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Community Seed Banks in Times of Change

DIVERSIFARM-India National Seminar



Lecture Hall, NASC Complex
124, Dev Prakash Shastri Marg, Krishi Kunj,
Inder Puri, New Delhi, 110012



8-9 April
2025



The seminar 'Community Seed Banks in Times of Change', 8–9 April 2025 is carried out as part of the project Unfolding the Potentials of Community Seed Banks for Food and Nutrition Security among Smallholder Farmers in India through the Realization of Farmers' Rights (DIVERSIFARM-India). The project aims to identify the community seed banks in India and establish a national platform for them and their supporting organizations and networks to share experiences and develop solutions to overcome challenges and unfold their potentials. The project is also exploring why some community seed banks are particularly successful and seeking to derive lessons for capacity building programmes. Furthermore, DIVERSIFARM-India is seeking to assess and identify ways and means to improve the institutional, legal and policy environments around CSBs to strengthen their long-term sustainability. The project seeks to identify possibilities for scaling out best practices, with a view also to the increasing areas under natural/agroecological/organic farming in India. Thereby the project seeks to further enhance the realization of Farmers' Rights in India, as they are recognized in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

DIVERSIFARM-India has been jointly developed by the Fridtjof Nansen Institute

(FNI), Norway, the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, India (MSSRF), and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research - National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (ICAR-NBPGR), and is currently carried out by FNI and MSSRF while ICAR-NBPGR is awaiting clearance to join the project. DIVERSIFARM-India is funded by the Royal Norwegian Embassy in New Delhi. More information about the project is available here:

<https://www.farmersrights.org/projects/diversifarm-india/>



About the Seminar

The objective for the seminar is to create a joint understanding of the magnitude and types of community seed banks in India and how they contribute to seed-, food- and nutrition security in the country, to shape a platform for exchange between and among them and their facilitating organizations and networks and to guide the DIVERSIFARM-India project.

At the seminar the DIVERSIFARM-India team will share the findings from a comprehensive mapping of community seed banks in India, present a typology of community seed banks and a first analysis of their situation and trends for discussion: Community seed banks in times of change.

We have invited community seed banks and their facilitating organizations to present their experiences and there will also be presentations of experiences from other countries. Importantly, we seek to enable exchange between and among the participants. We will also present preliminary work on the national community seed bank platform with the digital CSB-Atlas of India and invite input on how this platform may best be further developed and maintained in a fruitful way, keeping in mind also that

it should not duplicate other efforts but add value to the good work that is already being done. Last but not least, the seminar will enable feedback on the DIVERSIFARM-India project, to ensure its usefulness for the community seed banks of India.



Community Seed Banks in India in Times of Change

Organizers:

- Fridtjof Nansen Institute, Norway (FNI)
- M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai (MSSRF)
- Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority (PPV&FRA)
- Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN)
- Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, India Office

PROGRAMME

TUESDAY 8 APRIL, 2025

08:30 - 09:00: Registration

Opening Session

09.00

Opening / Inaugural session

Facilitator: **Dr R. Rengalakshmi**, Executive Director - Area Operations, M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), Chennai, and MSSRF team leader in DIVERSIFARM-India

Welcome address: Dr Regine Andersen, Research Director, Fridtjof Nansen Institute (FNI), Norway, and Project Leader of DIVERSIFARM-India

Opening Remarks: Dr Gyanendra Pratap Singh, Director, ICAR – National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources

Opening Remarks: Dr Jai Rana, Country Representative, India, Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT

Opening Remarks: Ms Bhagya Laxmi, Associate Director, Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN)

Special address: Shri Ajeet Kumar Sahu, IAS, Joint Secretary (Seeds), Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Govt of India

Special address: Dr Devendra Kumar Yadava, Deputy Director General (Crops), ICAR

Special address: Ms Martine A. Bottheim, Minister Counsellor & Deputy Head of Mission, Royal Norwegian Embassy of Norway, N. Delhi

Chairman's address: Dr Trilochan Mohapatra, Chairperson, Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority. Chair of the Advisory Committee of DIVERSIFARM-India

Vote of thanks: Dr R. Rengalakshmi, Executive Director - Area Operations, M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), Chennai

09.45: Tea/coffee break

Session 1: Community seed banks and DIVERSIFARM-India

Co-Chairs: **Dr D.K. Agarwal**, Registrar General, Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority (PPVFRA) and **Dr Sanjay Kumar**, Director, ICAR-National Institute of Seed Science & Technology (ICAR-NISST), Mau

