



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 the updated information on best practices and measures of implementing Article 9 of the International Treaty submitted by Norway on 21 June 2019.*

*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/practice* **Norwegian community seed bank**
- *Date of submission* 20<sup>th</sup> June 2019
- *Name(s) of country/countries in which the measure/practice is taking place* Norway
  
- *Responsible institution/organization*  
**The Royal Norwegian Society for Development (Norges Vel)**  
Bråteveien 200, N-2013 Skjetten  
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- *Type of institution/organization (categories)* independent non-profit member organisation
  
- *Collaborating/supporting institutions/organizations/actors*  
**Solhatt økologisk hagebruk AS**  
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#### Description of the examples

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

- *Short summary to be put in the inventory*  
The Norwegian community seed bank is a joint initiative of the Norwegian Genetic Resource Centre, the Royal Norwegian Society, private sector partners and associations. The objective is to promote the use of traditional varieties, including orphan crops, where it is economically viable to do so, and to facilitate efforts that these varieties once more can become commercially interesting. After

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



consulting with various partners, the Norwegian community seed bank was founded in 2018. It is owned by a newly-established cooperative with funding provided by the Norwegian Agriculture Agency and technical support by the Norwegian Extension Service. The Norwegian community seed bank institutionalizes the previous on-farm conservation work done by individual farmers and gardeners, thus reducing the dependence on idealistic individuals, particularly since some of the most knowledgeable and active farmers are approaching the age of retirement. It can further help to enhance restoration, regeneration and reintroduction of traditional varieties stored in collections, e.g. of universities, to create awareness among farmers and to increase their interest in engaging in seed production and use of traditional Norwegian varieties.

- *Brief history; Core components and Description*

In 2018, a Norwegian community seed bank was established in order to conserve plant genetic material and ensure the survival and availability for use of diversity of Norwegian varieties. Old Norwegian varieties of plant material can have good characteristics and be resilient to certain illnesses. Norway is currently entirely dependent on overseas vegetable varieties.

The Norwegian community seed bank was set up by the Royal Norwegian Society for Development together with cultivators of old plant varieties. This is a formal and visible cooperative for all producers and cultivators of Norwegian seed that naturally belongs in a community seed bank.

In the autumn of 2017, the Norwegian Genetic Resource Centre and Organic Norge invited the Royal Norwegian Society for Development to discuss the founding of a Norwegian Community Seed bank for plant material. Bodies involved in Norwegian seed work indicated that the Royal Norwegian Society for Development would be a natural hub for a national Community Seed bank of this kind.

A collaboration agreement was signed in 2018 with the Norwegian Genetic Resource Centre and the work is being financially supported by the Norwegian Agriculture Agency. The joint owners of the newly-established cooperative are initially *Økologisk Spesialkorn DA* and *Solhatt Økologisk Hagebruk AS*. Organic Norway and Norwegian Extension services (Norsk Landbruksrådgivning) are active supporting bodies.

The Norwegian Community Seed Bank is continuing the previous work done by Johan Swärd, a farmer who has about 60 varieties in a local community seed bank at his farm. Johan Swärd is still regenerating those seeds, but the Norwegian Community Seed Bank aims to institutionalize this work, to reduce the dependence on idealistic individuals. The two main owners of the Norwegian Community Seed Bank are companies that have specialised in commercialisation of traditional varieties. The first company, *Økologisk Spesialkorn*, owned by two farmers with decades of experiences in the use of traditional varieties. The other company, *Solhatt*, is specialised in organic garden seeds, and also sells seeds of traditional varieties.

- *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

**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>
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		x
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.	x	
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		x
10	Legal measures for the implementation of Farmers' Rights, such as legislative measures related to PGRFA.		
11	Other measures / practices		

- *Objective(s)* The Norwegian Community Seed Bank (Norsk Bruksgenbank SA) is to promote the use of traditional varieties, including orphan crops, where it is economically viable to do so, and to work to ensure that these varieties once more can become commercially interesting.
- *Target group(s) and numbers of involved and affected farmers<sup>5</sup>* Potentially all Norwegian farmers, particularly diversity farmers
- *Location(s) and geographical outreach* National
- *Resources used for implementation of the measure/practice*

<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).

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

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



- *How has the measure/practice affected the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture?*

It is too early to measure any effects yet as the community seed bank is a very young set up.

- *Other national level instruments that are linked to the measure/practice* The community seed bank is set up in collaboration with the Norwegian Genetic Resource Centre.

### Lessons learned

- *Describe lessons learned which may be relevant for others who wish to do the same or similar measures/practices (max 250 words).*

Reintroducing old, historically and culturally important varieties in countries with well-established commercial seed systems are challenging, particularly in the Nordic countries with well-educated farmers, where landraces and traditional varieties were rapidly replaced by modern high yielding varieties when these became available. Existing varieties have therefore survived at e.g. universities and research centres, not specifically trained in variety maintenance. Many surviving varieties conserved at the gene bank must therefore be restored true to type before use is possible, and sufficient quantities for testing must be generated. The Norwegian community seed bank is instrumental for carrying out such activities and thus providing possibility for reintroduction, where commercially relevant.

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

Main tasks/challenges in the near future for the Community Seed Bank:

- ✓ Transfer the local community seed bank for cereals from Johan Swärd, the farmer, to the organisation behind the national seed bank. It's necessary to improve the regenerating work. This demands financial resources to e.g. equipment for storage, small batch handling and seed cleaning.
  - ✓ Establish a standardised list of varieties and defining criteria for which varieties to keep and include in the seed bank.
  - ✓ Advocacy work in order to increase the political priority of the work of the seed bank. Today, there is not sufficient funding to replace the work done on an idealistic and voluntary basis.
  - ✓ Awareness raising to increase the interest among farmers to use of old, Norwegian varieties.
  - ✓ Recruit more co-owners of the seed bank to strengthen the organisation. There is a need to recruit more farmers to be seed producers. It's a challenge that some of the most knowledgeable and active farmers are approaching the age of retirement.
- *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)*

### Further information

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

About the project:

<https://norgesvel.no/projects/establishing-a-norwegian-community-seed-bank-for-plant-genetic-diversity-article1254-888.html>

Involved institutions:

<https://norgesvel.com/home/>

<https://spesialkorn.no/https://solhatt.no/om-oss/>