

**Strengthening Support for Small-Scale Farmers' Seed Systems:  
Knowledge Exchange, Collaboration and Innovation between  
Formal and Farmer-led Seed Systems**

*4 and 5 September 2014, Mont Fleur, Stellenbosch, South Africa*



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
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**ProGRESS**

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# Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>ABN</b>	African Biodiversity Network
<b>AFSA</b>	Alliance for Food Sovereignty for Africa
<b>AGRA</b>	Alliance for a Green Revolution for Africa
<b>ARC</b>	Agricultural Research Council (South Africa and Zimbabwe)
<b>CBD</b>	Convention on Biological Diversity
<b>CELUCT</b>	Chikukwa Ecological Land Trust
<b>COPAGEN</b>	Coalition for the Protection of Africa's Genetic Heritage
<b>CTDT</b>	Community Technology Development Trust
<b>ESAFF</b>	Eastern and Southern African Farmers' Forum
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>GMO</b>	Genetically Modified Organism
<b>ITPGRFA</b>	International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
<b>KZN</b>	KwaZulu-Natal
<b>MEAP</b>	Maendeleo Endelevu Action Program
<b>NSIMA</b>	New Seed Initiative for Maize in Southern Africa
<b>ProGRess</b>	Promoting Global Responsible Research and Social and Scientific Innovation
<b>PVP</b>	Plant Variety Protection
<b>RIDEP</b>	Rural Initiatives Development Program
<b>RRI</b>	Responsible Research and Innovation
<b>SADC</b>	South African Development Community
<b>UPOV</b>	International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants
<b>WEMA</b>	Water Efficient Maize for Africa
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organisation

# Day 1

**Attendance:** Please see the register, Addendum 1, for the full attendance list.

**Apologies:** Dr Mwananyanda Lewanika; Godfrey Mwila

After a round of introductions, Associate Professor Rachel Wynberg opened the proceedings by briefly introducing the programme as well as the objectives of the Seed and Knowledge Initiative (SKI). The presentations given over the two days are briefly summarised below. Full presentations are available upon request.

## 1. Patrick Mulvany: Sustaining agrodiversity

As the first keynote speaker, Patrick Mulvany, who chairs the UK Food Group and is a long-standing food policy analyst and critic, stated that, for him, the purpose of the meeting was to look at issues around sustaining the diversity that feeds us. He emphasised that a diversity of ecologies was necessary to support seed, and that the diets, and ultimately the health of all humankind depended upon seed. Patrick reminded participants that small farmers still constitute the bulk of food supply in the world, with the industrialised system feeding only 30% of the world's population.



Patrick set the context for possible steps to take forward, by focussing on the dynamics of seed systems; control over seed systems; and sustaining diversity.

### **Patrick identified the following possible steps for the way forward:**

- The system needs to focus on the production of **food**. **Two models** exist – (1) the industrial food system; (2) diverse, biodiverse, ecologically-based systems that produce good, healthy food. We need to choose which one should be supported, and what legal framework and institutional setup will support this model.
- **Local governance** and local food systems are the bedrock to ensuring diversity.
- In discussion of these issues, **involvement of the key actors** – small-scale farmers themselves – was essential in crafting policy, defining research programmes, and defining what innovation is.
- The **full range of options** is needed to consider seed diversity and the availability of seed to farmers.
- There is a need for an **open and less aggressive discussion** in policy development about contested issues so researchers do not feel so threatened.
- There is a need for **governments to take a stronger stand** at intergovernmental meetings on related issues (e.g. Farmers' Rights, International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), the World Trade Organization

(WTO), international policy development), so that a more diverse food system can flourish.

- Farmers and farmers' organisations and NGOs need an **open and safe space** to dialogue the important issues, without pressures from outside.

## 2. Dr Melaku Worede: Putting farmers first

Liz Hosken introduced keynote speaker Dr Melaku Worede, founder of Africa's first gene bank in Ethiopia and recipient of the Right Livelihood Award, noting that "he is not just a hero for us in Africa, but also globally"!