10.05 **DIVERSIFARM-India: Presentation of the project**

- **Dr Regine Andersen**, Research Director, FNI, and Project Leader, DIVERSIFARM-India

10.25 **Community seed banks in India - preliminary results from DIVERSIFARM-India:**

- State of research. Presented by **Dr C.M. Pratheepa**, Senior Scientist, MSSRF
- Results from the mapping of CSBs in India, a typology and major trends. Presented by **Ms Viviana Meixner Vásquez**, Researcher, FNI
- Questions and answers

11.00 **Achievements and situation of community seed banks in India:**

Presentations by representatives of CSBs from each of the major types of CSBs in India:

- CSB managed by its members directly or elected committees: **Raiser CSB, Odisha.**
Presented by: **Mr Prasant Mohanty**, Secretary Cum Executive Director, NIRMAN
- CSB managed by self-help groups: **Bibi Fatima CSB, Karnataka.**
Presented by: **Mr G. Krishna Prasad**, Founder and Director, (SAHAJA Seeds)
- CSB managed by an individual/household: **Amarkanan Rural Socio-Environmental Welfare Society (CSB), West Bengal.**
Presented: **Dr Anjan Kumar Sinha**, Founder and Secretary
- CSBs managed by Farmer-Producer Organisations (FPOs): **Junee Mountain Farmers Producer Company Limited, Himachal Pradesh.**
Presented by **Dr Lal Singh**, Director, Himalayan Research Group

12.30: Lunch

Session 2: Community seed banks in times of change

Co-chairs: **Ms Vidhya Das**, Joint Director, Agragamee, Odisha and **Dr A. V. Balasubramanian**, Director, Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems (CIKS), Tamil Nadu

14.00 **World café: Community seed banks in times of change - situation, challenges, and opportunities**

In this session we will invite all participants to actively participate in a World Café. There will be around five café tables with one host each. Each table will cover a different question, and all questions will together address our topic for the session. The participants will visit four different tables and stay 25 minutes at each table, before a signal will be given to move on. The hosts will summarize very briefly (2 minutes) for each group arriving at their table what the question is and what previous groups have responded, before opening the floor, facilitating the discussion and ensuring that all participants can have the floor. Each host will have four groups visiting. The host will summarize the input from the groups for presentation in the plenary afterwards.

Facilitators: **Dr R. Rengalakshmi**, Executive Director - Area Operations, MSSRF, and **Dr Regine Andersen**, Research Director, FNI

Café tables, topics and hosts:

- **Table 1: Trends in the CSB movement**
Hosted by **Dr E.D. Israel Oliver King**, Director Biodiversity, MSSRF
- **Table 2: Long-term sustainability for CSBs**
Hosted by **Dr Sarika Mittra**, Consultant, Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT
- **Table 3: Networking between and among CSBs**
Hosted by **Ms Bhagya Laxmi**, Associate Director, WASSAN
- **Table 4: Policies and legislation**
Hosted by **Dr Sunil Archak**, Principal Scientist, ICAR-NBPGR
- **Table 5: Prospects for scaling up good models**
Hosted by **Mr Pitambar Shrestha**, Program Advisor, Community Seed Banks Association of Nepal (CSB Nepal)

15.30: Tea/coffee break

15.50 Presentation of main points from the World Café in the plenary and discussion

16.55 Winding up the first day and presentation of the programme for the next day (ending 17.00)

WEDNESDAY 9 APRIL

Welcome and setting the stage, **Dr R. Rengalakshmi**, Executive Director - Area Operations, MSSRF

SESSION 3: Organizations and networks promoting CSBs in India

Co-Chairs: Dr Gyanendra Pratap Singh, Director, ICAR-National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (ICAR-NBPGR) and **Dr K.S Varaprasad**, Advisor, Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI), WASSAN and Rythu Sadhikara Samstha Academy

09.05 Organisations and networks promoting CSBs in India: Achievements, experiences and reflections on how to respond to the challenges and opportunities addressed during Day 1:

Organisations:

- **Living Farms, Odisha**
Presented by: **Bichitra Biswal**, Program Director
- **Ladakh Environment and Health Organisation (LEHO)**
Presented by: **Mr Tashi Tsetan**, Former Chief Agriculture Officer, Ladakh
- **CARITAS-India**
Presented by: **Dr M. K. Saju**, Zone Programme Lead, Caritas-India
- **M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF)**
Presented by: **Dr E.D. Israel Oliver King**, Director Biodiversity, MSSRF

