

# Organic Agriculture and Seed Diversity

*Organic agriculture is a holistic production management system, which enhances agro-ecosystem health, utilizing both traditional and scientific knowledge. Organic agricultural systems rely on ecosystem management rather than external agricultural inputs.*



- Seeds are a treasure inherited from our ancestors to feed us and future generations; they are the basis of our food production.
- Seeds are more than just food; they capture and express centuries of cultural heritage.
- Organic agriculture relies on biodiversity – genetic diversity, species diversity and ecosystem diversity.
- Organic farmers - often women - serve as custodians, maintaining genetic diversity by on-farm, in-situ conservation of indigenous and traditional varieties and species through farmers' seed saving and seed exchange.
- Organic plant breeding optimizes varieties for organic production conditions, and food and feed quality.
- Through participatory initiatives organic farmers are involved in seed breeding, selection and conservation.
- Organic Agriculture relies only on natural methods and refrains from unpredictable technologies, such as genetic engineering.
- Organic varieties are robust and fit to local, low-input agro-ecological conditions.
- Organic Agriculture contributes to seed security and the viability of plant varieties for the future!

### **Threat to plant diversity**

- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimates that about 75 per cent of the genetic diversity of agricultural crops has been lost in the last 100 years.
- The loss of a diversity of small, regional breeding stations and seed producers by enlargement of multinationals is a threat to biodiversity. Genetic diversity depends on a diversity of breeders.
- The increasingly small genetic base is not only limiting the diversity of food we get on our plate, it makes agro-systems more vulnerable to pests and diseases and farmers more dependant on external inputs.
- Genetic engineering only adds to the problems as it relies on large scale, industrialized agriculture, violating diversity and threatening gmo-free agriculture by its gene flow.



### **Supporting Organic Agriculture means supporting Seed Diversity**

Organic agriculture deserves support, as it is a tool to preserve the world's plant genetic resources.

#### **Therefore:**

- Traditional rural knowledge on seed saving and exchange should be revitalized.
- Organic plant breeding programs need more support and attention. To include the farmers' perspective, participatory programs should be encouraged.
- To broaden the genetic base of our food crops the potential of plant genetic resources should be evaluated.
- Organic Agriculture should be protected from contamination with unwanted traits, like GMO.
- Cuisine chefs and consumers should be enabled to rediscover the enjoyment of bio-diverse food.

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#### **IFOAM Head Office**

Charles-de-Gaulle-Str. 5  
53113 Bonn, Germany

Phone: +49 - 228 - 92650 - 10

Fax: +49 - 228 - 92650 - 99

Email: [HeadOffice@ifoam.org](mailto:HeadOffice@ifoam.org)  
[www.ifoam.org](http://www.ifoam.org)

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