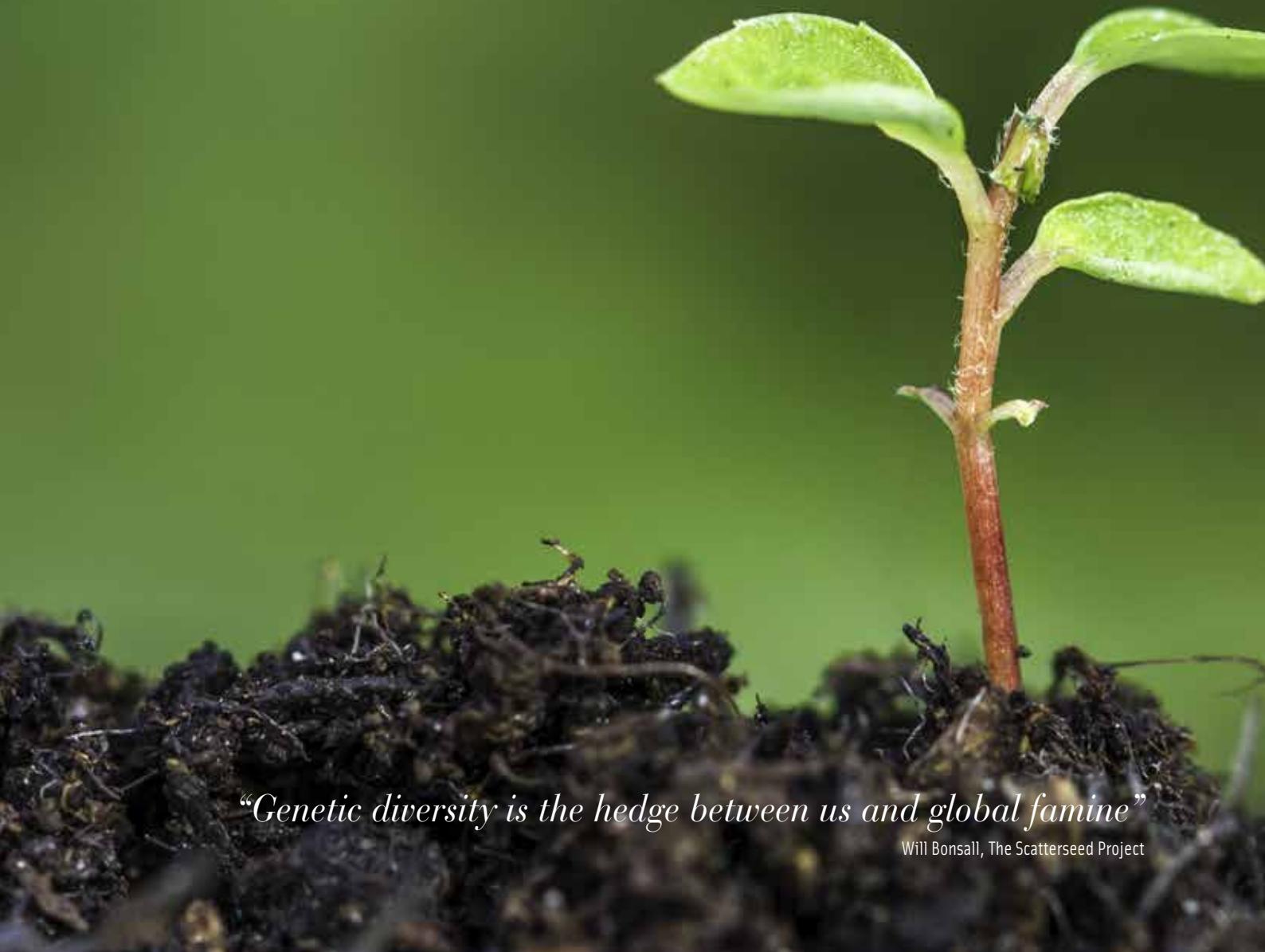




Seed Sovereignty

UK & Ireland Programme:

