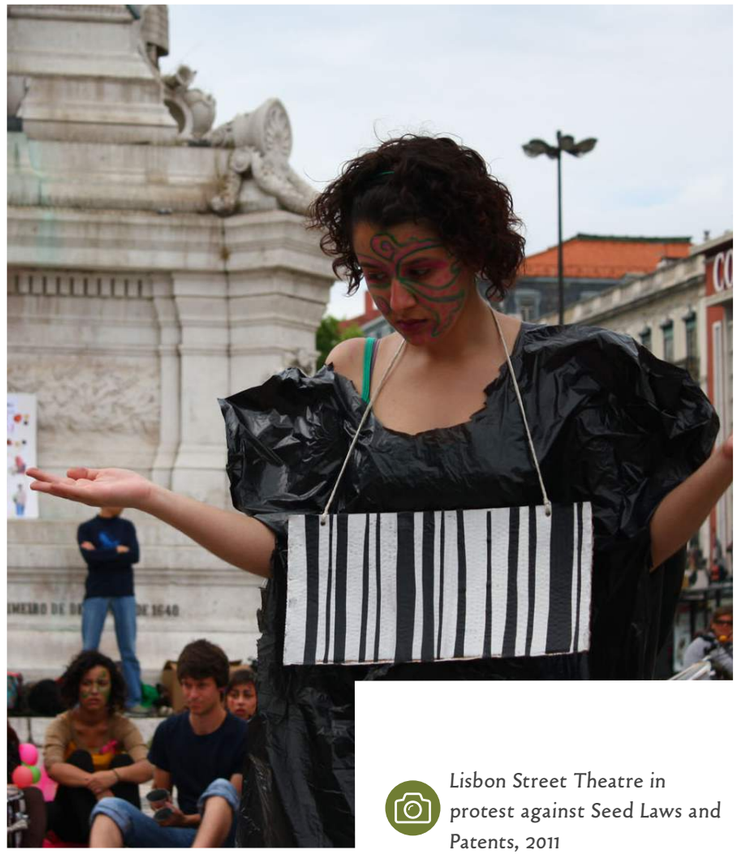
- Raise awareness and stimulate debate around seed sovereignty issues.
- Empower citizens, farmers and seed/food sovereignty defenders.

The empowerment is meant to be two-fold: spreading the knowledge and skills to actually save seeds, especially traditional varieties; and passing on information and techniques for awareness raising and political campaigning.
Until the political death of the European Seed Law, a significant part of our time was also dedicated to lobbying, petitioning and organising public protests. Besides that we needed to gain critical mass quickly to make our protests heard. Ever since European Parliament rejected the Seed law in 2014, we have changed our lobbying strategy to encompass a broader approach, warning about "bio-capitalism" and "Earth-grabbing" (i.e. privatising and trading nature) and explaining the bigger picture, such as how patents on seeds may undermine the right to food, how free trade agreements strangle local food and seed markets in the Global South. We have also turned to soft lobby approaches such as meeting with government representatives that work with seed preservation and control to "exchange" views.

We would have liked to have time to improve the scientific underpinnings of the campaign and to create more durable campaign materials, such as a "black book on seeds" and a handbook on seed saving networks, but when working with a small group of volunteers that keep the campaign running in all its invisible details, priorities have to be set and some of our ambition curbed!

## Main Campaign activities 2011-2015

In 2011 we launched the Seed Sovereignty Campaign with an 11-page briefing for partners and supporters, a website to inform, share and activate people and a Europe-wide petition. April 17 (International Day of Peasant Struggle) and 18 marked the first International Action Days for Seed Sovereignty in Europe and in Portugal we participated with two big events in community gardens in the largest cities, Lisbon and Porto and a protest march where we handed a copy of the European petition (with 60.000 signatures) to representatives of the European Commission and finalised with a street theatre "dramatising" the effects of patents on life. In the same year we managed to gather enough donations in fundraisers and workshops to finance the trip of the Australian seed savers Michel and Jude Fanton to Europe. In Portugal, the couple went on a road trip with us for 10 days, offering seed saving workshops while we organised debates and screenings of their film "Our Seeds", subtitled by volunteers.



