



Support our call to action

Help us in embedding *in situ* conservation and sustainable use of agricultural plant diversity in the policy and governance framework and you will be helping to ensure that Europe is prepared for the major problems facing agriculture due to climate change. Adequate EU policy provisions are absent, but are urgently required to systematically establish the required *in situ*/on-farm agricultural plant diversity activities and maintain current complementary *ex situ* activities.

We therefore invite policymakers in the agriculture and environment sectors to work proactively with the Farmer's Pride project (in association with the Natura 2000 network) towards putting in place a policy environment for an *in situ* conservation and sustainable use network that safeguards our agricultural plant diversity as the foundation for the future of the agricultural economy and food and nutrition security in Europe.



Policymakers: Agrobiodiversity for food security needs YOUR ACTION

Project partners



For more information and to find out how to get involved, visit our website or contact the Project Manager: s.kell@bham.ac.uk

www.farmerspride.eu

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Cover picture: Varieties of cauliflower for sale in a market in Sicily, Italy © P.Stapleton/ICRAF
Above: Collecting seeds of the endemic CWR *Convolvulus fernandesii* P. Silva & Teles in Portugal © Carlos Ferreira Silva
Inside: Vegetables for sale in a market in Italy © Bioversity International/R.Faidutti; Interbreeding a long greenhouse cucumber © Jeremy Cherfas; Farmer with landrace beans, Bulgaria © René Hauptvogel; *Aegilops cylindrica* Host, a wild relative of wheat (*Triticum* spp.), Slovakia © René Hauptvogel

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Agricultural plant diversity – the diversity of crops, their varieties, and wild relatives – is critical for the sustainability of our food production systems because it is the bedrock of resilient agriculture.

Food and nutrition security, climate-smart agriculture, and crop resilience to pests and diseases, are all impossible without agricultural plant diversity. Building on European expertise in *in situ* agricultural plant diversity, the EU Horizon 2020 Farmer's Pride project is establishing a Network for *in situ* conservation and sustainable use that ensures plant diversity is available to farmers and breeders.

However, without a push by policymakers to embed these improvements in key legislative and governance frameworks, there is a risk that the capital achieved by the network will dissipate at the end of the project.

This would threaten the sustainability of *in situ* conservation efforts which are essential to maintain European agricultural plant diversity.

Recommendation

Through engagement with Farmer's Pride, policymakers from the agriculture and environment sectors should identify the actions required to embed the project's advancement in legislation. If successful, you will have helped lay the foundations for enduring *in situ* conservation and sustainable use of agricultural plant diversity in Europe.



Introduction

The EU Horizon 2020 Farmer's Pride project is establishing a European-wide network for *in situ* conservation of agricultural plant diversity (alongside the Natura 2000 protected areas network).

This network is essential to ensure that the genetic foundation of our future food supply is adequately diverse to adapt to climate change impacts (i.e., to be capable of supplying the genetic traits required to fight crop pests and diseases and to cope with uncertain and extreme weather events).