Developing a Resilient Agroecological Seed System

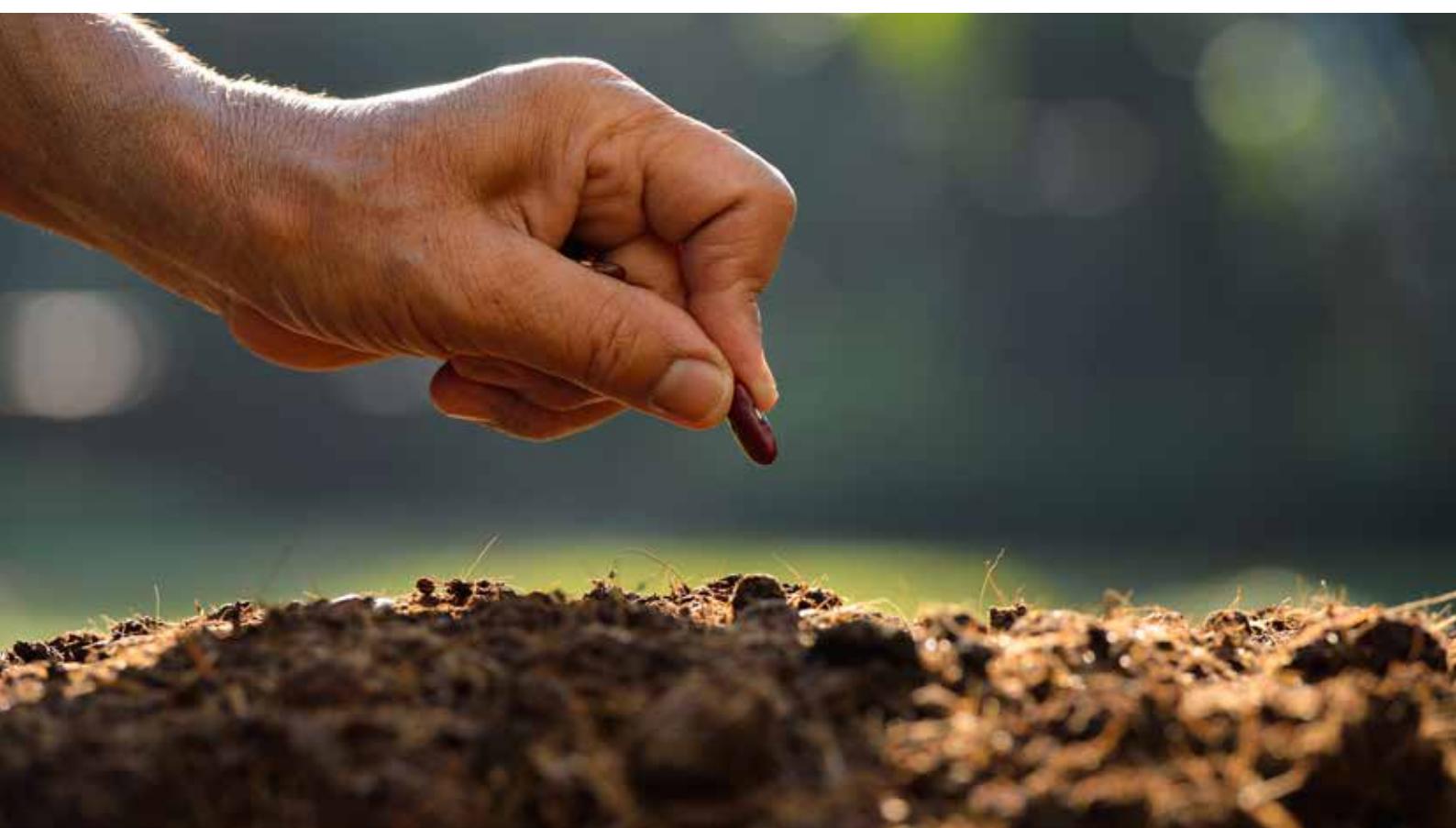


“Genetic diversity is the hedge between us and global famine”

Will Bonsall, The Scatterseed Project

Contents

Summary	3
Rationale	4
Background to the proposal	4
What are the challenges?	6
And the potential?	6
Seed Sovereignty UK & Ireland Programme	7
The Programme	7
The Steering Committee	7
Personnel	8
Aim & Objectives	9
Programme Activities	9
Expected Outcomes	12
About Us	13
Budget	14



Summary

The aim of the Seed Sovereignty UK and Ireland Programme is to support the development of a biodiverse and ecologically sustainable seed system in the UK and Ireland.

