

Seeds, Breeds, and Securing Our Future – A Global Initiative to Protect Genetic Resources and Cultivated Biodiversity

The quality and diversity of seeds, breeds, and other reproductive materials underpin human survival. These genetic resources enable agriculture and food systems to adapt to climate change, resist pests and diseases, sustain nutrition, and remain resilient over time. Yet this foundation is rapidly eroding.

Corporate consolidation of breeding and seed systems, restrictive intellectual property regimes, ecological degradation, and environmental pollution are narrowing the range of available genetic resources worldwide. Locally adapted, farmer-bred varieties are being replaced by uniform commercial materials optimized for short-term gains rather than long-term resilience. At the same time, genetic engineering technologies are advancing faster than precautionary governance, introducing additional ecological and social risks. Private interests weigh disproportionately on international and national policies.

Organic and agroecological food systems offer a proven alternative. By prioritizing biodiversity, soil health, decentralized breeding, and farmer knowledge, these approaches conserve genetic diversity, strengthen resilience to climate and ecological shocks, and support farmer livelihoods and community well-being. Decades of research and practice confirm their effectiveness – but global coordination and shared norms remain insufficient.

IFOAM – Organics International is uniquely positioned to address this gap. As the long-standing unifying voice of the organic and agroecological movements, IFOAM brings legitimacy, convening power, and experience in global norm-setting. Building on its existing principles and policy positions, IFOAM will produce, based on its established landmark positions and norms and in collaboration with its vast network, an open-source global document providing detailed holistic guidance on breeding and genetic resources, advancing a shared vision grounded in biodiversity, commons-based stewardship, human rights, and precaution. By articulating clear global norms for organic and agroecological breeding, IFOAM provides a legitimate reference point that guides policy, research, and funding decisions.

To translate vision into action and enable more strategic alignment and amplified impact across regions and sectors, IFOAM will also further develop its open-source digital commons to coordinate collective efforts.

These include:

- a **multistakeholder Directory** to enable the growth and coordination of the network, supported by proactive outreach and connecting participants and curated news feeds
- **mapping of genetic resources and stewardship initiatives** through an open-source online data platform, striving to leverage and optimize interoperability among existing data sources
- **shared talking points on genetic engineering and farmers' rights** so that farmers, farmers organizations and other like-minded parties can advocate for themselves in their jurisdictions
- facilitating **aligned research on key crops**
- a **private-sector campaign** highlighting case examples of the benefits of seed-based regional/local food systems and value-chain interdependence

Erosion of the world's genetic resources persists not because solutions are absent, but because efforts remain fragmented and weakly institutionalized. IFOAM seeks USD 300,000 over 18 months to deliver these concrete outcomes. This investment will help secure the biological foundations of resilient, just, and sustainable food systems at a critical moment of global transformation.