

GOSSI

Global Open Source Seed Initiatives

International Seed Day - 26th April 2022 Statement



Seeds are the basis of life. The Global Coalition of Open Source Seed Initiatives (GOSSI) envisions a world in which all seeds are free to be used, saved, shared, bred, and sold by anyone. Such freedoms will enhance the world’s cultivated diversity and the number and diversity of individuals, communities and organisations engaged in breeding new locally adapted varieties and seed saving.

Why is looking after our seed systems so urgent? About 80% of varieties of seeds grown a century ago have been lost forever, and by 2018 four corporations controlled over 60% of global proprietary seed sales. We need biodiversity in agriculture to be able to cope with the impacts of climate change. Additionally, increasing legal restrictions are being implemented through various forms of intellectual property rights (IPRs). IPRs, such as patents and “breeders’ rights”, are being widely supplemented by contractual restrictions required by licences, “bag tags,” and material transfer agreements. Farmers worldwide are increasingly unable to legally save, share, or breed varieties for sustainable methods with their own seeds.

The Open Source Alternative: As a response to the interlocked challenges of concentrated corporate power and IPRs, a variety of initiatives around the world have found “open source” and “copyleft” approaches to be a potent compelling response to create more regenerative and fairer alternative seed systems, and protect agricultural biodiversity not only in distant seed banks, but in its growing environment where it can continue to adapt to changing climatic conditions.

GOSSI Principles: GOSSI has adopted a set of core principles to which all open source seed projects adhere:

- Anyone may freely use open source seed - that is, grow it, save it, propagate it, breed it, and sell it.
- Recipients of open source seed may not privatise the seed or its progeny through IPRs or other use restrictions.
- Recipients of open source seed must assign the same rights and obligations to subsequent recipients.
- The breeder of open source seed shall be recognised through attribution of credit.
- Benefits shall be shared all along the seed value chain.

“Copyleft” features create a protected commons: It is open to those who will share and excludes those who will not share. It is important to clarify that while open source seed is free with respect to use, it is not necessarily free in price. Open source seed is best understood as “freed” seed, not “free” seed. Inspired by the open source software and digital commons movements, open source seed projects create pools of crop genetic material that cannot be appropriated and monopolised by private interests. These initiatives thereby strengthen the independence of farmer-breeders, public breeders, and independent breeders, enhance diversity in both the social and genetic foundations of plant breeding, and facilitate the development of effective responses to the challenges of climate change.

GOSSI’s objectives: GOSSI works to strengthen the role of farmer-based and participatory breeding and to provide support for open source seed systems that are unencumbered by the use restrictions usually applied in the conventional dominant, power and market concentrated commercial seed sector.

What can you do to support Open Source Seed?: As a consumer, you can ask your local fruit and vegetable retailers and market traders to stock local and traditional varieties, and enquire about the origin of the seed that your food comes from. As a farmer, you can ask your seed trader to stock restriction-free varieties and maybe even start experimenting with your own seed saving and breeding. As a breeder, you can join your national OSS initiative or if there is not one yet in your country, consider finding like-minded people to start your own. As a concerned citizen you can help spread the word for no-IPRs on seed and be an ambassador for OSS and the options for diversity and sharing that it offers. For more information, stories and inspiration on Open Source Seeds, visit www.seed-commons.net

Related links

GOSSI website [www.seed-commons.net]

GOSSI supporting organisations and initiatives:

- OpenSourceSeeds, Germany [<https://opensourceseeds.org/en/>]
- Bioversity International, Uganda

[<https://www.bioversityinternational.org/about-us/where-we-work/east-and-southern-africa/uganda/>]

- Bioleft, Argentina [<https://www.bioleft.org/en/>]
- Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, India [<https://csa-india.org/#>]
- Earth Net Foundation, Thailand [<https://www.greennet.or.th/home-en/>]
- Instituto de Ecologia, Mexico
- Masipag, Philippines [<https://masipag.org/#>]
- Open Source Seed Initiative, USA [<https://osseeds.org/>]
- Seed Savers Network, Kenya [<https://seedsaverskenya.org/>]
- Rete Semi Rurali, Italy [<https://rsr.bio/>]