With genetic and agro-biodiversity as its central focus, the programme will support the broad range of agro-ecological farming operations that exist, incorporating all seed grown within these systems, enhancing current initiatives by supporting and developing networks, addressing gaps in knowledge and skills, and raising awareness of the need for change.

The outline that follows was created after a lengthy consultation process with food and seed experts in the UK. We are also fortunate to have the ongoing guidance and support of the Director of the Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security, Jane Rabinowicz, who has overseen a five year programme to conserve and advance seed biodiversity in Canada.

We are very excited by the potential of this work to address cohesively, and with the benefit of multiple stakeholders, the issues of seed affecting both the UK and Ireland, and the world at large. We are now looking for funders to engage in this critically important programme and help rebuild a seed system which encompasses the diversity and abundance needed to feed ourselves for many generations to come.

“There is a growing awareness among growers that we are losing our genetic inheritance, and that there is something we can do about it.

Knowledge and coordination are the key to change and the feasibility report was a vital first step in bringing people together to find solutions. We fully support the proposal of a seed programme and are very keen to be involved as it develops.”

- Ben Raskin, Soil Association

Rationale

Almost everything we eat comes from a seed. We cannot have food security without seed security. Yet, the importance of seed is rarely noticed.

Around the world, seed diversity is threatened. Since the 1900s, 75% of plant genetic diversity has been lost and of the 80,000 edible species available for food production, only 150 are currently grown.

Biodiversity is critical for ensuring a secure and sustainable food system. At a time of climate crisis, there has never been greater urgency to re-build global seed diversity. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization: "Plant genetic diversity is ... one of the central preconditions for food security. It ... provides the genetic traits required to address crop pests, diseases and changing climate conditions". Diversity in plants also gives us a range of options for raising the healthiest and most productive crops. No matter what changes happen in our food system, we will always be able to adapt if we have enough genetic diversity.

In November 2015, the National Farmer's Union in the UK highlighted that the UK's self-sufficiency in food production has fallen from 78% in 1984 to 62% currently and may fall to less than 50% by 2080. The loss of topsoil and consequent decline in availability and quality of arable land for agriculture have also come to light recently, with a resulting awareness of a need for change in agricultural policy and practice.

The benefits of an agro-ecological approach in dealing with these issues have been highlighted in a number of studies (eg IAASTD in 2008). With an emphasis on nurturing ecological sustainability and growing for local markets, the discussion has shifted towards the need for an alternative food production system which would require the production of local seed and necessarily entail seed sovereignty (seed produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods).

There is important work currently being done by various groups within the agro-ecological sector in the UK and Ireland to address the challenges we face with our seed system. The experts working in this area have the right skills and knowledge to help effect change. However, the alarming rate at which we are losing our plant genetic diversity means that these efforts urgently need to be supported, coordinated and scaled up in order to make a real difference.

Background to the proposal: the first UK festival of seed and a feasibility study

In October 2014, in recognition that whilst the UK's seed and food justice movements were passionate and experienced, they were also largely disconnected, The Gaia Foundation and partners held The Great Seed Festival, the first UK festival of seed. The Festival had two main objectives: to raise awareness of the importance of seed in our food system, and to link existing seed networks to inspire greater collaboration and working.

Supported by The A Team Foundation, Salvia Foundation and the Big Lottery's Awards for All, the Festival brought together groups from across the UK's seed and food movement to 'celebrate the seeds that feed us'.

Through the process of organising the Festival, it became apparent that whilst there are an increasing number of initiatives addressing issues around food – food poverty, waste, community growing schemes, etc – there was relatively little being done in the UK to protect seed, revive seed knowledge and ensure the availability of good quality, local seed for commercial growers. It was therefore very timely that, as a guest speaker in the Festival programme, Jane Rabinowicz from USC Canada presented on the hugely successful seed revival and access programme that they have undertaken across Canada. The event re-energised the UK's seed movement and catalysed interest in further collaboration.



In December 2014, a meeting was held to bring together those groups involved in the festival and discuss how best to use the momentum that the festival had generated. The meeting affirmed an appetite and need for a more joined up effort on seed work in the UK. It was agreed that a study was required to identify who is already doing what, exactly what challenges we are facing, the opportunities available for a collaborative initiative, what the overall goals of an initiative would be and how best to achieve them.

