

## Position paper

# Contributions to the Preparatory Plan of Action draft on Genetic Resources in European agriculture "Genetic Resources for EU Agriculture: Status and Vision". Background Paper. Brussels, 9th June 2016 "

Sevilla, 16-06-2016

First of all Red de Semillas "Resembrando e Intercambiando" wants to thank the development of a Preparatory Plan of Action on Genetic Resources for Agriculture in Europe, that we think should support the a sustainable and autonomous agrifood system on the hands of farmers and consumers.

In the draft of the Background Paper received last June 9<sup>th</sup>, we found positive elements, such as those related to the need to reduce legal and administrative burdens in the small scale production and valorisation of genetic resources for agriculture (GRA). However, we believe that the proposal is very focused on the vertical and not on the participatory research of crop wild relatives (CWR), and does not include the need to reintroduce agricultural biodiversity in the fields, on the farmer's hands, placing in the centre of the process the participation and needs of farmers and seed networks as guarantors of generation, conservation and management of the GRA. It also does not prevent the generation of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) as well as the use of genetic engineering (GE) in public funded research or in the products and processes derived from this research. Therefore we are sure the proposal should include key elements to achieve an holistic approach to conservation and use of genetic resources for food and agriculture in Europe.

In the following document, Red de Semillas "Resembrando e Intercambiando" proposes some actions to be included in the final document of the Preparatory Action Plan. It also includes some suggestions that might be considered in the further development of the document.

Due to the short time we had for the analysis of the draft, and the preparation of the proposal, it is schematic and concrete, yet complete.

## 1. Dynamic management of genetic resources on farm

### 1.1. Public policies and regulations

- Promote the **active participation** of **seed networks and farmer organizations**, cornerstone of sustainable GRA management, as **partners** in the design and development of European public policies in this area. A specific **Secretariat** for these actors is necessary.

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- Implement **farmers rights**, recognized in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), **to produce, exchange and sell their own seeds**.
- Removing legal barriers to the small-scale production and valorisation of local seed crop varieties. On this document there are proposed only the following actions:
  - **Direct sale of local seeds varieties**: it is proposed that farmers could, as a complement to their farm activity, sell seeds of not registered varieties without having to be an official seed operators, always that such sale is made on the farm itself or directly in farmers markets, that are organized regularly in some municipalities.
  - Sell of conservation varieties: the registration that gives access to sell these varieties, should be replaced by a **traditional varieties Inventory**, in which the constraints of homogeneity and stability are eliminated and that includes varieties through a characterization using morphological and ethno-agronomical basic descriptors.

### 1.2. Incentives.

- Development of **recommendations** for the elaboration of **agri-environmental aids**: sub-measure Conservation of genetic resources in agriculture and livestock.
- Keep **track** of the territories that are developing in their **Rural Development Programs** sub-measures on conservation of genetic resources in agriculture and livestock, and its **impact** on the local level.
- Make a **study of public funds** dedicated to projects about conservation and sustainable use of GRA **in situ, ex situ and on-farm**.

### 1.3. Research.

- Prioritization of **Participatory Research** serving the needs of the social actors that generate, conserve and use sustainably, and in public domain, the GRA: **farmers and seed networks**. Development of participatory **breeding projects for diversity** and not for uniformity.
- Support participatory projects on **test and formal breeding** (in collaboration with **public research**) of local varieties in the public domain. Give **priority to funding** such initiatives.
- Support and funding the development of **experiences** on on farm **test and informal breeding** of local varieties, on public domain, done by farmers and seed networks.
- No funding of research projects in pre-breeding if IPRs and GE are not prohibited in the direct and indirect processes and results.

### 1.4. Training and education.

- Implementation of a **training plan** for farmers and seed networks in seed production: individual and collective production, breeding, conservation, multiplication, etc; with special focus on young farmers.

- **Sensitization:** raising awareness of farmers and consumers about the importance of cultivated biodiversity and its management by farmers and seed networks for the autonomous production of **healthy food**.

### 1.5. Community Seed Banks.

- Priority on **technical and financial support** to Community Seed Banks as dynamic spaces for the sustainable management of PGRFA done by farmers and seed networks.
- Recognition of the importance of Community Seed Banks, and promotion of their participation in the generation of public policies on the management of the GRA.

## 2. Access to genetic resources.

- Setting up a **multiplying farmers network** whom actively collaborate with *ex situ* banks.
- Ensure **farmers and seed networks representation** on intellectual property decision-making forums.
- Avoid globally **biopiracy** and illicit traffic of genetic resources. **Create a protocol** to prevent misappropriation of traditional varieties and their denominations.
- Deny access to genetic resources, used by farmers and seed networks and their associated knowledge, by research projects that have as their direct or indirect purpose the development of **varieties with IPR** and/or developed through **genetic engineering techniques**. Reject projects as **DivSeek** and similar.
- Reject the **patent** of new varieties generated by **CWR** genes insertion in varieties with agricultural interest.
- Avoid genetic engineering on **microorganisms** with food and agricultural interest.
- Develop a study on the **difficulty of access** to *ex situ* conservation banks in Europe by farmers and seed networks.
- Rejection on the creation and funding of a **European Conservation Bank**, by not being a priority for farmers and seed networks.

## 3. Organic seeds

- **Equitable use** of local varieties in the European regulation of organic seeds: promoting and facilitating the use of local not registered varieties in **organic production**.
- Facilitate **control and certification** of seeds produced by farmers on their own farm and exchanged with other organic farmers.
- Registration of local or farmers varieties on the **organic seeds databases** by public institutions and NGOs.

## 4. GMOs effect on biodiversity

- Create a **protocol** to prevent **contamination by GMOs** in *ex situ* conservation banks.
- **Rejection** of GE in the **direct and indirect** processes and results of research projects in **GRA and CWR**.