Dr Melaku reflected on the importance of collaboration with farmers, by describing how the Ethiopian famine had catalysed action on the conservation of agrobiodiversity. He inspired participants by explaining how government plant breeders had worked with farmers to raise yields and promote diversity together for mutual support, along with conserving the knowledge component of agrobiodiversity.



The key steps in ensuring continued diversity include: 1.) Conserve, 2.) Use; 3.) Enhance; 4.) Diversify; 5.) Innovate.

Remarking that advocacy would do better when supported by stories from the ground, he commented that he felt confident to meet the challenges that exist and lie ahead when seeing the diversity of the group at the seminar. This was a first for the Southern African Development Community (SADC), he noted.

## 3. Prof Doris Schroeder: Whose innovation counts?



Professor Schroeder, who heads ProGRess, a European Commission project focused on responsible research and innovation (RRI) and is based at the University of Central Lancashire, said that as a philosopher she was interested in justice. One important aspect of justice is 'equality of opportunity', which may be problematic in the context of agricultural innovation.

Innovation confers benefits – both on innovators and end users. When activities confer benefits, moral philosophers are interested in the underlying fairness, but she said fairness to innovators was difficult to find.

**The three main criteria for RRI are:** 1) Ethical acceptability (of both the process and outcome); 2) Sustainability; and 3) Societal desirability.

**So, whose innovation counts?**

1. Those who can innovate **ethically acceptably**.
2. Those who can innovate **sustainably**.
3. Those who can innovate **societally desirably**.

These are important criteria to apply when thinking about agricultural research and innovation.

#### 4. Dr Isiah Mharapara: Research at the ARC, Zimbabwe

Dr Mharapara of the Zimbabwean Agricultural Research Council stressed that the lives of smallholder farmers should be seen as a complex - in other words their livelihoods are not just about maize, or cereals, but are much more intricate. When talking about seed, the whole farming system should be taken into account. He cautioned against approaching smallholder farmers from a limited perspective, saying that researchers tended to focus on areas that they were experts in. He said that policy in Zimbabwe – since the advent of land reform - was very supportive of smallholder farmers who produce the majority of the food in the country. Research must be designed from the farmers' perspective, must be framed in the long-term, and must be scaled up from the local level.



#### 5. Dr Kingston Mashingaidze: Research perspectives from South Africa



Dr Mashingaidze of the Agricultural Research Council in South Africa started off by saying that it was not clear how many small-scale farmers there were in South Africa, estimates ranging from 500 000 to 5 million. He believes that some of the problems limiting maize production amongst smallholder farmers include a lack of access to hybrid seed, drought, poor soil fertility and inability to buy fertiliser, as well as poor agronomic practices.

Kingston introduced a number of projects which the ARC in South Africa were running, including WEMA (Water Efficient Maize for Africa), and NSIMA (New Seed Initiative for Maize in Southern Africa). The ARC also involved small-scale farmers in participatory evaluation production of certified seed in partnership with private seed companies.

#### 6. Charles Nkhoma: Bringing genebanks to farmers - CTDZ Zambia's perspective

Charles Nkhoma of the Community Technology Development Trust (CTDT) in Zambia spoke about his organisation's work with small-scale farmer and the importance of incentives for

farmers to maintain diversity on-farm and provide seeds to the genebank. Charles added that Plant Variety Protection (PVP) laws needed to provide space for farmer seed development. He emphasised the need to decriminalise seed multiplication and noted that they had handed a memorandum to the Minister to demand a moratorium on the sale of local seed companies and to make resources available for seed production for smallholder farmers.



**In order to stem the loss of crops, the following are facilitated by CTD:**

- Establishment of community seedbanks.
- Development of community seed multiplication and production programs.
- Supporting farmers with participatory plant breeding.
- Seed and food diversity fairs.
- Conservation farming and agroforestry.

### 7. Natalie Feltman: The South African national genebank



Natalie Feltman of South Africa’s national genebank, known as the South African National Plant Genetic Resources Centre, spoke about the genebank’s first on-farm conservation project which entailed repatriation of locally developed traditional crops. She said that one of the main challenges was that small-scale farmer seed systems are under stress and poorly understood. She also introduced a new project with Bioversity International which focuses on the establishment of community-based seedbanks. She recounted how a seed “queen” in the Limpopo province had lost all her seed, emphasising the importance of community seedbanks.