The feasibility study was conducted in 2015. It had three main objectives:

1. To understand the challenges and opportunities related to seed security in the UK.
2. To map and understand the UK's existing seed networks.
3. To identify the potential for a more strategic and linked up effort to build a more resilient and sustainable seed system, what activities would be needed to achieve this and how best to carry them out.

A combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches were used for the study and an advisory group comprising of representatives from the Organic Research Centre, The Soil Association, The Seed Co-operative, The Landworkers Alliance, The Irish Seed Savers Network and several organic seed companies were invited to comment on findings and drafts. A mix of surveys, interviews, consultation and regional visits ensured that the study optimised the participation of those with the knowledge, experience and expertise in seed to help shape the development of the seed programme.

Following completion of the report on the study and circulation of the findings, a meeting was held, attended by the study's advisory group, The Gaia Foundation and Jane Rabinowicz from USC Canada to assess the reports' findings and map out an approach for the programme.

“The feasibility study on the need for a UK and Ireland Seed Programme is an excellent piece of work and timely too. Implementing the various points and suggestions from the study could bring people together of different disciplines within the sustainable UK seed sector concerning both vegetable, cereal and fodder seeds.”

- Peter Brinch, Seed Cooperative

What are the challenges?

The feasibility study revealed a number of barriers and challenges to achieving a biodiverse and resilient seed system in the UK and Ireland. These can be categorised as:

- Loss of agricultural biodiversity – Since the 1900s 75% of plant diversity has been lost (FAO, 1999) and of 80,000 edible species available for food production only 150 are currently grown (Seeds according to Slow Food 2014). The RSPB's State of Nature report in 2013 cited pressure of agriculture as a key factor in the 60% decline in farmland species over the last 50 years, 34% declining strongly and the 2015 State of Nature in the EU cited agriculture and the modification of natural conditions as the highest pressure/threat to wildlife species.
- Seed regulations – Although regulations were originally introduced to ensure the quality of seed, these often restrict the ability of farmers to save their own seed.
- Privatisation of plant breeding – While plant breeding was originally carried out by academic institutions and government bodies, it is now increasingly privatised, moving the focus away from varieties for agro-ecological systems and towards those which are genetically constrained.
- Loss of knowledge and skills – Seed production and saving is now widely seen as separate from the agricultural growing cycle. Where seed is being saved, there is often a lack of knowledge and resources to ensure it is done robustly. Coverage of seed production in agricultural and horticultural training is very limited. Consistent seed production is extremely difficult for farmers.
- Limited communication/access to resources – Although there have been some improvements in recent years, there is very little communication between different generations of agro-ecological growers to share lessons learned. Additionally, communication between current seed breeders and food growers could be improved so that there is a clear understanding of each others' needs and access to resources to facilitate breeding programmes.
- Lack of public awareness – Generally, there is very limited public awareness around the problems with our seed supply, the loss of biodiversity and why this matters. Agro-ecological approaches are often marginalised and not seen as a way to ensure food security within the UK and Ireland. There is a need for education on these issues to broaden the customer base of consumers who really understand them and will be supportive.

And the potential?

Whilst highlighting the challenges to be faced, the feasibility study also drew out the many opportunities for addressing these challenges. There is invaluable work being done in the UK and Ireland to improve the availability and quality of seed suitable for agro-ecological farming, some of which has been going on for decades and brings with it a pool of expertise and experience that can be drawn upon. There are good relationships between some of the different actors in this sector, with existing and potential possibilities for collaboration. The study also revealed that there is an interest from UK seed merchants in access to good quality UK and Ireland grown seed.

Above all, there is a sense of need, urgency and commitment to doing more to address the loss of genetic diversity and to broaden the production base in the seed system and a clear message that an overarching programme would be hugely beneficial to coordinate and support this work.

Note: The feasibility study primarily dealt with vegetable seed but the research revealed that many of the same concerns also apply to cereals and potatoes. Different factors apply to the production and saving of seed for these distinct areas and the programme will seek to support each of them.