Lisbon Street Theatre in protest against Seed Laws and Patents, 2011



This Seed Savers Tour attracted hundreds of visitors to our events and resulted, among other press coverage, in a television report on seed freedom and the Seed Campaign.

In 2012, besides regular press releases, campaign presentations and other PR work, we managed to organise three larger events to mark the 17th of April, the RIO 2012 Summit and the first Fortnight of Action for Seed Freedom by the newly founded global Movement for seed freedom. For RIO 2012 we published a "secret file" in several parts, denouncing the fallacy of the Green Economy and the continued pillaging of our planet.
We celebrated the first Seed Freedom Fortnight with a women-inspired march through the centre of the capital, spreading free seeds from a farm cooperative and handing a big bag of rye seeds to a representative of the European Commission with the request to keep all seeds as free as those!

In May 2013 the European Commission finally released their proposal for a European Seed Law and we responded, in concert with our European partners, with new protests, petitions and open letters from civil society. For a whole year the main focus was on keeping the pressure as high as possible on institutional decision-makers. We went to the newspapers, TV programmes, spoke at events and festivals, met with our European colleagues to speak in one voice. The hard work paid off: we all achieved a major victory in March 2014 when European Parliament rejected the (several times amended) Seed Law proposal.




Michel and Jude Fanton at a Seed-inspired Permaculture workshop in Coimbra, 2011 »

"Keep your hands off Our Seeds!" Seeds with a message at the 2012 Seed Freedom March «






Spreading Free Seeds during the Seed Freedom March, October 2012) »







Start of the Seed Freedom March, October 2012 »

Materials of the 2011 Seed Savers Tour «

After the political death of the European Seed Law, we applied our energy to transforming the Seed Campaign into a movement, passing on our knowledge of campaigning and advocacy and stimulating the sharing of knowledge and skills that are fundamental for food and seed sovereignty. We also participated in the 2014 Free Pepper campaign, a European initiative to overturn patents on plants and seeds.
In 2015 we will organise our fourth Food and Seed Activist Meeting, which for the second time will take place at a farm, mixing theory and practice, working on strategies and working with the earth, debating and acting. We feel campaigning needs to imitate life: it should be diverse, it should evolve, it should be fertile, most importantly it should be free!

Website:
www.sosementes.gaia.org.pt
Email: sementeslivres@gaia.org.pt

Campaign presentation and some of the event reports in English:
http://gaia.org.pt/node/16228

Campaign press centre:
http://gaia.org.pt/node/15902

European Seed Sovereignty Campaign:
www.seed-sovereignty.org

A 2-minute video of one of our events in 2013:
https://vimeo.com/79926448

For a brief presentation of the Portuguese Seed Savers association, Colher para Semear, see http://gaia.org.pt/node/417

The more recent initiative Seed Circles (Círculos de Sementes) has also contributed to encouraging people in Portugal to save seeds:
http://circulosdesementes.blogspot.pt/p/o.html





Marching with a Seed Freedom song through Alfama, Lisbon, October 2013 »

Preparing to sow, workshop at the 2014 Seed Activist Camp »



# Portugal – Círculos de Sementes – Circles of Seeds

**Some things about us:**

- The coordination is made by 2 volunteers, Pepa Bernardes and Frederica Teixeira and all the activities are prepared and conducted voluntarily by the participants of all Circles of Seeds.
- We don´t have funding, everything we do is free, when we travel to give a workshop the circle of seeds that call us pays the costs of the travel.
- We are members of the Portuguese Seed Sovereignty Campaign and the Seed Freedoom Movement since October 2012 to December 2014.

circulosdesementes.blogspot.pt/

## The focus of our mission is...

- To create a network of Circles of Seeds throughout the country to rediscover, gather and share our national heritage of ancient and traditional seed varieties.
- To share information about Seed Saving and awareness lectures all over the country.

## Our on-going Projects...

- The Circles of Seeds Seed Bank
- The Circles of Seeds Network
- National gathering every year, were we celebrate the Seeds, dance, share seeds, good organic food, free workshops, ...
- Awareness lectures on the importance of preserving local seed varieties
- Free Seed Saving Workshops all over the country
- Discovering the Seeds (workshops for primary schools)
- Preparing a seed saving book
- Bring Dr Vandana Shiva to Portugal





## We held ...

- 27 Seed Saving Workshops all over the country, in schools, farms, events, festivals, fairs...
- Two National gatherings
- 4 Lectures on Food Sovereignty in schools
- 12 Awareness lectures on the importance of preserving local seed varieties
- Seed and plants sharing events
- Visits to small local farmers

## We participate

- In Portuguese Seed Sovereignty Campaign meetings, events, workshops and visits.