Networks:

- **Working Group on Seed Systems for Rainfed Areas (WGoSS)**
Presented by **Ms Bhagya Laxmi**, Associate Director, Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN)
- **The Working Group for Women and Landownership (WGWLO)**
Presented by **Ms Purvi Vyas**, Thematic Member (Agriculture) & Practising Farmer

Supporting institutions:

- **Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority**
Presented by: **Dr D K Agarwal**, Registrar General, Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority
- **National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources**
Presented by: **Dr Gyanendra Pratap Singh**, Director, ICAR-National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (ICAR-NBPGR)
- **ICAR-National Institute of Seed Science & Technology, Mau**
Presented by: **Dr Sanjay Kumar**, Director, ICAR-NISST
- **Sree Anna Abhiyan**
Presented by: **Mr Susanta Sekhar Choudhury**
- **Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT**
Presented by **Dr Jai Rana**, Country Representative for India
- **International Rice Research Institute**
Presented by: **Dr Swati Nayak**, Scientist II and South Asia Lead - Seed Systems and Product Management

11.10: Tea/Coffee Break

SESSION 4: CSB-experiences from other countries

Co-chairs: Ms Bhagya Laxmi, Associate Director, Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN) and **Dr Jai Rana**, Country Representative, The Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT (Bioversity)

11.30 Experiences from other countries

- **Experiences from Nepal**
Presented by **Mr Pitambar Shrestha**, Program Advisor, CSB-Association, Nepal
- **Experiences from The Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT in other countries**
Presented by **Dr Jai Rana**, Representative for India
- **Results from the research project DIVERSIFARM (2020 - 2024), with in-depth case studies from CSBs in Ethiopia, Malawi and Nepal**
Presented by **Dr Regine Andersen**, Research Director, FNI / Project Leader DIVERSIFARM

12.00: Lunch

SESSION 5: Ways forward for community seed banks

13.30 Panel discussion with the plenary: What can we learn and ways forward

Co-chairs: Dr Arabinda Kumar Padhee, Principal Secretary, Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment Department, Government of Odisha (TBC) & **Dr B Meenakumari**, Former Chairperson, National Biodiversity Authority and Former Deputy Director General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research

Panel participants are the chairs from all sessions and our resources person from Nepal:

- **Dr D K Agarwal**, Registrar General, PPVFRA
- **Dr Sanjay Kumar**, Director, ICAR-NISST
- **Dr Gyanendra Pratap Singh**, Director, ICAR-National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (ICAR-NBPGR)
- **Dr K. S. Varaprasad**, Advisor, Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI), WASSAN and Rythu Sadhikara Samstha Academy
- **Dr Jai Rana**, Country Representative, The Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT
- **Ms Bhagya Laxmi**, Associate Director, Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN)
- **Mr Pitambar Shrestha**, Program Advisor, CSB-Association, Nepal
- **Ms Vidhya Das**, Joint Director, Agrabamee, Odisha
- **Dr A.V. Balasubramanian**, Director, Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems (CIKS), Tamil Nadu
- **Dr R. Rengalakshmi**, Executive Director - Area Operations, MSSRF
- **Dr Regine Andersen**, Research Director, FNI

15.00: Tea/coffee break

15.20 DIVERSIFARM-India: How can the project best contribute to strengthen CSBs in India?

Co-Chairs: **Dr Regine Andersen** (FNI) and **Dr R. Rengalakshmi** (MSSRF)

- A new platform for community seed banks in India: How can it best strengthen CSBs? Presentation of the preliminary platform by the project team for discussion.
- Planned case studies of success factors, institutional environments and policy and legal frameworks of community seed banks in Odisha – as a pilot. Presentation of the plans by the project team for discussion.

16.30 Wrapping up the results from the seminar
By the co-chairs.

16.45 Feedback / comments
Feedback and comments from the participants are welcome.

17.00 Votes of thanks and closing of the seminar

DIVERSIFARM-India Community Seed Banks in Times of Change

Seminar Secretariat:

M S Swaminathan Research Foundation
3rd Cross Street, Institutional Area,
Taramani, Chennai 600 113, India

Scan for Seminar
Location



Photo Credits: Agrabamee, Odisha (Padaaunli, Pondpus & Kandraguda CSBs), Srushtidnyan (Srushtidnyan CSB), VIEWS India (Mukundapur CSB), Living Farms (Dumerpadar and Kalakani CSB), MSSRF (CIKS CSB)