Seed Sovereignty UK & Ireland Programme

The Programme

The overarching programme aim, main objectives and proposed activities have been drawn directly from the information gathered through the feasibility study. It has been designed specifically to support existing initiatives, strengthen collaboration and maximise the resources available.

A collaborative approach to the delivery of the programme will be critical to its success. The Gaia Foundation will be leading on the work in partnership with other organisations seeking to create a resilient agroecological seed system, and a steering committee has been established to this end.

The Steering Committee

Jason Horner

Jason Horner has been an organic grower in the West of Ireland for the last 25 years. On his farm in Co Clare he grows vegetables for a local market stall and saves seeds. He is a Director of the Irish Seed Savers Association and a committee member of the Organic Growers Alliance (UK). He is also a part time coordinator of an apprentice programme for the Organic Growers of Ireland.

David Price

David Price is the secretary of the Seed Co-operative, a Community Benefit society established through the work of the Biodynamic Association which aims to expand the work undertaken, over 20 years by Stormy Hall Seeds. David also runs Gosberton Bank Nursery, which is being developed as a small mixed farm, with its main focus on vegetable, herb and flower seed production. This site will also house a seed processing hub for a network of seed growers across the UK, plus facilities for plant breeding work, skill and knowledge sharing, and seed sales and distribution activities.

Francesca Price

Francesca Price is the Communications Director for the Gaia Foundation and Project Director of We Feed the World, an international photography exhibition which celebrates the work of small, family farmers. As a journalist and broadcaster for 25 years, Francesca has endeavoured to raise awareness, through the media, of the issues that challenge our food and seed system. She believes passionately in the power of communication and networks to implement long-term behaviour change.

Ben Raskin

Ben Raskin is head of Horticulture at the Soil Association, the UK's leading organic charity and certifier. He has been active in promoting seed sovereignty and diversity at both policy and campaigning level but also with practical projects such as the Open Pollinated Seed Field Lab, run as part of the Innovative Farmers Network. Ben has been working in horticulture for more than 20 years, setting up and running the horticultural production for Daylesford Organic Farm, the well known UK brand. He was a founding member and horticultural advisor of the Community Farm, a CSA near Bristol, and written books including Compost, A Family Guide.

Ashley Wheeler

Ashley Wheeler is a founding member of The Landworkers' Alliance and runs the organic vegetable gardens with his partner Kate at Trill Farm in Devon, producing around 80 different salad crops for local restaurants including including River Cottage HQ and Canteen, the Town Mill Bakery, Millside and the HIX Oyster and Chop House. During his six years at Trill Farm, Ashley has been saving seed for herb, vegetable and salad crops and has been instrumental in establishing the group, the South West Seed Savers. He has recently started growing seed commercially for the Real Seed Catalogue.

Lawrence Woodward

Lawrence Woodward was a founder and Director of the Organic Research Centre at Elm Farm, for over 30 years. He played a pivotal role in the strategic and practical development of the organic sector in the UK and in 2001 he was awarded an O.B.E. for services to organic farming. Positions he has held include Chairman of the British Organic Standards Committee, Chairman of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), Member of the Soil Association Council and Management Committee, Member of United Kingdom Register of Organic Food Standards (UKROFS) Board and the English Organic Action Plan task force. He was also the founding chairman of the Organic Milk Suppliers Coop Organic Arable Marketing Co Ltd, Organic Seed Producers Ltd and the European Consortium of Organic Plant Breeders. As director of the Organic Research Centre he developed and steered a major research and development push for organic plant breeding and seed production in the UK and other European countries which had a major influence on the promotion of "population breeding" in cereals, organic cereal seed production in the UK and the promotion of an Europe aide network of organic plant breeders and researchers. Currently he works with Organic Arable, the IFOAM EU Group, HAWL (Homeopathy at Wellie Level) and GM Freeze. He is a co-founder and director of Beyond GM.

