



Q&A: The Future of Food: Seeds of Resilience, A Compendium of Perspectives on Agricultural Biodiversity from Around the World

Why did the Global Alliance commission/support this work?

- Since fall 2015 members of the Global Alliance for the Future of Food have been exploring how we might collectively strengthen community based and farmer led efforts to protect and promote seed biodiversity.
- This work is led by the Global Alliance's Agroecological Transitions Working Group.
- Members of the Agroecological Transitions Working Group aim to strengthen recognition and support of community-based efforts to protect and restore agricultural biodiversity, including agroecological seed saving systems and movements, knowledge generation and exchange, research, and/or advocacy towards policies that positively strengthen and support farmer-managed seed systems.
- The Global Alliance believes that seeds are the foundation of sustainable, equitable and secure food systems, and that maintaining and enhancing agricultural biodiversity is critical in light of global challenges such as climate change, and food and nutrition security.

How did the Global Alliance approach the development of the Compendium?

- Given the complexity of the issues involved, we knew that we needed to get input from diverse and divergent perspectives to help guide our decision-making around how to engage in this area.
- First, we commissioned an Opportunities Report from Emile Frison and Toby Hodgkin, two well-known experts on the topic of agricultural biodiversity with broad experience at the international level.
- We then reached out to experts in the field from diverse sectors and regions to get their feedback on the report, and to hear their recommendations on a path forward.
- The result is *The Future of Food: Seeds of Resilience, A compendium of perspectives on agricultural biodiversity from around the world.*

What does the Compendium include?

- The compendium includes the following elements:
 - A printed Synthesis of Findings that acts as the executive summary.
 - Key Messages.
 - An online PDF of the entire compendium available at www.futureoffood.org
 - The separate pieces of the compendium include: Foreword, Key Messages, the Synthesis of Findings; the Opportunities Report; 12 Commentaries; and, a Summary of Recommendations.

What was the process for selecting contributors to the Compendium?

- The contributors were identified by Global Alliance members who are working in the field of agricultural biodiversity.
- Emile Frison and Toby Hodgkin were asked to write the opportunities report due to their decades of experience and the global scope of their expertise on agricultural biodiversity.
 - The Global Alliance wanted to ensure that the writers would take a broad, systems-oriented approach to describing the landscape of opportunities in this arena.
- For the commentaries, the Agroecological Transitions Working Group generated a list of over 50 experts in the field from a diversity of regions and professional backgrounds. We narrowed the list to twenty, with an intentional eye towards a diversity of perspectives and representation from different geographic regions. The twenty experts were invited to submit commentaries, out of which twelve responses were received.
- The majority of experts invited to contribute to this compendium are farmers or scientists who support community based approaches to agricultural biodiversity conservation.
- We asked these experts to share with us, from their own experience, what they see as the best ways to strengthen community based and farmer managed seed systems, and how funders can contribute effectively to these efforts.
- We have edited their contributions only minimally for clarity and flow, leaving their voices and opinions intact.

How will this work inform next steps relating to seeds and agricultural biodiversity for the Global Alliance?

- The Global Alliance's Agroecological Transitions Working Group is discussing how to support the key recommendations identified in the compendium.
- We are also in discussion with the contributors to the compendium, key seed stakeholders and other advisors about how best to leverage the Global Alliance's support for community based seed systems.
- Over the coming months, the Global Alliance will participate in events and meetings related to agricultural biodiversity to share the recommendations flowing from the compendium and explore how to best work with others to strengthen support for community based and farmer managed seed systems.

What is the Global Alliance's stance on GMOs? How can you talk about agricultural biodiversity and not address GMOs?

- The Global Alliance for the Future of Food is a strategic alliance of 25 independent philanthropic foundations that takes a collaborative approach on how to reach its vision for more sustainable, secure and equitable food and agriculture systems.
- Our members come from diverse perspectives; we focus our efforts where there are synergies.
- Right now, that doesn't include taking a position on GMOs.
- What we do and how we do it is informed through strategic engagement, listening to the voices of stakeholder across all sectors and evidence that comes from scientific research and the experiences of people working in the field.
- Some contributors to the compendium state that GMOs represent a threat to agricultural biodiversity. Others work for organizations that support the use of GMOs.

- GMOs are just one of many areas where there are differing perspectives not only amongst our members but within many institutions and organizations. This is reflected in the divergent perspective that can be found in the compendium. We embrace these differences and believe they are a reflection of the complexities involved in managing seeds and our global food supply.

Where is the voice of industry in the Compendium?

- The GA values a diversity of opinions, and industry represents an important voice and perspective in this dialogue and others related to sustainable food systems.
- The Global Alliance deliberately sought to include a diversity of perspectives, including a contribution from researchers working for an international seed company.
- The Global Alliance believes the compendium is just the beginning of a process to understand and explore the topic of agricultural biodiversity and will continue to solicit diverse perspectives and opinions from a broad range of stakeholders.

NOTE

The Future of Food: Seeds of Resilience was commissioned by the Global Alliance for the Future of Food in collaboration with the authors for use by Global Alliance members to stimulate information-sharing, learning, and collective action. The Global Alliance has chosen to make it available to the broader community to contribute to thinking and discussion about sustainable food and agriculture systems reform. It constitutes the work of independent authors. Any views expressed in this report do not necessarily represent the views of the Global Alliance or of any of our members.