

The Global Crop Diversity Trust



Project author or developer:
**United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)
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Where:
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Website:
www.croptrust.org/

The conservation of crop diversity as a means to overcome hunger and guarantee food security worldwide

The Global Crop Diversity Trust is an independent international organization working to guarantee the conservation of crop diversity. Crop diversity is one of the world's least recognized but most valuable resources. Individual crop varieties, such as the 200,000 varieties of wheat, have different traits for drought or heat tolerance, nutritional quality, disease resistance and every other possible characteristic. Crop diversity is therefore the raw material for improving and adapting crops to meet all future challenges. Yet at the moment much of the world's crop diversity is neither safely conserved, nor readily available to scientists and farmers who rely on it to safeguard agricultural productivity. Diversity is being lost, and with it the biological basis of our food supply. Our mission is to ensure the conservation and availability of crop diversity for food security worldwide.

An increasingly unpredictable and changing climate, and a world population expected to reach 9 billion by 2050, will place unprecedented demands on agriculture. Conserving the vast diversity of crop varieties is the only way to guarantee that farmers and plant breeders will have the raw materials needed to improve and adapt their crops to meet these challenges - and provide food for us into the future.

The conservation of crop diversity is neither technologically complicated, nor, considering the importance of the task, expensive. The varieties of many of the most important crops can be simply stored as seed in freezers. It is instead the reliability of funding which is so crucial to conserving seed, as even short-term breaks in funding can lead to cutbacks in basic maintenance and the loss of unique varieties. Currently, with no secure funding, many of the world's genebanks know neither what is being stored on their shelves, nor even whether the seed is alive or dead.

The Trust's response is to raise an endowment, the interest from which is enough to guarantee the effective conservation - and crucially, the ready availability to those who wish to use it - of the biological basis of all agriculture. The endowment will ensure that the conservation of this most vital and natural resource is placed forever on a firm foundation.

