



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



**The International Treaty**  
ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES  
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

**Views, Experiences and Best Practices as an example of possible options for  
the national implementation of Article 9 of the International Treaty**

*Note by the Secretary*

*At its [second meeting](#) of the Ad hoc Technical Expert Group on Farmers' Rights (AHTEG), the Expert Group agreed on a revised version of the [template](#) for collecting information on examples of national measures, best practices and lessons learned from the realization of Farmers' Rights*

*This document presents information on best practices and measures of implementing Article 9 of the International Treaty submitted by Seed Savers Network, Kenya on 10 June 2021.*

*The submission is presented in the form and language in which it was received.*



## Template for submission of

### Measures, Best Practices and Lessons Learned from the Realization of Farmers' Rights As set out in Article 9 of the International Treaty

#### Basic information

- Title of measure/practices. Small scale holders capacity building on community seed banking
- Name(s) of country/countries in which the measure/practice is taking place. Kenya
- Responsible institution/organization Name: Seed Savers network  
Address: 334-20116  
Website: [www.seedsaverskenya.org](http://www.seedsaverskenya.org)  
Email address- seedsaversk@gmail.com  
Phone number(s) 254-712451777  
Contact person- Daniel Wanjama
- Type of institution/organization (categories)- Non –profit organization
- **Collaborating/supporting institutions/organizations/actors, if applicable (name, address, website (if applicable), e-mail address, telephone number(s))**

Kenya plant health inspectorate service (kephis).

Ministry of agriculture

GERRI (Genetic resources research institute).

#### Mandatory information:<sup>1</sup>

- Short summary to be put in the inventory (max. 200 words) including:
  - Implementing entity and partners  
Seed savers association is a grass root and not-for profit organization working in Kenya. The organization targets indigenous farming communities (women, youths and men) by empowering them to take lead in agro-biodiversity conservation, food sovereignty, safeguarding farmer's rights and sustainable agriculture. In the 12 years of existence +59000 small scale farmers have been trained and empowered to diversity crops in their farm using locally available seeds and soil fertility amendments. This has been done in partnership with Tudor trust and the ministry of agriculture
  - **Start year**
  - Objective(s)  
To become the leading agent in promoting diverse seed access to farming communities in Kenya
  - **Summary of core components**

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<sup>1</sup> This mandatory information is required in order for the measure/practice to be included in the Inventory.



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- The project is being implemented in Kenya and entails Farmers group recruitment, mobilization, and training, Farmers champion training to act as seed ambassadors in villages, seed saving and establishment of community seed banks, development of community biodiversity registers, documentation of traditional knowledge, advocacy and lobbying for farmers managed seed system and farmers rights, Training of Trainers of trainers(TOTs) to build capacity of staff from like-minded with knowledge and skills in seed saving, organizing local seed/ food fairs, managing an online portal(seed exchange Kenya) for revival and conservation of local seeds, developing relations with National Gene -bank (genetic resources research institute) to ensure community seed banks in Kenya are able to preserve their seeds for long years in the Kenyan government facility. Also train farmers on agro ecology through kitchen gardens and food forests and Partial scholarship to master students in Kenyan university with a project that support agro-biodiversity conservation and has participatory research in their methodology.
  - **Key outcomes**

Farmers has been able to start community seed banks currently standing at 100 seed banks in different villages of Kenya, and more than 80 varieties /cultivars have been documented with 10 varieties of underutilized and high value local varieties nutritional analysis having done and a booklet developed for the same. More than 100 varieties have been preserved in community seed banks which has increased diversity in farm and also improved nutrition.
  - **Lessons learned (if applicable)**

Farmers are custodians of seeds but unfortunately indigenous seeds are being lost for example during our research we have found 35 lost varieties in one village. This has been as a result of denied farmer's rights to sell seeds and other restrictive laws that have contributed much to the loss
- **Brief history (including starting year), as appropriate**