### 8. Kudzai Kusena: Bringing genebanks to farmers; Enabling policies in Zimbabwe

In the interests of saving time, Kudzai Kusena of the national genebank in Zimbabwe was asked to present his two talks back-to-back. Firstly, he presented on the role of the national genebank, emphasising the importance of genebanks in responding to climate change. He then listed a number of activities which linked genebanks with farmers, including community seedbanks, repatriation, on-farm characterisation, participatory plant breeding, seed and food fairs as well as agricultural shows.

In his second presentation, Kudzai discussed the international frameworks informing domestic policy in Zimbabwe, such as the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), the Global Plan of Action, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing, and UPOV. He stated that there were gaps in terms of regulating agricultural biodiversity as these instruments were too broad and insufficient to cater for the specificity of agrobiodiversity, let alone promote farmers' seed systems. In Zimbabwe they are therefore promoting specific legislation that will protect Farmers' Rights.



### 9. Dr Regassa Feyissa: Seed sovereignty

Dr Regassa Feyissa of Ethio-Organic Seed Action in Ethiopia, presented on small-scale farmers, seed sovereignty, and policy frameworks. In his opinion, it is problematic that



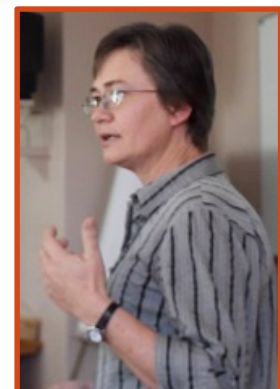
small-scale farmers are automatically linked with poverty and backwardness and proposed that small-scale farmers should be seen as family farmers and professionals with wide skills.

He suggested that the reason for the failure of the first "Green Revolution" failure was that food production was not seen as a right, but was instead seen as commodity production. He argued that seed sovereignty was a human right of the present and the future that related to the right to be seed secure, and the right to produce food, adding that policy frameworks needed to be based upon these principles.

### 10. Joan Sadie: The Plant Improvement Act

Joan Sadie of the National Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, focussed on South Africa's Plant Improvement Act which:

*Regulates all aspects around plants and seed intended for cultivation to ensure that these plants and seeds are of an acceptable quality to ensure a harvest and thereby supports government's commitment to food security, job creation and economic development.*



**She said that in the absence of regulation, the following might occur:**

No standards for plants or seed - nor for facilities or businesses; no order in variety denominations; and varietal purity is not maintained.



Following her presentation, Dr Julian Japhta of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries expressed concern that sectors were “stubbornly committed to our respective mandates” and that there were many assumptions about what is “formal” or “informal”. He challenged civil society as not being always clear and having the right information and not speaking to the right people, not consulting with all stakeholders, including the government. He noted the South African government’s commitment to support small-scale farmers, already expressed as a target in its medium-term strategic framework.

## Day 2

On the second day, presentations continued in the morning, giving space for viewpoints from NGOs working directly with farmers and civil society organisations.

### 1. Chester Chituwu: CELUCT, Zimbabwe

Chester Chituwu presented views from the ground on behalf of the Chikukwa Ecological Land Trust (CELUCT) in Zimbabwe. CELUCT’s approach is one which looks at the system in an integrated manner and with an eco-functional perspective.

For his organisation, seed is life, and is also spiritual. He briefly summarised CELUCT’s work, which includes farmer action learning groups; seed exchanges; seedbanks and the protection of sacred sites. In closing, Chester identified opportunities as: **closer cooperation with government agencies**, and **networking with other organisations** doing similar work. He commented that government officials were mostly supportive, but that some extension workers, because of the nature of their training, tended to focus on production only.



