



# THE BAUTA FAMILY INITIATIVE ON CANADIAN SEED SECURITY



## UPDATE TO **COMMUNITY AND PARTNERS**

The Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security is building a movement for resilient seed systems in Canada. Working with farmers, seed producers, researchers, and partners from civil society, government and business, we are taking action to conserve biodiversity, keep seeds accessible to the public, support ecological agriculture, and promote the wisdom and knowledge of farmers.

This document is being published during our fourth year working in fields across the country. We want to share with our community what has been achieved so far, and how we are planning for the future.

We begin by acknowledging those who have been passionately growing and sharing seed for decades, and who have laid the foundation for the thriving seed movement we see in Canada today. We welcome new partners who are realizing the importance of biodiversity, and want to get involved.





Photo: Salt Spring Seed Sanctuary

# WHY SEED?

It is quite simple - without seed we do not have food. Nine out of every ten bites of food taken around the world today begin with the planting of a seed. Every year nature brings something new to test us, and this is increasingly the case with climate change. Diversity is our best resource to adapt to this change. Without it our food system is vulnerable.

This is where we find ourselves today. Just when we need it the most, diversity is narrowing at alarming rates.

We must conserve diversity in gene banks and community seed collections, keep it alive and adapting in farmers' fields, and introduce new crop diversity through innovative farmer-breeder collaborations. We must breed for flavour and nutrition alongside productivity, and promote sustainable farming. Finally, we must increase public awareness of the critical role of biodiversity, and collaborate with Canadians, coast to coast to coast, to build a resilient seed and food system.

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"[The Bauta Family Seed Initiative has] allowed us to approach seed development in a much more grassroots way. And I'm talking about serious seed development - we're not just testing some varieties, we're actually creating new genetic material where farmers are involved in all the steps of the process."

- **Researcher**

# HOW OUR APPROACH IS UNIQUE

- ☪ We are field-based, guided by the knowledge and needs of farmers.
- ☪ We are grounded in science.
- ☪ We are solutions-oriented.
- ☪ We work locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.
- ☪ We are committed to collaboration across sectors and geographies.
- ☪ We are aiming for systemic change, and taking a long-term approach.

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"I think that I am a better selector of plants and seeds. But what I think is really amazing is that there is support for farmers to select for traits that will benefit their own specific farm. Support for specificity of place is the direction in the future..."

- **Farmer**





Photo: Michael Marapeese - FarmFolk CityFolk

# CHALLENGES

"...these aren't initially business models that get up and running quickly. Seed, unlike a lot of products, is a longer-term return-on-investment sector."

- **Seed Industry Association**

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"We're breeding varieties with a broader genetic base, and there's no way to register these formally."

- **Researcher**

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"...there is a serious lack of research and development of vegetable seeds. This weakens the potential growth of the organic and ecological seed market."

- **Canada Organic Trade Association Report on The Market for Ecological and Organic Seed in Canada**

# WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED SO FAR

Below we provide a snapshot of what we have achieved in each of the key areas of the program. Since 2013 we have tracked 600 direct engagements, and 15,000 indirect engagements with this program.

## SCALING UP SEED PRODUCTION

108 grants awarded • Completed *Organic Seed Market Study* with Canada Organic Trade Association • Founding partner of Prairie Organic Grain Initiative • Launched BC Eco-Seed Co-op & Vegetable Seed Producers' Network

## APPLIED RESEARCH

Expanded national participatory plant breeding program • 170 farmers engaged in breeding and trialing • Farmer-bred wheat lines showing 9% higher yields and better nutrient content than reference cultivars • Tasting events to build support for farmer varieties

## PUBLIC SEED COLLECTIONS

Training manuals & open source seed collection software developed • 37 grants awarded • 250% increase in community seed collections • Regional seed bank launched in Nova Scotia

## ONLINE TOOLS FOR BUYING + SELLING SEED

"Ecological Seed Finder" service developed • Online "citizen scientist" database for national crop data • Preliminary development of online seed marketplace

## MOVEMENT BUILDING

\$3 M raised in matching funds • 90+ organizations involved • 10+ long-term core partners • Increased collaboration & networking • Inspired new seed program for the UK & Ireland

## KNOWLEDGE + SKILLS

1,700+ attended training events • 400 participants each attended field days & webinars • 17 seed interns • Early development of national seed production curriculum

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# WHAT WE WANT TO DO NEXT

Many of our partners have said that the meaningful change we are striving for could take 5, 10, or 20+ more years. Through continual evaluation of this program and the seed system, we have identified some changes we want to see, and how we'd like to get there.

## APPLIED RESEARCH

### CHANGES NEEDED IN THE SEED SECTOR

- Access to a broad genetic base of seeds to respond to a changing climate
- Sustainable funding and increased buy-in for participatory approaches from researchers, research institutions and government
- Increased farmer leadership in research
- More research on more crop types in more areas across Canada

### STRATEGIES FOR GETTING THERE

- Continue to develop and deliver high quality research programs with farmers and partners across Canada
- Investigate sustainable funding models and increase outreach to researchers and institutions
- Expand vegetable breeding, selection, and trials
- Investigate intellectual property solutions and distribution options for breeding materials

## KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

### CHANGES NEEDED IN THE SEED SECTOR

- Sustainably-funded ongoing training that is responsive to needs of farmers and seed producers
- Widespread opportunities for peer exchange
- Increased technical support on organic seed production

### STRATEGIES FOR GETTING THERE

- Investigate sustainable funding models and long-term partnerships for training
- Continue to support mentorship and learning networks for producers
- Continue to lead field days, workshops, conferences, webinars and internships

# SCALING UP SEED PRODUCTION

## CHANGES NEEDED IN THE SEED SECTOR

- Financially viable ecological seed businesses at different scales and locations
- Increased collective capacity to provide high-quality bulk seed to farmers
- Increased quality, quantity and diversity of regionally adapted, ecological varieties of vegetables, fruits, and field crops

## STRATEGIES FOR GETTING THERE

- Support high impact businesses and co-operative projects
- Pursue partnerships across value chains to increase the market for local, organic seed
- Continue to research the organic seed market, identify opportunities for growth, and assess change over time

# DIVERSITY CONSERVATION

## CHANGES NEEDED IN THE SEED SECTOR

- Increased awareness and support for agricultural biodiversity conservation
- Increased networking and knowledge exchange among those working to conserve agricultural biodiversity on- and off-farm
- Strong leadership and technical capacity of community seed collections and regional seed banks

## STRATEGIES FOR GETTING THERE

- Participate in emerging networks for agricultural biodiversity conservation at home and internationally
- Offer technical support and training opportunities for seed collections
- Continue developing open source seed collection management software

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"...they hit the ground with a lot of questions and kept broadening their circle and asking more questions. ... it helped establish the sincerity of their work and broadened their network rapidly."

- **Organic Association**

# MOVEMENT BUILDING

## CHANGES NEEDED IN THE SEED SECTOR

- Even more farmers, seed producers, organizations and other partners working collectively on seed issues
- Increased awareness and engagement on seed among public and policymakers
- Improved public understanding of the importance of genetic diversity to climate adaptation

## STRATEGIES FOR GETTING THERE

- Continue to provide convening opportunities for the seed movement to discuss issues, opportunities, and priorities
- Expand engagement with policymakers and the public
- Document and celebrate seed heritage and seed stories
- Cultivate connections with related social and environmental movements, conventional growers, and growers in marginal areas





The current phase of The Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security ends January 31, 2017. Our ability to act on our ideas for the future will depend on securing funding for a second phase of work.

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**SEEDSECURITY.CA**



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