Farmer's seed systems are essential for the management and conservation of agricultural biodiversity. This diversity contributes to the socio-ecological resilience of our global food and agriculture systems and plays an important part in the livelihoods of rural communities. Agricultural biodiversity is critical to food security and nutrition. Under the right circumstances, farmers seed system can support social cohesion and serve as positive sources of local collective action in terms of , for example, providing equitable access to diverse quality seeds. It is through these realization that seed savers have taken initiative since 2014 under small holder seed enterprise project that have seen farmers being trained on importance of seed saving, seed sovereignty and seed policies whereby they are sensitized on issues surrounding seeds; cost of seeds which are very expensive for example tomato seeds are costly where one tiny seed is estimated to be ksh8. Freedom of food has been denied to farmers due to seed patenting that gives rights to individuals to own the seed thereafter affecting diets and choices of food available to consumers. There is also reduction in seed and crop diversity since some less profitable crops are eliminated like local vegetables. Emergency of diseases have increased since farmers use hybrid seeds which requires a lot of external inputs like fertilizers and other chemicals that injure the environment.



- **Description of the context and the history of the measure/practice is taking place (political, legal and economic framework conditions for the measure/practice) (max 200 words)**

Reliance on human management, farmers altered original plants through breeders who have developed them. Kenya is a contracting party to other international treaties affecting seeds such as plant genetic resources for food and agriculture on trade related aspects of intellectual property rights. Moreover the national constitution obligates statutory recognition and protection of the ownership of indigenous seeds and plant varieties, their genetic and diverse characteristics and their use by the communities of Kenya. The obligations deriving from all these international agreements must be fulfilled against farming systems that are predominantly smallholder farmer-based. In 2019, the Kenyan government through the ministry of agriculture livestock and fisheries developed regulations to operationalize crop act 2013 which limits freedom of farmers in production and would drastically burden farmers with unnecessary production and marketing procedures. Through a multi stakeholder’s forum, seed savers was able to join likeminded organizations to submit a memorandum to the government with interest in the areas of sustainable and regenerative agriculture. This involves promoting of sustainable agriculture, supporting small scale farmers and equal access to land, technology and markets.

- **To which provision(s) of Article 9 of the International Treaty does this measure relate**

- Art. 9.1
- Art. 9.2a
- Art. 9.2b
- Art. 9.2c

Art. 9.3 This measure relate to this article that states that nothing in this article shall be interpreted to limit any rights that farmers have to save, use , exchange and sell farm -saved seed/propagating materials, subject to national law and as appropriate.

**Other information, if applicable**

- Please indicate which category of the Inventory is most relevant for the proposed measure, and which other categories are also relevant (if any):

No.	Category	Most relevant <sup>2</sup>	Also relevant <sup>3</sup>
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<sup>2</sup> Please select only one category that is most relevant, under which the measure will be listed.

<sup>3</sup> Please select one or several categories that may also be relevant (if applicable).



1	Recognition of local and indigenous communities', farmers' contributions to conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, such as awards and recognition of custodian/guardian farmers	√	
2	Financial contributions to support farmers conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA such as contributions to benefit-sharing funds	√	
3	Approaches to encourage income-generating activities to support farmers' conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA	√	
4	Catalogues, registries and other forms of documentation of PGRFA and protection of traditional knowledge		√
5	In-situ/on-farm conservation and management of PGRFA, such as social and cultural measures, community biodiversity management and conservation sites		√
6	Facilitation of farmers' access to a diversity of PGRFA through community seed banks <sup>4</sup> , seed networks and other measures improving farmers' choices of a wider diversity of PGRFA.	√	
7	Participatory approaches to research on PGRFA, including characterization and evaluation, participatory plant breeding and variety selection		√
8	Farmers' participation in decision-making at local, national and sub-regional, regional and international levels	√	
9	Training, capacity development and public awareness creation	√	
10	Legal measures for the implementation of Farmers' Rights, such as legislative measures related to PGRFA.	√	
11	Other measures / practices		

- In case you selected 'other measures', would you like to suggest a description of this measure, e.g. as a possible new category?