Personnel

Neil Munro, formerly Head of the Heritage Seed Library, has just taken up the post of Programme Manager to lead on the delivery of the programme. Well respected across the European seed movement, Neil was an advisor at Garden Organic before becoming the Senior Grower at The Heritage Seed Library, producing around 120 varieties per year for an annual catalogue. In 2001 he became Head of The Heritage Seed Library, managing the department. In 2004 Neil studied for an MSc in the 'Conservation & Utilisation of Plant Genetic Resources' at University of Birmingham. His thesis focused on assessing the Genetic Erosion of Vicia (beans) species in Syria, interviewing farmers on changing land-use and agriculture and carrying out molecular analysis of former and current seeds collected from various sites across Syria. Neil returned to manage the Heritage Seed Library in 2008 until March 2016 when he joined The Gaia Foundation to lead this programme. Neil's rich background and extensive contacts will be a great asset to building further partnerships with initiatives and organisations working on similar issues.

Aim & Objectives

Aim:

To support the development of a biodiverse and ecologically sustainable seed system in the UK and Ireland.

Objectives:

1. To support and cultivate regional and national connections and collaboration to provide coherence across the food and seed sector.
2. To support farmers and growers with further skills, resources and information.
3. To foster a more supportive environment for a biodiverse and ecologically sustainable seed system to thrive.

Programme Activities

The following activities would be undertaken over a three year programme.

1. Activities to support and cultivate regional and national connections and collaboration:

(a) Strengthen existing and establish new regional networks and seed co-operatives

There is important work currently being done by various groups within the agro-ecological sector in the UK and Ireland to address the challenges we face with our seed system. Some of these include the ISSA in Ireland, the Heritage Seed Library in UK and Community Seed Banks such as Sussex Community Seed Bank, South West Seed Savers and London Freedom Seed Bank. The experts working in this area have the right skills and knowledge to help effect change. However, the alarming rate at which we are losing our plant genetic diversity means that these efforts urgently need to be supported, coordinated and scaled up in order to make a real difference. This is the clear message that arose from the 100 participants that contributed to the feasibility study.

To help facilitate this, and in recognition of the need to support regional diversity, the programme will support up to five regional hubs. These will be spaces for knowledge sharing through trainings and access to shared resources and information on best practice. These hubs will, in the future, support the establishment of regional seed production co-operatives where particular varieties would be grown and shared with members. The aim is that each co-operative will select varieties of seed to grow each year, suited to their particular conditions. The possibility of regional seed banks or libraries will also be investigated and links made with existing seed libraries.

We will arrange at least one exchange visit per year between regional networks and European allies as well as ensure attendance at key European sector events. This would enable those involved in the programme to learn from other projects and to share their own learnings.

(b) Website

The website will provide a platform for people to find out more about the programme and why it is important; for growers to access information and advice on seed production and saving; to exchange information and ideas across the network; to publicise programme events and/or related seed events across the UK and Ireland; to share good news, learnings and case studies from the programme; to share existing and forthcoming legislation and policies which affect seed; and to host a database on the performance of seed varieties.

A basic site will be introduced initially to provide information about the programme as it generates interest across the sector. A more comprehensive site will be in place in Year 2, and in Year 3 play host to the database.

2. Activities to support farmers and growers with further skills, resources and information

(a) Equipment, and on-farm training in seed production and storage

The effective production, processing and storage of seed is a skilled process, the knowledge of which has increasingly been lost as we have separated out growing for produce from growing for seed. Today, very few growers have the skills and knowledge needed for consistent seed production. The programme will seek to address these gaps by supporting and strengthening the skills of existing trainers as well as encouraging new trainers.

One of our partners, The Seed Co-operative in Lincolnshire, will provide education and training for professional growers, home gardeners and the wider public about the importance of seed biodiversity and agro-ecology. The programme will support the Seed Co-operative's provision of on-farm training in addition to organising its own independent on-farm training workshops. It will link with others such as the Irish Seed Savers Association who run training courses in seed production and will investigate the introduction of a producer standard for seed-saving which would demonstrate compliance with seed sovereignty principles, highlighting the importance of seed biodiversity. The programme will prioritise 'training-of-trainers' to encourage the widespread dissemination of skills.

In order to address the lack of access to equipment for the production, cleaning and storage of seed, growers will be asked to complete a short survey regarding the equipment currently in use, and what they require. This will differ depending on the type of seed (vegetable, cereal or potato). Wherever possible, the programme will then facilitate access to such equipment by getting smaller, affordable equipment for growers or by setting up a sharing arrangement between those who have larger machinery. If appropriate machinery isn't available other avenues off funding will be sought to facilitate this.