### 2. Patrick Kasasa: CTD, Zimbabwe



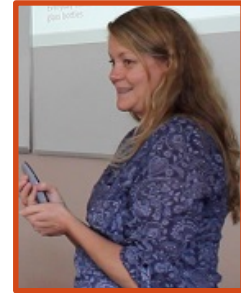
Patrick Kasasa of CTD in Zimbabwe remarked that the informal (farmer-led) seed systems in Zimbabwe were very active, but that their contributions to food and nutrition security were only partially recognised and often not reported. He also found that when players in the corporate seed sector talked about national seed requirements, they “forgot” to include the statistics and contributions of farmers’ varieties. CTD was facilitating the recognition of farmers’ varieties by supporting the repatriation of lost agricultural biodiversity from the national genebank to communities.

### 3. Lawrence Mkhali and Jaci van Niekerk: Household seedbanks in KZN



Lawrence Mkhali of Biowatch introduced the work of the organisation, which has a two-fold approach: 1) Advocacy, research and networking, and 2) Working on the ground with smallholder farmers. He presented Biowatch's definition of a seedbank which is seen as a dynamic system of seed exchange, rather than a physical structure.

Jaci van Niekerk of the University of Cape Town presented on the recently (July 2014) conducted household seedbank study with Biowatch farmers from Ingwavuma and Pongola.



### 4. John Nzira: The Mupo Foundation

John spoke about the Mupo Foundation's vision and objectives. At Mupo, eco mapping and calendars, which were helpful in the visioning process, were used alongside dialogue and familiarisation to promote the idea that a farmer is a teacher and an innovator.



#### **Opportunities identified by Mupo were:**

- More integration with formal research systems.
- Increase of cluster leader skills development.
- Increased exchange and network activities in the region.
- Supporting primary and secondary seed breeding cooperatives.
- Reducing dependency on external inputs.
- Putting farmers' voices first.
- Developing and sharing resource materials and case studies.

### 5. Dr Fasil Gebeyehu: The African Biodiversity Network

Dr Gebeyehu, from the African Biodiversity Network (ABN), presented on the different perceptions of knowledge, such as the different perceptions of seed productivity between traditional and modern systems. He said that seed was becoming a commodity although for small-scale farmers it was embedded in their day-to-day life.

Fasil said that at ABN, joint operation and collective action was the main focus, adding that, with an emphasis on increasing yield, the socio-cultural aspects of productivity were being overlooked. He concluded that an ongoing challenge was policies which undermine farmers' rights to grow their own varieties.



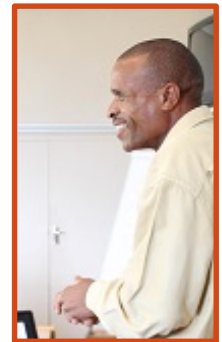
## 6. Bright Phiri: Commons for EcoJustice, Malawi



Presenting on behalf of the Commons for EcoJustice in Malawi, Bright outlined his organisation's work, which focussed on policy research, analysis and monitoring, as well as advocacy and lobbying. Bright identified the following capacity gaps: negotiation skills, scientific know-how; harmonisation of policy issues identified by farmer-led systems; and links with decision-making processes.

## 7. Nelson Mudzingwa: La Via Campesina, Zimbabwe

Nelson Mudzingwa presented on behalf of La Via Campesina, the peasant farmers' movement which now has its African headquarters in Zimbabwe. He talked about a number of active campaigns, and outlined their strategies related to seeds, such as fighting against the 'green revolution' and GMOs, and rejecting programs that attempt to privatise our seeds and criminalise seed exchange and traditional uses of seeds.



## 8. Rose Williams: Biowatch South Africa



Rose Williams of Biowatch noted some lessons for civil society engagement, such as supporting farmers; and advocating with evidence. For a visual depiction of Biowatch's participatory methods employed for conducting monitoring and evaluation, please see Rose's PowerPoint Presentation.

## 9. Elfrieda Pschorn-Strauss: The Alliance for Food Sovereignty for Africa

Elfrieda reminded the audience that they were talking about peoples' lives, livelihoods, and that was what mattered. She gave an overview of the regional initiatives around biodiversity and food sovereignty. In 2007 ABN initiated a first meeting of networks in Africa, including Friends of the Earth, Coalition for the Protection of Africa's Genetic Heritage (COPAGEN), the Eastern and Southern African Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) and others to find ways of elevating the African voice in international discussions. This was in response to increasing pressure on Africa to implement a Green Revolution and adopt GMOs, exemplified by the enormous resources poured then into AGRA and more recently into the G8's new alliance for food and nutrition security. These initiatives make lots of decisions *about* Africa, but not necessarily *with* them and are doing things that Africa does not necessarily want.