## We created and maintain

- The Circle of Seeds blog
- The Circle of Seeds Facebook page
- The Circles of Seeds Seed Bank

List with photos of all activities we have been doing:
http://circulosdesementes.blogspot.pt/p/calendario-de-actividades.html

circulosdesementes.blogspot.pt/



## Our History

This project began on the 14th October 2012, following an international appeal by Dr. Vandana Shiva to join hands for Seed Freedom globally.
In response, we organized a seed workshop in Évora, Portugal.
We decided that we must act without delay.
We searched a little bit and...
To meet the urgent need to rescue our country's existing traditional seed, and share vital seeds knowledge, we put together the concept of Seed Circles, with the idea of a living seed bank.

## And the result...
## CIRCLES OF SEEDS

A Circle of Seeds is a simple idea:
It is to gather a group of friends or neighbours, each of whom commits to grow and save seeds from one or more crops. Each member selects a crop variety and takes on to sow, tend, harvest, clean, dry and store its seeds.
At the meetings everyone shares their seeds and the information they have on the variety chosen. Just imagine...
If the Circle has 12 people and each person chooses a variety, after one year, the Circle's seed bank will contain seeds from 12 varieties.
The following year, each person chooses another variety and now there are 24 varieties. After 5 years...

circulosdesementes.blogspot.pt/





## What is needed to start a circle?

- A person to organize the Circle.
- People interested in seed saving. We suggest no more than 12 people to maintain support, focus and commitment.
- Availability to meet on a quarterly basis.
- Seed cleaning, stirring and storing items such as bottles and strainers.
- Seeds of good quality, if possible local and heirloom
- A vegetable garden.
- Field diary for plant species (provided by the Circles Network)

## Guidelines:

- People need some knowledge of seed harvesting, cleaning and storing of seed
- For groups without this knowledge, the Network offers free advice and workshops
- Priority should be given to traditional seeds but species from other regions can also be cultivated if considered important (eg Stevia).
- Transgenic and hybrid seeds or are not allowed.
- The seeds are grown for free exchange. No commercial transactions should be involved.
- Each person selects to take care of a plant of their choice; more can be selected if desired.
- As much information as possible should be recorded about each variety in the field diary provided by the Circles Network.
- Each member commits to share the seeds they have grown with other members of their Circle and with their Circle's seed bank. In addition, each Circle contributes seeds to the Network Seed Bank
- All Circles are self-organising.
- Circle meetings are recommended quarterly.
- There will be a national gathering of all Circles at each year.
- National Network Meetings are organised by Circles on a rotational basis.
- The Network offers free advice, support and onsite workshops. Circles are responsible for hosting workshop facilitators and covering their travel expenses.
- Each circle has a coordinator responsible for liaising with the Circles Network.

circulosdesementes.blogspot.pt/



## The Network Seed Bank

The Network Seed Bank will serve to:

- Preserve the diversity of seed
- Be a repository for all Circles
- Provide seeds for new Circles

## How it works

- All circles have access to the list of existing Seeds in the seed bank
- Whenever the Circles need seeds, they request the varieties they want (provided they are available) and return the same variety and amount whenever they can (if possible at the end of the season)
- Postage costs are covered by the Seed Circles requesting seeds
- The Circles send their seeds to the Network Seed Bank along with their completed field diaries
- On arrival, each batch of seeds is recorded on a register with all available information
- All batches of seed sent to Circles are accompanied by a record
- People outside the Network may also request seeds in exchange for double the yield the following year

A little movie of our 2nd National Gathering in 2014
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rv6fVaBRf1c#t=40

To find out more and to register your Seed Circle with the National Network of Seed Circles, please contact:
Círculos de Sementes / Circles of Seeds - Organisation's name: Wakeseed - Country: Portugal
Contact: 962658017 - circulosdesementes@gmail.com









circulosdesementes.blogspot.pt/

# United Kingdom - The Landworkers' Alliance and The South West Seed Savers' Cooperative

**Farmers join to save the seeds that feed us**
**by Ashley Wheeler – The Ecologist, 6 January 2015**

Source:
http://www.theecologist.org/campaigning/2702693/farmers_join_to_save_the_seeds_that_feed_us.html

Farmers and growers in south-west England have united to reclaim the lost skill of seed saving, writes Ashley Wheeler. They are determined to grow, develop, share and disseminate openpollinated seeds, and oppose EU laws granting commercial plant breeders a legal monopoly on the seeds that sustain our lives.

