

Dear Seed keepers and seed warriors,

On behalf of Navdanya, I write to invite you to become part of a Global Citizens Alliance for Seed Freedom - the start of a global campaign to alert citizens and governments around the world on how precarious our seed supply has become – and as a consequence how precarious our food security has become.

We started Navdanya 25 years ago to protect our seed diversity and farmer's rights to save, breed, and exchange seed freely, in the context of the emerging threats of the TRIPS Agreement (Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights Agreement) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) which opened the door to the introduction of GMOS, patents on seed and the collection of royalties. A Monsanto representative later stated "In drafting these agreements we were the patient, diagnostician, physician all in one". Corporations defined a problem - and for them the problem was farmers saving seed. They offered a solution, and the solution was the introduction of patents and intellectual property rights on seed, making it illegal for farmers to save their seed. Seed as a common good became a commodity of private seed companies, traded on the open market.

Today, the threat is greater. Consider the following:

- The last twenty years have seen a very rapid erosion of seed diversity and seed sovereignty, and the rapid concentration of control over seed by a very small number of giant corporations
- Acreage under GM corn, soya, canola, cotton has increased dramatically.
  
- Besides displacing and destroying diversity, patented GMO seeds are also undermining seed sovereignty, the rights of farmers to grow their own seeds and to save and exchange seed.
- In countries across the world, including in India, new seed laws are being introduced which enforce compulsory registration of seed, thus making it impossible for small farmers to grow their own diversity, and forcing them into dependency on giant seed corporations.
- genetic contamination is spreading - India has lost the cotton seeds because of contamination from Bt. Cotton and Mexico, the historical cradle of corn, has lost eighty percent of its corn varieties and these are but two instances of loss of local and national seed heritage.
- After contamination, Biotech Seed Corporations sue farmers with patent

infringement cases. More than 80 groups came together recently in the US and filed a case to prevent Monsanto from suing farmers whose seed had been contaminated.

- As farmer's seed supply is eroded, and farmers become dependent on patented GMO seed, the result is indebtedness. Debt created by Bt. Cotton in India has pushed farmers to suicide.
- India has signed a U.S. /India knowledge Initiative in Agriculture, with a representative of Monsanto on the Board. States are being pressurized to sign agreements with Monsanto. An example is the Monsanto Rajasthan memorandum of understanding (MOU) under which Monsanto would obtain intellectual property rights (IPRs) on all genetic resources as well as research on seed carried out under the MOU. It was only after a campaign led by Navdanya and a "Monsanto Quit India" Bija Yatra that the government of Rajasthan cancelled the MOU.
- Pressure by Monsanto on the US Government and the joint pressure of both on governments across the world is a major threat to the future of seed and the future of food.
- Wikileaks exposed the US government's intentions to proliferate the use of GMOs in Africa and Pakistan. Pressure to use GMOs imposed by US government representatives is a direct effort to support giant biotech business and to expand their markets.

**These trends demonstrate a total control over the seed supply and a destruction of the very foundation of agriculture. We are witnessing a SEED EMERGENCY at a global level.**

The disappearance of our biodiversity and of our seed sovereignty is creating a major crisis for agriculture and food security around the world. We must act before it is too late.

Seeds are the first link in the food chain and the repository of life's future evolution. As such, it is our inherent duty and responsibility to protect them and to pass them on to future generations. The growing of seed and the free exchange of seed among farmers has been the basis to maintaining biodiversity and our food security.

I am sure you will sense the emergency as deeply as I do, and feel the need to join forces to reclaim our seed and to protect our Seed Diversity and Seed Freedom.

Let us collectively make 2012 the year to "Save our Seeds" and "Reclaim our Seeds as a Commons" – from privatization through patents, from compulsory

registration laws, from seed monopolies, from genetic erosion and contamination.

Let us plan common strategies and common actions so that the voices of the 99% in issues related to seed become louder than the bullying by Monsanto and the other four Agricultural Seed- Biotech Giants, who are determined to control the world's food systems by stealing our seed and our freedoms.

On behalf of Navdanya, I invite you to contribute to a "Global Report on the Seed Emergency" to wake people up to how great is the risk to our seed supply. Because seed is the first link in the food chain, the seed emergency will lead to a food emergency. We must act before it is too late.

In the report on Seed Freedom and Seed Sovereignty we want to focus on:

1. The erosion of seed diversity and disappearance of open pollinated varieties
2. The threat to farmers seed sovereignty from patent and seed law and GMO contamination
3. The threat to public breeding
4. The corporate concentration over the seed supply
5. The increasing costs of seed because of royalties
6. The influence of corporations over government research, breeding and agricultural policy
7. People's initiatives for seed conservation and reclaiming seed as commons.

Please send your ideas, your hopes, your dreams so we build a strong movement "Occupy the Seed".

I look forward to your positive response to this proposal. Some of you have fought legal battles against Monsanto, some of you are building movements to reclaim our Seed Sovereignty and Seed Freedom. All these contributions are vital. We must create better synergy among the diverse strands of our movement. Let us inform each other across the world about what you have done to protect the seed and seed freedom, what you have witnessed in terms of threats, what you anticipate if the seed giants continue their agenda of owning and monopolizing seed - the first link in the food chain - and what you hope we can collectively achieve to "Reclaim the Seed as Commons".

We hope you can write 10 to 15 pages, if possible with photographs, about

your ideas and experience with the seed and send your report by July 2012, so that we can launch it together during the fortnight for seed freedom beginning with 2 October, Gandhi's birth anniversary, to 16th October 2012 , World Food Day, to declare "No Food Sovereignty without Seed Sovereignty".

I look forward to joining forces with you to make 2012 the year of the Liberation of the Seed and to help ensure a sustainable and just future for generations to come.

In Solidarity,

**Vandana Shiva**

Two documents that provide an in-depth understanding of the seed issue are

1. The Manifesto on the Future of Seeds (2004), available in several languages ([www.navdanyainternational.it](http://www.navdanyainternational.it).) Its principles were the basis to the Regional Law of Tuscany on Seed heritage that same year.
2. "The GMO Emperor has no Clothes: false promises, failed technologies" – published by Navdanya International last year together with an alliance of citizens movements (see\* below) ([www.navdanyainternational.it](http://www.navdanyainternational.it)). The report made evident the severe threat to seed from erosion, pollution and privatization.

Contributing organizations: Centre for Safety (CFS), USA; Centre of Studies for Rural Change in Mexico (CECCAM); Network for a GE Free Latin America (RALLT), Ecuador; Amigos della Tiera Uruguay (REDES); Uruguay Sustainable, Conservation Land Trust, Patagonia; Navdanya International; Confederation Paysanne, Via Campensia, France; Save our Seeds (SOS), Germany; Italian Association for Organic Agriculture (AIAB), Italy; Blueridge Institute, Switzerland; International Coalition to Protect the Polish Countryside (ICPPC) Poland; World Peace Culture Fund Genetic Resources Conservation, Russia; African Biodiversity Network (ABN); Friends of the Earth, Africa; Gaia Foundation, UK; Navdanya, India; NO! GMO Campaign, Japan; Gene Ethics, Australia; Madge, Australia.

Write to [info@seedfreedom.in](mailto:info@seedfreedom.in)