Out of the network meetings facilitated by ABN, a platform was created, the Alliance for Food Sovereignty for Africa (AFSA). AFSA is a network of networks with offices in Ethiopia and Uganda, for now focusing on the thematic areas of Agro-ecology, Seed Sovereignty, Food Sovereignty and Landgrabbing.

After lunch, participants were asked to split into the following four working groups:

**(1) The research community, (2) Civil society organisations, (3) NGOs working directly with farmers, and (4) Government agencies.**

**Working groups were asked to consider the following questions, before feeding back to plenary:**

1. List the three most important steps your sector can take or needs to take in order to support farmer-led seed systems.
2. Looking forward: what 3 activities will enable you to take the steps listed above?

An energised discussion followed where each group reported on their discussions.

**Addendum 3** provides a summary table of feedback from each of the working groups.

The meeting was closed by Rachel Wynberg who thanked participants for their constructive and creative inputs, and noted that this was simply the beginning of a longer process and dialogue. Mont Fleur was thanked for hosting the group so warmly. Smaller group meetings then continued into the evening, followed by a smaller visioning session and think-tank discussion the following day.



## ADDENDUM 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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32	Refera	Befekadu	ABN	befekadurefera@yahoo.com
33	Sadie	Joan	DAFF	JoanS@daff.gov.za
34	Schroeder	Doris	PROGRESS	DSchroeder@uclan.ac.uk
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36	van Niekerk	Jaci	UCT	jaci.vn@gmail.com
37	Williams	Rose	Biowatch SA	rose@biowatch.org.za
38	Worede	Melaku	ABN	melaku@ethionet.et
39	Wynberg	Rachel	UCT	rachel@iafrica.com
40	Yelemtu	Fassil	ABN	fassil@africanbiodiversity.org

## ADDENDUM 2: SEMINAR PROGRAMME

# Strengthening Support for Small-Scale Farmers' Seed Systems: Knowledge Exchange, Collaboration and Innovation between Formal and Farmer-led Seed Systems

## SEMINAR PROGRAMME

### WEDNESDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2014

Arrival in Stellenbosch

19:30 **Group dinner at Mont Fleur**

### THURSDAY 4 SEPTEMBER 2014

8:30	<b>Welcome, purpose and introductions</b>	<b>Associate Prof Rachel Wynberg (UCT)</b> <b>Seed and Knowledge Initiative Team</b>
9:00	<b>Keynote</b>	<b>Patrick Mulvany</b> (Senior policy advisor, UK)
9:30	<b>Keynote</b>	<b>Dr Melaku Worede</b> (Founder of the first African genebank, Ethiopia)
10:00	<b>Discussion</b>	All
10:30	<b>TEA</b>	
11:00	<b>Whose innovation counts?</b>	<b>Prof Doris Schroeder</b> (ProGReSS, UK)
11:30	<b>Research perspectives: How can research achieve social impact and address needs of small farmers?</b>	<b>Dr Mwananyanda Lewanika</b> (STEM University, Zambia) <b>Dr Isiah Mharapara</b> (Agricultural Research Council, Zimbabwe) <b>Dr Kingston Mashingaidze</b> (Agricultural Research Council, SA)
12:45	<b>LUNCH</b>	
13:45	<b>Bringing genebanks to farmers: Perspectives and examples from Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa</b>	<b>Kudzai Kusena</b> (Genetic Resources and Biotechnology Institute, Zimbabwe) <b>Charles Nkhoma</b> (Community Technology Development Trust, Zambia) <b>Natalie Feltman</b> (Department of Agriculture, SA)
15:15	<b>TEA</b>	
15:30	<b>Enabling policy frameworks for small farmers, seed sovereignty and security</b>	<b>Dr Regassa Feyisa</b> (Ethio-Organic Seed Action, Ethiopia) <b>Godfrey Mwila</b> (Agricultural Research Institute, Zambia) <b>Kudzai Kusena</b> (Genetic Resources and Biotechnology Institute, Zimbabwe) <b>Joan Sadie</b> (Department of Agriculture, SA)
17:00	<b>Closure</b> (Mountain walk for those interested)	
19:00	<b>DINNER</b>	