(b) Reviewing regulatory requirements

The regulations concerning the production and exchange of seed are complex and varied, and can provide a huge obstacle for those seeking to participate in the seed system. Current legislation restricts the exchange of many vegetable seeds, making it prohibitive for small-scale seed producers to register and therefore be legally allowed to sell seeds of vegetable varieties. With the advent of Brexit, this is the ideal time to work with partners to draw up a viable and reasonable alternative to the existing legislation. The aim is that there is tiered system making it economically viable, as well as environmentally viable to produce and legally sell seeds. The current directives favor large seed producers of uniform varieties. Whilst these directives exist it will limit the legal selling of varieties to those that adhere to the testing regime and that are produced and sold in a large enough volume to make production viable. This won't stop variety testing and assessment, or indeed the conservation of varieties, but it will limit the road to market for some growers.

The programme will first seek to demystify the regulatory system for growers by establishing a Legal Working Group to provide accessible information about existing legislation. Longer term, the Group will look to develop alternative regulatory proposals to be positioned to key policy makers and shared with key food sovereignty lobbying groups.

(c) Support the creation of a database

There is currently no central UK repository for information on the varieties being grown and knowledge about their performance in different regions and conditions. This sort of information is critical in safeguarding and enhancing diversity in seeds, particularly in the face of climate change and unpredictable growing environments in the future. In Year 3 the programme will together with a suitable partner support a database of varieties grown across the UK and Ireland, providing the information in a simple and accessible way for growers.

(d) Variety trials

On-farm variety trials in Year 2 will begin to research the effectiveness of different seed varieties in various landscapes and across seasons. This will be particularly critical for plant breeding and for the creation of a robust database about varieties. The programme will look to partner with an academic research body and could also link with the Soil Association trials and the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) UK network. Growing sites will be identified through the regional hubs.

(e) Participatory plant-breeding (PPB)

PPB is a process of breeding which begins with the farmer, rather than institutions. In addition to enhancing biodiversity through the reintroduction of heritage and local varieties, the programme will also coordinate PPB for seed particularly well suited to agro-ecological (chemical free) farming systems. An academic partner will be sought in addition to partnering with those already conducting such trials, including the Seed Co-operative and the Savari Trust, to enhance their efforts and scale up.

(f) A seed facilitation fund

Limited funding was the most commonly cited barrier to implementing and scaling-up work relating to locally-grown seed. If sufficient funds become available through the programme, the programme could coordinate the provision of a small grants fund to assist those currently involved in this work. The steering committee would review applications for funds twice a year. Alternatively, regional programme coordinators will share fundraising opportunities across partners, whenever identified.

3. Activities to foster a more supportive environment for a biodiverse and ecologically sustainable seed system to thrive

(a) Engaging the next generation of farmers and growers

In order to ensure the resilience of an ecologically sustainable seed system, there is a need to engage with and educate those who will be the future farmers and growers. Opportunities will therefore be sought for speaking engagements with experienced seed growers at agricultural and horticultural colleges and institutions on the importance of an agro-ecological approach and the possibilities that it offers. Initially, those institutions in areas with regional hubs will be targeted to link with the work of the hubs but the programme will also offer talks to a wider area. At least three engagements per year will take place. There is further scope for education about seed-saving and the programme by working with those in apprenticeship schemes. The programme will work initially with apprenticeship providers such as the Soil Association and the Biodynamic Association, reaching out to other providers in subsequent years.

(b) Public-awareness and education campaign

The programme will seek to engage home gardeners and allotment holders, as well as the wider public on the loss of biodiversity, the need for action, and the merits of an agro-ecological approach. Gaia's We Feed the World photographic exhibition and campaign from Spring 2018 will provide an excellent platform through which to spread these messages. Gaia is also a UK partner on the release of documentary Seed: The Untold Story released in the UK in April 2017. As the film tours the country we will reach out to many more people who are beginning to wake up to the critical importance of seed to our food system.

(c) Engaging decision-makers

Capacity to engage decision makers has been identified as a major gap for the agro-ecological farming sector, particularly on seed. This will therefore be a critical activity and link with the seed regulatory work coordinated by the Legal Working Group. They will explore the potential for changes in policy, considering the UK and Ireland's biodiversity obligations. The programme manager will connect with DEFRA in the UK and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) in Ireland as well as groups such as the British Society of Plant Breeders. Partnership-building with others will be a key part of this work. In the context of Brexit it is particularly important that the Programme Manager is up to speed on expected changes to legislation. The People's Food Policy currently being developed by members of Food Sovereignty UK will also be taken into consideration by the programme.

