

Press Release

INTERNATIONAL SEED SECTOR RENEWS ITS COMMITMENT TO CROP DIVERSITY

On a visit to the Global Seed Vault in Svalbard, Norway, today (23 February), the International Seed Federation (ISF) highlighted the ongoing responsibility shared by governments and the private seed sector to support the conservation of plant genetic resources and maintain crop diversity.

The seed vault houses the world's largest collection of plant genetic resources with over 850,000 samples used by plant breeders to develop improved seed. In recognition of the value of the vault's specialized system for collecting and storing plant genetic resources, ISF made a financial contribution to the Crop Trust in 2016.

"Because the crops we rely on for food are grown in parts of the world, distant to the centers of their domestication, the sharing of genetic material across national borders for research and plant breeding is essential. To ensure that these collections of plant genetic resources are preserved for future generations, we need the support of governments and the private seed sector around the world," said ISF President Jean-Christophe Gouache.

Representing 7500 members in 70 countries, ISF has always supported the *ex situ* conservation of crops as a way to preserve plant genetic diversity in the long-term. Seed companies have taken responsibility for maintaining plant genetic resources since the 1930s when the first formal gene banks were created.

Plant breeders work closely with gene banks, receiving and donating samples for research and crop improvement efforts to shape genetic resources into improved seed. To safeguard the benefits of these exchanges, it is critical that the transfer regulations, such as the ones put in place by the standard Material Transfer Agreement of the International Treaty for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), do not create an additional administrative burden for seed companies, or for the plant breeding community at large.

Crop Trust Executive Director Maria Haga said: "Crop diversity does not suffice to achieve a food secure world, but it is a prerequisite. Without access to the widest possible diversity of crops, we will lose options to adapt agriculture to new climates, fight pests and diseases, increase yields and make our crops more nutritious and tastier."

The Crop Trust, an international organization working to safeguard crop diversity, is an essential funding element of the United Nation's International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), an agreement that includes 135 countries.

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About ISF

ISF is widely regarded as the voice of the global seed industry. It has represented the interests of its members since 1924, and today represents 7500 members of the international seed trade in 70 countries worldwide. Read more about who we are and what we do on the ISF website:

www.worldseed.org