



Rediscovering Forgotten Foods and Ensuring Benefits to Smallholder Farmers

A Collective Action within Key Focus Area (KFA) 1: *Empowering Farmers at the Center of Innovation*

Forgotten crops, also called orphan crops and under-utilized species, are domesticated plant species, conserved and improved by farmers for centuries, but currently underutilized. Their use has reduced over time due to social perceptions of their value, or challenges in scaling their use beyond local communities. Their conservation and use are at risk due to reduced awareness of their value among farmers and consumers, lack of interest from research institutions and challenges in establishing commercially viable markets. There are hundreds of such crops around the world, yet we now rely unduly on four big staple crops for our sustenance, with a resulting legacy of malnutrition and non-communicable diseases, natural resource depletion and loss of diversity in our diets.

Smallholder farmers have the right to save, use, exchange and sell farm-saved crop genetic resources, including those from neglected and underutilized species; protect their traditional knowledge, innovations and practices; participate in decision making processes; and in the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of those resources. While farmers' rights implementation is a responsibility of



“When crops that could contribute to better food, health and income are abandoned by communities, marginalized by agriculture, ignored by research and absent by consumers’ diets, the entire world loses”.
(Biodiversity International)

national governments, farmers should be aware and enabled to take up their legitimate rights; institutions should be supportive of the implementation of farmers’ rights and policy frameworks should be appropriate for the realization of these rights.

Nonetheless, forgotten crops provide vital nutrition for local communities, contribute to global food security, generate environmental services and improve communities’ livelihoods through additional income derived from their commercialization.

What we will do together

The aim of this Collective Action is to empower local communities, particularly disadvantaged and displaced farmers, rural women and youth, in their rights as farmers to save, use, exchange and sell forgotten crops. Recognizing the great crop diversity and local adaptation that has been generated by millions of farmers over centuries, it will promote research and innovation to improve these crops and their value to farmers. The aim is to directly empower farmers and communities at the center of sustainable farming systems, to better manage, sustain and benefit from genetic resources through access to knowledge and technical support, enabling participatory innovation for farmers and creating the required enabling environments. Change in societal eating habits requires collective advocacy for consumer awareness and education and re-connection to [Read more →](#)



the cultural significance of forgotten crops. We need to foster innovation and small enterprise opportunities in processing, value addition and packaging, and awareness of how these foods can be cooked and used.

Global progress on forgotten crops demands truly multi-disciplinary approaches that draw together diverse actors, working at scale on common needs and creating the enabling

environments and markets required, even where crops/foods are presently of very local use.

Partners in this Collective Action will work through four key areas (see Box), providing a collective voice and platform for all stakeholders to advocate and enable change around forgotten foods and the rights of small farmers in their conservation, use and development.

Some specific outputs anticipated through this multi-stakeholder Collective Action include:

Sharing knowledge and fostering partnership

- Information on forgotten crops on-farm, their importance for food and nutrition security, adaptation to climate change and cultural identity of smallholder farmers
- Knowledge based and decision support toolkit, including apps, radio spots, capacity/training material, flyers and videos on farmers' rights to support the conservation and use of forgotten crops
- Global Directory of relevant organizations and their work

Collective advocacy

- Promotion of participatory plant breeding activities on forgotten crops
- Mobilization of community awareness of the value and potential of forgotten crops and social-networked actions to develop incentives, effective scales and value in their use and development
- Raise awareness of farmers rights at local and national scales and of the importance of their recognition in national policies alongside Plant Breeders Rights
- Fostering of consumer demand and awareness, and that of policy makers at different levels

Participatory Innovation

- Development of collective programmes to develop appropriate technologies for production, improvement, processing, packaging and value addition of forgotten crop foodstuffs in rural communities and associated towns
- Commercialization of forgotten crops through farmer collectives, out-grower schemes and other such measures for achieving market scale, considering their contribution to food security, health and nutrition and resilience to climate change

Reforming policies and enabling change

- Metrics of productive systems to demonstrate real costs of production and value of forgotten crops vis-à-vis monoculture systems, in order to demonstrate to policy makers the value of investing in this sector
 - Improve regional, national and local policy frameworks promoting and allowing the implementation of farmers' rights
- Creation of financial incentives and market access/support mechanisms for smallholder farmers to improve the conservation and sustainable use of forgotten crops

You are invited to join Partners in GFAR including AIRCA/GAPAD, Crops for the Future, Bioversity International, Palestinian Farmers Union, World Rural Forum, ANGOC, YPARD, BLE, ISHS, the African Orphan Crops Initiative National Research Institutions, Univ. of Nairobi, FARA, the Barli Development Institute for Rural Women and the Lexicon of Sustainability in this vital Collective Action.

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