



Community Declaration

Establishment of Community Seed cum Gene Banks

Considering the importance and relevance of agrobiodiversity conservation in future food, nutrition and health securities and for sustainable development at local, national, regional and global levels;

Understanding the contributions farmers and local communities make towards agrobiodiversity conservation and food security at local level;

Supporting the efforts of farmers and local communities to contribute to health and nutritional securities at local, State and national levels;

Learning from the past on the need for community-level preparedness for disasters and climate change related sudden and drastic changes to local environment;

Being prepared to deal with future impacts of natural and man-made disasters;

Appreciating the interest of local people and their families in supporting local development that is based on principles of sustainable development and inter-generational equity;

Mindful of the state, national and international interests and support mechanisms to support community-based conservation action;

Considering the mandates of local level statutory bodies such as the Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) in supporting and promoting implementation of the Biological Diversity Act (2002);

Being aware of the provisions of access to genetic resources and benefit sharing (ABS) under the Biological Diversity Act (2002);

Supporting the outcomes of National Seed Fest (2019) on the need to establish community-led, community-level gene banks and seed banks, that include seeds and planting material;

Having interest in strategizing and implementing the work being undertaken at community-level on conservation, sustainable use of agrobiodiversity, that includes plants, animals, fish, soil organisms, insects and all other related biodiversity and the interactions among and between them;

Mindful of the enormity of the diversity and their special characters and characteristics that the community hold and continue to cultivate;

Considering the need for strategizing and implementing the work at community-level on conservation of such agrobiodiversity;

Being aware of the market-related opportunities and threats that exist for the varieties under cultivation;

Supporting the need for sharing the genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge systems and practices across communities and stakeholders within the country and outside, subject to formal legislation, customary laws and other provisions;

Sensing the urgent need for establishing a community-led, community-based initiative within the District, at the level of Panchayats;

Appreciating the need for translating intent of collaboration and benefit sharing of genetic resources, based on prior and informed consent of the communities involved in initiatives related to agrobiodiversity conservation;

Considering the urgent need of taking action towards community-based conservation in the District;

Contributing to such similar efforts to support community-based conservation action within the country and abroad;

Supporting the initiative by Community Agrobiodiversity Conservation Center of the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, FLEDGE and the International Initiative on Knowledge Systems (IICS) to enhance cooperation among the communities in the District to benefit from the agrobiodiversity and related conservation action;

We the farmers, local community representatives and knowledge-holders, especially the women, youth and elders, of Wayanad District, Kerala, hereby resolve:

- ✓ Volunteer to establish at least one community seed and gene bank (along with seedling material as relevant) within each Panchayat in Wayanad, as needed;
- ✓ The Panchayats will decide on the nature/type of resources they will conserve, including the option for species specific seed and gene banks;
- ✓ The seed and gene bank will focus on the following key activities - conservation, documentation and utilization of diversity, encouraging local innovation and agricultural and related practices, special characteristics, conditions and uses of the agrobiodiversity and related traditional knowledge;
- ✓ The seed and gene banks will be owned and managed by the members of the Panchayat and local community, in close collaboration with the Biodiversity Management Committee;
- ✓ All the seed and gene banks will be managed by youth, women and elders who will also serve as the collectors, managers of the resources and will be central to decision making in sharing and use of the resources of the seed and gene banks;
- ✓ The operational guidelines and procedures for conservation, sustainable management, resilience, sharing and use as well as means of benefit sharing will be developed by the Panchayats using the generic guidelines that will be prepared for Wayanad District, that are based on lessons learnt from local, national and international initiatives;

- ✓ The seed and gene banks will be established considering the principles of agrobiodiversity conservation for dealing with food, health and nutritional securities, disaster preparedness, climate resilience and adaptation, sustainable development, prior informed consent and equitable sharing of benefits; human rights and the related;
- ✓ The seed funding for establishing the seed and gene banks will be provided on a voluntary basis by the Panchayats, the Biodiversity Management Committee, the State Biodiversity Board, the State Government, National Government, agencies, private sector, international agencies and other donors;
- ✓ The seed and gene banks will create a regulated online platform to share relevant information on the resources, their special nature and potential use with an intent to attract collaboration, innovation and exchange opportunities as well as market potential for relevant resources with consideration of potential threats;
- ✓ The seed and gene banks will consider all relevant formal legislation, customary law and policy provisions relevant for the activities, and may collaborate with national and international entities for sharing of experiences and expertise besides knowledge, supported by consent-based exchange and principles of benefit sharing, as appropriate.
- ✓ We also will be working towards establishing a “Women Seed Conservers Network” at the State level in Kerala.

Wayanad, Kerala 9th March 2019