

**Putting farmers' and indigenous peoples' access to crop diversity at centre,
in seed policy and practice for seed security**

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Comment by Egil Hoen, Vice President, Norwegian Farmers' Union

My name is Egil Hoen. I am the vice president of the Norwegian Farmers' Union and a cereal farmer in the eastern parts of Norway. On my farm I also have pigs and beef production. For me as a farmer it is extremely important to have access to enough and the right type of seeds at a reasonable price. The seeds have to be well adapted to our climate and of a good and right quality for my use and the market I serve. I buy new seeds every year from a farmers' owned cereal and purchasing cooperative. I also sell my cereal to this cooperative, where I am a member. By buying seeds from this cooperative, I also get part of the surplus back.

Norway is a small market with a challenging climate. It is essential that we have the chance to develop our own seeds, well adapted to the local conditions. We have our own Norwegian breeding company, Graminor, that is essential. They develop varieties of field crops and horticultural plants suitable for Norwegian and Nordic growing conditions. This is something we would not get from the few big companies dominating the world's seed market. But besides these formal seed markets, it is also essential for me to be able to use my own seeds without paying a fee. Some of the harvest I keep as seeds for the next season. This I can do free of charge.

In 2005 we had a big discussion in Norway regarding the farmers' rights to seeds. Our government at the time wanted Norway to join UPOV 91. We had already joined the UPOV 78. The farmers' union was strongly against joining the UPOV 91. Joining this convention would weaken farmers' rights to use seeds from its own harvest. Luckily the proposal did not go through, and Norwegian farmers can still use seeds from their own harvest free of charge. It is costly to develop new seeds, but the farmer should not take the full cost, the society must share the responsibility for this important work of developing new and locally adapted seeds.

For generations farmers all over the world have kept and developed their own seeds. This represents the basis of the plant varieties we have today. As a farmer in Norway I have the freedom of using my own seeds without extra costs. The farmers' ownership of seeds and independence is extremely important, and should be enjoyed by farmers all over the world.

Thank you!