For thousands of years seed saving was common practice for farmers and growers. As fundamental as maintaining soil fertility and crop husbandry.

It was the norm for farmers to select the plants most suited to their land and collect the open pollinated seed from the best plants. This selected seed adapts to the climate and soil type of that land, known as a landrace.

This leads to a hugely diverse living bank of seeds that constantly adapts to changes and results in resilient plants that have an ability to tolerate stress caused by environmental pressures.

Unfortunately, since the uptake of modern F1 hybrid seed, whose offspring would not produce traits true to the parent, and could therefore not be saved to reproduce reliable crops, farmers' landraces have dwindled.

Hybridisation came about after agricultural fertiliser companies took Mendel's knowledge of plant genetics and started breeding varieties of F1 hybrid seeds that could not be farmerreproduced. The F1 seed produced uniform, vigorous and nutrient-demanding crops. But breeding from them led to offspring with lack of vigour and lower yields.

This commercial advantage was taken on board by the fertiliser companies who began breeding seeds and adding them to their catalogues – with a view to the profits to be made both from selling the seeds, and selling the fertiliser the F1 plants needed to perform.

## Seeds as 'Intellectual property'

The first Plant Patent Act came about in 1930 in the US and led to large agricultural companies, who bred F1 hybrids (along with manufacturing chemical fertilisers and pesticides) being given some legal protection for 'their' seeds.

Seed varieties and plants eventually became 'intellectual property'. The result is that 67% of the world's propietary seed (seed with intellectual property rights) is owned by just ten companies.

These companies pushed the hybrid vigour of these seeds and farmers became reliant on them as they had the fertilisers and pesticides that these same companies were manufacturing. The Green Revolution saw farmers become dependent on this modern way of farming and lost the more traditional skills of rotation and seed saving.

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation estimates that since the 1900's around 75% of plant genetic diversity has been lost due to farmers relying so heavily on hybrid seed.

## Current legislation

Seed legislation was introduced in the early 1900s to regulate the seed market and assure consumers that the seeds they were buying would be viable and come true to the description on the packet.

Currently the seed legislation in the EU is made up of Directives which were put in place by the European Commission.
Such directives can be interpreted by member states, resulting in different levels of leniency.

So now new legislation has been proposed in the form of an EU Regulation which must be adhered to in its entirety across all member states.

The result in the UK would be much tighter controls of seed saving and lead to the loss of many open pollinated varieties.
The proposed regulation was rejected by both the Environment and Agriculture Committees and has been sent back to the Commission for redrafting.

However, it is likely that the Commission will be under huge pressure from the agri-industrial lobbyists. Furthermore, if the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership goes through, more pressure will be applied from the US seed industry.

They will no doubt aim to mould the regulation to benefit the large scale seed companies that already control so much of the commercially available seed.

## Reclaim the seeds!

Obviously this is all rather disheartening, but it should be a reminder that as farmers, growers and a nation of amateur gardeners we must reinvigorate the skill of seed saving, and take back control of our seeds, and ultimately our food system.

One of the first steps of food sovereignty – set out in the 2007 Declaration of the Forum for Food Sovereignty is to assert "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems."

By continuing to save and breed seed varieties that are locally adaptable we can begin to reverse this loss of biodiversity and build up a constantly evolving living seed bank.

It is of paramount importance that we work to bring back life to the skill of seed saving and set-up networks amongst farmers and growers to start breeding more open pollinated seed varieties that can be exchanged amongst local groups.