Expected Outcomes

1. Increased collaboration, meaning greater coherence and resilience across the UK and Ireland agro-ecological seed sector.

- A network of 5 regional seed hubs and co-operatives
- Regular meetings between Steering Group members
- Broad range of engaged actors and partners across the seed movement

2. Farmers and growers increased skills in seed production and contributing to enhanced seed diversity.

- More agro-ecological seed available in the UK and Ireland
- 80 growers trained in seed saving and the production of agro-ecological seed
- Online database of agro-ecological seed varieties and their performance
- Next generation of growers up-skilled through trainings and apprenticeships
- Active Legal Working Group providing information on seed legislation

3. Information about seed varieties in the UK, Ireland and Europe, and the development of guidelines supporting agro-ecological seed in the UK.

- On farm variety trials
- A database of varieties with information about growing and performance
- Recognition of the value of on-farm research
- Participatory plant breeding enabling growers to plant locally adapted varieties
- Development of alternative regulatory proposals for agro-ecological seed production and distribution

4. Greater awareness of the critical importance of seed diversity creating a more supportive public and political environment for an agro-ecological seed system to thrive.

- Online platform highlighting the importance of seed diversity
- Programme gains media attention
- Regional understanding of benefits of local seed varieties
- Increased trust in local seed from growers and the public
- Influence policy to ensure that agro-ecological seed supported



About Us

The Gaia Foundation has been working at the nexus of climate, seed and knowledge for over three decades both in the UK and overseas. Alongside inspiring global partners including Dr Vandana Shiva, Ethiopian plant geneticist Dr Melaku Worede and organisations such as GRAIN, USC Canada and the African Biodiversity Network we have delivered collaborative projects which create lasting change. Our work has focused on both the global – through advocacy, film and policy; and the grassroots – walking alongside committed communities as they revive their traditional seed varieties and celebrate their role as seed custodians once again.

The Gaia Foundation has a consistent track record working for farmers, seed and climate both in the UK and overseas:

- In 1999, Gaia initiated the 'FREEZE' campaign – the first broad-based coalition of civil society groups in the UK, reaching thousands of people, keeping them informed and calling for a moratorium on genetic engineering in food and agriculture.
- In 2002, Gaia co-founded the regional African Biodiversity Network pioneering African-led solutions to the challenges they face. The network now comprises over 350 active members across 13 countries, with many new African NGOs born out of the process.
- Gaia's 2012 film *Seeds of Freedom* challenged the mantra that large-scale, industrial agriculture is the only means to feed the world. Narrated by Jeremy Irons, it became the 'go to' film for the food justice movement in the UK and has been viewed by a global audience of 1.5 million.
- Gaia's flagship reports include: *Seeds for Life: Scaling up Agrobiodiversity* (2013) and *Celebrating African Rural Women: Custodians of Seed, Food and Traditional Knowledge for Climate Change Resilience* (2015)
- In 2014, Gaia coordinated The Great Seed Festival to 'celebrate the seeds that feed us'. The first of its kind, the festival brought together a broad range of actors from the UK and Ireland seed sovereignty movement – including growers, foodies and farmers from the highlands to the lowlands – to encourage and inspire greater collaboration as well as raise the issue of seed and diversity with the wider public. It was here that the idea for this programme was born.

“Since the mid 1990s I have known and worked with the Gaia Foundation on seeds, biodiversity and food issues.

Gaia has consistently been an excellent convener of organisations around key issues. It has also had good outreach with its publications and documentaries to a wide range of audiences. Moreover, including in Africa, it has long-standing relations with farmers' organisations and support NGOs and their networks in the Global South - especially on matters concerning seeds and biodiversity.

They have always exhibited competence in the work they do. One feature that I have much appreciated is their ability to engage many other organisations and networks, but not to dominate, in determining and achieving successful outcomes. I can recall many initiatives with UK and African partners which have flourished because of their approach.”

- Patrick Mulvany, Former Chair of the UK Food Group

