

Community Field Gene Banks: A Way Forward for Achieving Zero Hunger?

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The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 – Zero Hunger, can only be achieved when food and nutritional security is ensured. However, due to the changing climatic scenario, there is a need for the promotion of sustainable agriculture with the constant development of new crop varieties which are resilient to biotic and abiotic stresses. For this purpose, there is a need for community seed banks and field gene banks at local, regional, national and international levels having the seeds and plants with wider genetic diversity and with biotic and abiotic stress tolerant traits. The nature has in its bounty a vast variety of related wild species of the present cultivars. This diversity when developed, managed and promoted as genetic common resources and the access to these resources are granted at fair and equitable sharing basis, new varieties or genotypes can be developed for location specific needs and environments. The constituents of the India's National Agricultural Research System together with the help of the Protection of Plant Varieties & Farmers' Rights Authority, Bioversity Authority and other community/civil society organizations should work for the establishment of the community field gene banks either in the Bioversity parks or elsewhere across the Agro-climatic regions. The genotypic and phenotypic data along with the trait specific data of the established genotypes in the banks should be stored in a public server for public access. This will ensure the farmers, breeders or anyone to access the data and can get the materials for the selection or breeding the improved varieties for the local or national needs in a participatory approach. In India, the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources had made efforts for the establishment of community seed banks in Udaipur. And some of the civil societies involved with the agrobiodiversity had also established community seed banks. Internationally efforts are also being made by the Bioversity International. However, community field gene banks, unlike biodiversity parks are not yet established in the country. This paper is about reiteration of the need for such type of establishments with the support of the public for achieving SDG 2, zero hunger.

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