

How to set up a community seed bank

Problems

- Continuous loss of agricultural biodiversity / genetic erosion
- Difficulty to access seed adapted to local and organic conditions through the market

Solutions

Community Seed Banks (CSB) are a powerful tool for farmers and gardeners to cooperate in the management of seed diversity. Seed selection, production and management by farmers could be a collective action, in which shared actions allow to face technical problems and to find new solutions. CSB could provide organic varieties and heterogeneous material to farmers seeking cultivars adapted to local conditions.

Practical recommendations



*Figure: Preparing seeds for storage
(Photo: RSR)*

Location: A CSB should have separate rooms for acquiring seed checking, cleaning and seed storage. Clear entry and exit routes need to be established. Good hygiene and regular surface cleaning with alcohol are important to avoid contamination. Avoid wood or porous material surfaces. For storage ideally temperature should be $<15^{\circ}\text{C}$ and relative humidity $<40\%$. Seed losing germinability quickly should be stored $<4^{\circ}\text{C}$.

Equipment: A CSB can operate with very basic equipment. The minimum are sieves with mesh appropriate to the seed being handled, plastic buckets and containers, vacuum packing machine and weighing scale. For pre-storage temperature treatments, a deep freezer (-20°C) and an air dryer (e.g. food dryer) are essential.

Data management: All seed entering and leaving the CSB should be recorded. It's important to record the origin of the seed, local name, who grew it, harvest year. Data can be recorded on paper or digitally, ideally both. For seed distributed outside the CSB it's advisable to use the Standard Material Transfer Agreement.

Further information

<https://www.communityseedbanks.org/>

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LIVESEED: Boosting organic seed and plant breeding across Europe. LIVESEED is based on the concept that cultivars adapted to organic systems are key for realising the full potential of organic agriculture in Europe. Research project 2017-2021.

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