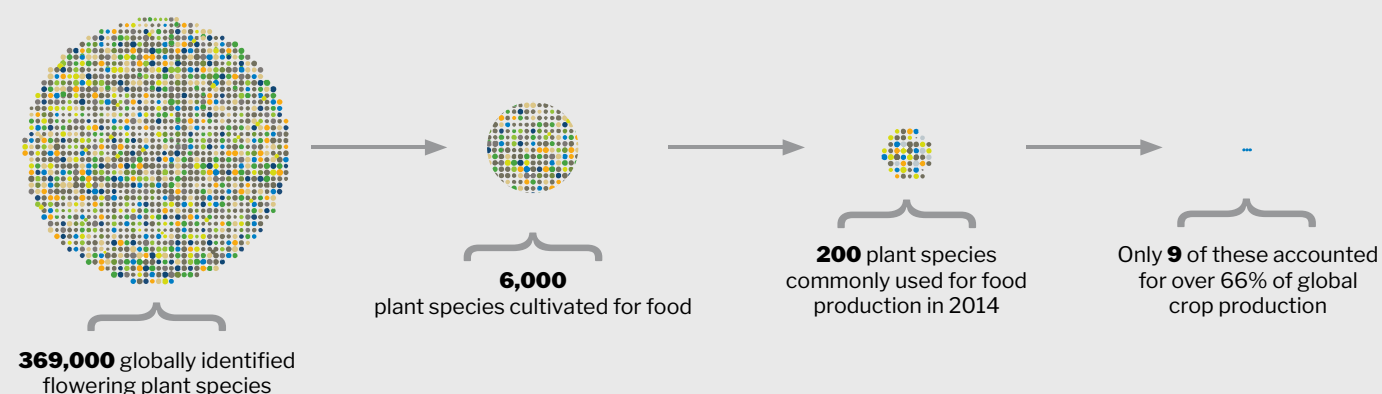
Maintaining agricultural plant diversity is essential for food, nutrition and economic security. Despite this, there is currently no specific European directive that covers its management and oversight in EU policy and governance frameworks. While there are several policy instruments to conserve biodiversity, they do not cover the specific area of *in situ* conservation and sustainable use of agricultural plant diversity.



Our future food security depends on the survival of a wide range of plant genetic resources, including wild relatives of crops and locally-adapted cultivated varieties (landraces).

The need for plant genetic diversity in agriculture

Our heavy reliance on a small number of crop species and genetically uniform varieties puts future food and nutrition security at risk.



Data sources: Royal Botanic Gardens Kew State of the World's Plants report (2017) and FAO State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture (2019)



The problem

Poor understanding of the importance of agricultural plant diversity, and a lack of coordination in the conservation sector, has led to a plethora of conflicting policies which have harmed rather than promoted the *in situ* conservation of agricultural plant diversity.

Current incentive mechanisms for *in situ* conservation, where they exist at all, are *ad hoc* and uncoordinated. Access and benefit-sharing is complicated by the fact that, in contrast with *ex situ* conservation (in genebanks), *in situ* genetic materials are dispersed across different locations and managed by a broad range of stakeholders.

Huge inequalities also exist in the policy coverage of *ex situ* versus *in situ* conservation in Europe. While nearly all countries have an *ex situ* agrobiodiversity conservation programme and at least one operational genebank, there is no similar complementary *in situ* or on-farm conservation programme. Indeed, both *ex situ* and *in situ* activities lack an EU policy directive.

The need for such a network (comparable to and linked with the existing Natura 2000 network of protected areas for biodiversity conservation) was established in response to a demand by the EU DG for Agriculture (<https://bit.ly/2KJOpWD>) and the European Parliament (<https://bit.ly/2wPwMpy>) that *in situ* conservation efforts be properly coordinated.

However, to ensure the sustainability of the Network beyond the Farmer's Pride project, *in situ* agricultural plant diversity conservation mechanisms urgently need to be embedded in EU legislation.

Proposed solution

Together we can put in place a clear plan of action to embed legal mechanisms for *in situ* conservation of agricultural plant diversity in EU and broader European legislative and governance frameworks.

To prepare for a dialogue with policymakers, the H2020 funded Farmer's Pride project is reviewing all policies pertaining to food, agriculture, biodiversity and the environment to identify critical legislative gaps and opportunities. It is envisaged that the policy recommendations will encompass, at a minimum:

- Actions aimed at bridging existing policy gaps and harmonizing conflicting policies.
- The creation of a regulatory framework that facilitates access, use, and equitable benefit-sharing of agricultural plant diversity conserved *in situ*.
- Incentive mechanisms and schemes aimed at sustaining *in situ* conservation.
- Measures required for the sustainable functioning of the 'European Network for *In Situ* Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources' established by the project.
- An information technology support framework (platform development, user interface) for *in situ* conservation, equal to that of the IT network for managing agricultural plant diversity in genebanks, the European Search Catalogue for Plant Genetic Resources (EURISCO).