**FRIDAY 5 SEPTEMBER 2014**

8:30	<b>Reflections on previous day</b>	All
9:00	<b>Views from the ground: Seed systems and farmer innovations</b>	<p><b>Chester Chituu</b> (Chikukwa Ecological Land Trust, Zimbabwe)</p> <p><b>Patrick Kasasa</b> (Community Technology Development Trust, Zimbabwe)</p> <p><b>Lawrence Mkhaliphi</b> and <b>Jaci van Niekerk</b> (Biowatch and UCT, SA)</p> <p><b>John Nzira</b> (Mupo Foundation, SA)</p>
10:30	<b>TEA</b>	
11:00	<b>Civil society engagement: Strategies, support and lessons</b>	<p><b>Fassil Gebeyehu</b> (African Biodiversity Network, Kenya)</p> <p><b>Bright Phiri</b> (Commons for EcoJustice, Malawi)</p> <p><b>Nelson Mudzingwa</b> (La Via Campesina, Zimbabwe)</p> <p><b>Elfrieda Pschorn-Strauss</b> (AFSA)</p> <p><b>Rose Williams</b> (Biowatch, SA)</p>
12:00	<b>Discussion</b>	
13:00	<b>LUNCH</b>	
14:00	<b>Strategies for strengthening research engagement with and support for smallholder farmers and informal seed systems</b>	All
15:30	<b>WAY FORWARD AND CLOSURE</b>	

### ADDENDUM 3: SUMMARY OF WORKING GROUP DISCUSSIONS

SECTOR	STEPS	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>Research community</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Involve smallholders and offer safe spaces for participation.</li> <li>2. Recognise the existence and value of smallholders.</li> <li>3. Support smallholders in all sectors (e.g. financial, research, services through extension etc.).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Carry out participatory research.</li> <li>2. Identify and legitimise different research approaches.</li> <li>3. Describe and understand existing seed systems and identify threats to current small holder seed systems.</li> <li>4. Governmental interdepartmental working groups to include smallholders in their agenda</li> <li>5. Government to extend services (i.e. seed quality, certification, pest control etc.) that are generally geared to large-scale producers to smallholder farmers.</li> <li>6. Extend/create commitment by governments' national assets (ARC, National Genebanks, etc.) to smallholder seed and knowledge systems.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Civil Society Organisations</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Regional and global seed policy.</li> <li>2. Advocacy strategy.</li> <li>3. Put farmers at the centre.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ITPGRFA, seed trade, new framework, farmer trade.</li> <li>2. Plant Variety Protection laws – find space for farmers' rights.</li> <li>3. Develop an awareness programme on indigenous crops.</li> <li>4. Explore community protocols.</li> <li>5. Build capacity on policy</li> <li>6. Mobilise farmers.</li> </ol>



<p><b>NGOs working directly with farmers</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creative documentation of case studies, good practices, stories.</li> <li>2. Revival of lost seeds and related knowledge systems.</li> <li>3. Support and empower farmers to organise themselves into movements.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Decolonise our minds in the way we work with farmers (not as experts).</li> <li>2. Change our behaviour to begin the journey with them.</li> <li>3. Build our own capacity in a range of issues that affect farmers and translate such issues or policies into their language.</li> <li>4. Organise and coordinate ourselves with farmers (forming networks, coalitions, alliances between NGOs and farmers).</li> <li>5. Ensure women's participation.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Government agencies</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify relevant policy information; share with farmers.</li> <li>2. Local and regional markets to be established (for farmers' varieties etc.) with policy backing.</li> <li>3. Farmers should have a choice regarding seed certification.</li> <li>4. Develop farmer representation.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop farmer-led advocacy strategies, with CSOs acting as facilitators only.</li> <li>2. Farmers need to speak for themselves.</li> <li>3. Farmers need to analyse information.</li> </ol>