

RED DE SEMILLAS

The loss of genetic resources in farming and cattle-breeding and the recovery of local varieties were the reasons for creating the “Red de Semillas” network. An organisation of a technical, social and political nature, “Red de Semillas – Re-Sowing and Sharing” aims to bring together the various local projects in Spain and provide instruments for carrying out activities in the field of the preservation and utilisation of agricultural biodiversity, helping to coordinate activities amongst the different members and promoting their participation in national and international projects.

The main assets of the Network are the people and the organisations that belong to it. They include farmers and farming organisations, agricultural experts, supporters of responsible consumption and fair trade, local action groups, germplasm banks, university staff and students, ecologist movements, research centres, etc.

Work is done via the local networks on the preservation of genetic diversity in their areas through the recovery, conservation, improvement and use of the local agricultural varieties that have been passed down by farmers over the years.

The Network’s activities have been, and continue to be, closely related to organic farming and the need for the inclusion within it of the preservation of biodiversity. The Network also aims to help recover the know-how of local farmers regarding growing methods.



SCOPE

Local: long before the RdS was set up, the many groups that belong to it had been working on the preservation of local diversity, and farmers were actively providing materials and participating in exchange networks. In addition, research centres have been carrying out on-site programmes using local materials and producers. Of special interest is the work being done by the La Verde cooperative and the CIFAES.



National: the RdS carries out political activities and provides information, including: the report entitled Agricultural biodiversity, farmers and genetic erosion; lobbying and legal amendments aiming to unravel the complex legislation on seeds and ascertain its effects on farmers; the campaign on the rights of farmers to the use and preservation of biodiversity, and the declaration on the rights of farmers to the use and preservation of biodiversity, signed by 73 organisations. Of special interest also is the Seed Action Plan, a document that analyses the problems faced by biodiversity and plant genetic resources in farming.

International: the RdS has been present at several international events including Frick, Brussels, Villarceaux, Paris, Frankfurt, Toulouse, Rome and Florence. It is participating, alongside fourteen other EU groups, in the European project to enhance the genetic diversity of plants grown on organic farms in Europe and it also belongs to the International Community Organic Seed Network.

GROUPS BELONGING TO RED DE SEMILLAS

RED ANDALUZA DE SEMILLAS
RED CANARIA DE SEMILLA ECOLÓGICA
RED DE SEMILLAS DE LA ZONA CENTRO
RED DE SEMILLAS DE EUSKALHERRIA
RED DE AGROECOLOGÍA DE LA REGIÓN DE MURCIA
RINCÓN DE LA BIODIVERSIDAD DE ADEMUZ. VALENCIA

RED DE SEMILLAS DE CASTILLA Y LEÓN
RED DE SEMILLAS DE CATALUNYA
RED DE SEMILLAS GALLEGA
EKONEKAZARITZA. EUSKADI
COMARCA DE TENTUDIA. EXTREMADURA
ESTACIÓN EXPERIMENTAL DE CARCAIXENT

AGRICULTURAL BIODIVERSITY AND GENETIC EROSION

Genetic resources for farming and food (agricultural biodiversity) are the source of the food, clothing and medicines needed by mankind. Agricultural biodiversity is therefore an essential resource for guaranteeing food safety and the sustainable development of farming.

At present, no more than 120 cultivated plant species provide 90% of food, and only 12 plant species and 5 animal species provide over 70% of food. Only 4 plant species (potatoes, rice, maize and wheat) and 3 animal species (beef cattle, pigs and chickens) provide over half.

Over the last hundred years, there have been enormous losses in agricultural biodiversity. This has been studied and proved by all the organisations and institutions working in this field, such as the FAO (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation). The recovery of local varieties and of farmers' knowledge of them is essential for ensuring not only their number but also their usefulness in agro-ecosystems.

In organic farming, one of the most important strategies for achieving the necessary ecosystemic balance with sufficient productivity but without the use of chemical treatments is the use of varieties that have adapted to the local environment. It is precisely the local varieties that meet these needs best and this is what makes them so valuable. Moreover, by using local varieties, it is possible to recover the local culinary and gastronomic culture, restoring land use and preserving landscapes.



BIODIVERSITY FAIRS

Since it is essential for members of the Network to share their experiences, over the last four years there has been an annual meeting, the Cultivated Biodiversity Fair, at which local cultivars are displayed, debates are held on the problems facing farmers and contacts are established between farmers, specialists, researchers, consumers and local residents.

The fairs to date have been held in: Amayuelas de Abajo (Palencia) in 2000; Castelfabib (Valencia) in 2001; El Bosque (Cádiz) in 2002; Ajangiz (Bizkaia) in 2003; Manresa (Barcelona) in 2004, Cortes de la Frontera (Málaga) in 2005 and Bullas (Murcia) in 2006. In addition to these fairs, more recently there have also been local fairs (Andalusia and Castilla y León), meetings on biodiversity (Manresa), seminars on organic seeds (Canaries), etc.

CULTIVAR LOCAL

"Cultivar Local" is a quarterly bulletin created in 2003 offering national and international information on documents, announcements, experiments and activities relating to biodiversity and organic seeds. The publication comes in electronic format and can be downloaded, free of charge, from:

www.redsemillas.info

www.redandaluzadesemillas.org

Further information:

Anyone interested in collaborating in the projects and activities of any of the groups that belong to the Red de Semillas can contact:

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Resembrando e Intercambiando