## The South West Seed Savers' Cooperative

With the threat of the EU Regulation controlling the exchange and marketing of seeds and our belief that farmers should have the right to saving, sowing and exchanging their own seeds, The Landworkers' Alliance have set-up a seed saving network amongst growers and farmers in the South West of England.

The network was launched at an event held at Embercombe in Devon, which gave farmers and growers an insight into the history of seed saving and current legislations as well as a practical workshop to show how little is required to save seed, and how relatively simple it is.

The basic idea of the SWSSC is that each member saves open pollinated seeds, even if it is just from one variety of crop. We will gather in the autumn to share our seeds, so that each member comes away with many more varieties and can become less reliant on hybrid seeds bought from seed companies.



The members will gradually be breeding varieties that are locally adapted and so produce more resilient crops with a greater genetic diversity than if they were to use hybrid seeds.

The SWSSC will continue to host workshops and events to help members re-learn the skill of seed saving. Practical advice and guidance will be given to members, and on farm visits will take place to learn the technicalities of seed saving.

The ultimate intention is to have local groups all over the UK, building communities of growers who save and share high quality, locally adapted seeds – thus keeping alive essential knowledge and seed diversity, both a priceless inheritance from our ancestors, and such an important gift to our children.

Ashley Wheeler runs a market garden in Devon with his family. He is a founding member of The Landworkers' Alliance and The South West Seed Savers' Cooperative. He ran a session on seed networks at the Oxford Real Farming Conference on 6th and 7th January 2015.

The Landworkers' Alliance is an official member of the international peasant farming movement La Via Campesina which represents 200 million small-scale producers around the world. We campaign for the rights of small-scale producers and lobby the UK government and European parliament for policies that support the infrastructure and markets central to our livelihoods.

## Join us:

If you are a grower or farmer in the South West of England and wish to be a part of the The South West Seed Savers' Cooperative please contact ashley@trillfarm.co.uk

landworkersalliance.org.uk/



# Seed Freedom in Europe




## Rollback of EU Seed Law

Maria-Grazia-Mammucini-vice-president-Navdanya-International-Small

EU Seed Law

### Statement on Seed Freedom Victory in Europe – Press Release – February 2014

Source: *http://seedfreedom.in/statement-on-seed-freedom-victory-in-europe/*



There is good news from Europe. Both the Environment committee and Agriculture committee of the European parliament have rejected the Seed Law proposed by the European commission. This is a victory for biodiversity, for farmers and gardeners, for citizens, for democracy, and for Seed Freedom. Last year after the group of experts of the International Commission on the future of food/Navdanya launched the Law of the Seed at Terra Futura in Florence, we started to work with European Parliament to build a campaign to stop the Seed Monopoly Law based on uniformity from being passed.






## International Solidarity Caravan for Seeds – April, May 2014

April-May 2014 saw the huge success of the International Caravan for Seed Freedom. The caravan travelled more than 4000 kms from Greece, to Italy to France. The caravan saw citizens and farmers from different realities come together openly and creatively to strengthen the Global Movement and share future actions so that from our seeds and food may begin a new economy based on the commons. In times of crisis of huge social, economic and ecological collapse the international caravan for Seed Freedom worked to build alternatives to the current ecological and agricultural models:

*http://seedfreedom.info/campaign/international-solidarity-caravan-for-seeds-2014/*

Key Outcomes:

- Planning meeting with key European movements on actions and strategies for the Call to Action for Seed, Food and Earth Democracy.
- Workshops on Seed Saving, Agro ecology and Beekeeping, Seed Exchange and Celebrating Biodiversity.
- European Co-ordination for Seed Freedom launched to combat upcoming EU Seed Legislation.
- *Peliti, Greece core and steering committee member of the Global Alliance for Seed Freedom.*
  *Co-ordinator from Peliti Athens travels to India for steering committee meeting in September 2014 as well as taking workshops on biodynamic farming.*

### *Links:*

International Solidarity Caravan for Seeds – A Reportby Manlio Masucci (translated by Navdanya International)
Source: *http://seedfreedom.info/campaign/international-solidarity-caravan-for-seeds-2014/#ManlioMasucci*

Florence Declaration on Seed Freedom, Food Freedom and Earth Democracy
*http://seedfreedom.info/florence-declaration-on-seed-freedom-food-freedom-and-earth-democracy/*








Seed Freedom