

# Organic seed from community seed banks

## Problems

Organic growers often buy hybrids or commercial seeds, bred for intensive industrial agriculture, which are usually not suitable for organic and local growing conditions. Alternatively, they grow their own seeds, or they get seeds from neighbors. These seeds usually do not cover all crop and market needs, are of limited quantity and often of low quality.

## Solutions

### Community participatory selection

Good quality organically bred, locally suitable seeds are needed, that are compatible with organic standards and certification. Community seed banks safeguard landraces or heirloom varieties, farmers selections and obsolete varieties grown by farmers at local level. Participatory organic breeding is a tool for valorising agrobiodiversity in a sustainable way where farmers have the primary role and can benefit acting as custodians. Good seed, from best selected local traditional varieties means better quality products for consumers, more effective farming and low cost of production.

## Practical recommendations

- Agronomists can help and train farmers and community seed banks how to select their own best varieties and produce high quality seed.
- Farmers being members of community seed banks can contribute in selection and seed production.
- Researchers supporting farmers in multiactor participatory organic breeding can help to improve suitable variety choice and meet market's needs.
- Organic seed production initiatives can contribute to the sustainability of community seed banks on local level.

**Key message:** Organic thrives when it lets agrobiodiversity to evolve

## Further information

1. AEGILOPS Seed Schools: <http://www.aegilops.gr/>
2. Bioersity International: **Community seed banks: concept and practice** Facilitator handbook  
[https://www.bioersityinternational.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/CSB\\_Vernooy\\_2017.pdf](https://www.bioersityinternational.org/fileadmin/user_upload/CSB_Vernooy_2017.pdf)

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**LIVESEED:** Boosting organic seed and plant breeding across Europe. LIVESEED is based on the concept that cultivars adapted to organic systems are key for realising the full potential of organic agriculture in Europe. Research project 2017-2021.

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**Figure 1.** Seed school (Photo: Aegilops)



**Figure 2:** On farm tomato evaluation (Photo: Aegilops)