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- Objective(s)
  - Target group(s) and numbers of involved and affected farmers<sup>5</sup>
  - Location(s) and geographical outreach

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<sup>4</sup> Including seed houses.

<sup>5</sup> Any classification, e.g. of the types of farmer addressed, may be country-specific.



- Resources used for implementation of the measure/practice  
Seed savers have partnered with Tudor trust that help in realization of the project through facilitation of extension staffs.
- **How has the measure/practice affected the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture?**  
According to the Kenya plant health inspectorate service, the informal seed sector in Kenya accounts for about 60-70 per cent of most seeds planted by farmers across the country. In this farmers recycle seeds from previous harvests thereby denying them the chance to maximize yields. Through the trainings and seed banks in farmers villages that have enabled easier seed access, we have realized that currently farmers have conserved their indigenous seeds at their village level compared to the past where some seeds could be found in National gene bank. They not only do subsistence farming from this seeds but also marketing of local products is slowly building up thus leading to conservation
- **Please describe the achievements of the measure/ practice so far (including quantification) (max 200 words)**  
We have so far reached over 60000 farmers, and so far we have 100 farmer group and individual seed banks across the country where each seed bank covers a maximum of 600 people in a village. We have been able to reach 30 youths groups who had had a bad perception about farming in the past and we believe in a bright and healthy future of the population thus the success of plants biodiversity practices lies in today's youth and that's why we relentlessly reaching out to them. We have been able to save through farmers more than 300 varieties of seeds which were getting extinct and in the same line helped in conservation of soil and water using some of these local varieties. Food supply has increased to more than 20000 households and thus lowering food insecurity cases while still improving health through consumption of more nutritious diets.
- **Other national level instruments that are linked to the measure/practice**  
We collaborate with other likeminded organization for trainings and workshops, practical and agriculture lessons, purchase of seeds and planting materials such as ministry of agriculture and kephis to ensure plant and seed health

#### **Lessons learned**

- **Describe lessons learned which may be relevant for others who wish to do the same or similar measures/practices (max 250 words).**  
Farmers have rich traditional knowledge on plants and seeds but unfortunately we have lost seed diversity at an alarming rate. This is because farming is faced by numerous challenges which affects its success. Farmers continue to experience high post-harvest loses, undeveloped marketing systems and value chains, high cost of production, low farm investments, loss of biodiversity, less agriculture extension, land fragmentation, less government support, gender disparity in ownership of land, dominance of production by old population, declining consumption of local food, declining space of farmers rights, less crop diversification, soil degradation, unfavourable agricultural policies and climate change and seed access and systems bio piracy; which exploits the genetic materials from the farmers



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without paying compensation of patents by some foreign organizations. All this has formed a basis of food insecurity in various part of Kenya

- **What challenges encountered along the way (if applicable) (max 200 words)**

One of the challenge experienced during our work is the limitation to reach more farmers for awareness creation due to limited resources and laws that are against farmers selling seeds hence limiting the capacity for farmers to produce more indigenous seeds due to lack of market linkages as most people are not aware about what they are losing or the nutritional value of the indigenous foods

- **What would you consider conditions for success, if others should seek to carry out such a measure or organize such an activity? (max 100 words)**

One of the condition is capacity building for farmers who are also the consumers. Awareness creation and practical activity through one on one contact with farmers helps in realization of how rich and powerful a seed is in production. This helps the farmers in conservation and protection of their local seeds and foods hence increase in diversity, and food security. In this line markets are created where trained farmers requires some seeds from different community hence creates a network that helps to assimilate more and more farmers which will help them understand policies surrounding seeds.

#### **Further information**

- Link(s) to further information about the measure/practice

Further information can be found on our website- [www.seedsaverskenya.org](http://www.seedsaverskenya.org)