

Seed Deposit 2020

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Svalbard Global
Seed Vault Deposit

25 February, 2020

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BACKGROUND

Since its inauguration in February 2008, the Svalbard Global Seed Vault has become an iconic symbol of a unique, joint effort by the global community to preserve crop diversity for future generations. The Seed Vault was established and is owned by Norway. It is managed and operated in a partnership between the Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Nordic Genetic Resource Centre (NordGen) and the international organisation, the Crop Trust.

The diversity of the world's agricultural plants, crop diversity, is essential for global food security. It provides the raw materials plant breeders need to produce crops that are more robust and able to withstand new pests, diseases, and extreme weather conditions related to climate change. We also need crop diversity in order to produce high yields and nutritious food. Despite its immeasurable worth, much genetic diversity has been lost as agriculture developed and continues to decline at unprecedented speed. While the exact number of traditional plant varieties that have disappeared is not known, many can only be found in genebanks, established over the past fifty years. There are over 1,700 genebanks in the world which conserve and make this genetic material available. In addition, a rich diversity of seeds are also conserved by farmers and local communities around the world, also through community seed banks.

But genebanks are also at risk. Floods, wars and turmoil, lack of resources or even power cuts can lead to unique seed and plant collections being lost forever – and when they disappear, they take potential solutions for our future agricultural challenges with them. That is why it is important for genebanks to back up their seed collections. Firstly, in another genebank and secondly, in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault.

Situated 78 degrees north of the equator, the Svalbard Global Seed Vault is the world's largest backup seed facility, and stores duplicate seed samples from nearly every country on earth. The Seed Vault is artificially cooled down to minus 18 degrees, and permafrost and thick rock ensure that the seed samples will remain frozen even without power. The Seed Vault is the ultimate insurance policy for the world's food supply, offering options for future generations to face the challenges of climate change and the need for nutritious food to feed a growing global population. The Seed Vault stores the largest global back up of seeds from food and forage crops. The seed samples represent more than 5,000 species.

After 10 years of operation, the Norwegian Government undertook necessary technical improvements of the facility. The aim of these improvements is the long-term safety of the seeds. A new waterproof access tunnel has been constructed and a number of security measures has been improved. The EUR 20 million technical upgrade of the facility was completed in 2019.

The Seed Vault is the final back up in a global system of conservation and has already proven its worth. The International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) originally housed its seed collection in Aleppo, Syria. It is now rebuilding the seed collection in Morocco and Lebanon using its duplicate seeds from the Seed Vault. Reconstructing their collections would not have been possible without having stored duplicates in Svalbard.

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On the 25th of February 2020, the largest seed deposit event since 2008 will take place in Svalbard as representatives from some 30 different genebanks will come to Longyearbyen for a Seed Summit and a Seed Deposit Ceremony.

The active use of crop diversity by farmers and local communities are needed to conserve these valuable crop varieties for future plant breeding; thus, complementary approaches to genebank conservation will be addressed at the Seed Summit.

It is essential to safeguard crop diversity as these genetic resources contain solutions that may be needed to adapt our food systems to the effects of climate change, and to enable us to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition by 2030, as set forth by the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2. The **Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg** has taken the opportunity to invite her colleagues in the **SDG Advocates Group** to also attend the event. The SDG Advocates are 17 inspiring, influential individuals raising global awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the need for accelerated action. In Svalbard, they will have a closed meeting but they will also attend part of the Seed Summit and the Seed Deposit Ceremony.

Media representatives are invited to report from the event. In the pages below, more information is presented about the media program, interview requests and practical information.

PROGRAM

Please note that all participants must register through [this link](#) for accreditation to attend these events.

We would appreciate **confirmation of your attendance no later than 2 February 2020.**

MONDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2020

9:00 - 18:00 Media Accreditation

Location: [Kulturhuset](#), Longyearbyen

Please visit Kulturhuset, to receive your accreditation badge. In case of difficulties to get to the Kulturhuset in time, please contact Medvind at +47 919 22 750. **Participants are expected to wear their accreditation badge to all events.** Those without a badge will not be able to participate, no exceptions. For security and logistical reasons, always follow the instructions of your host.

19:00 - 21:00 Media Briefing and Mixer

Location: [Huset](#), Longyearbyen

On Monday evening, media representatives are invited to attend a background briefing on the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. Representatives of the three partners and the International Advisory Panel to Svalbard Global Seed Vault will be present and available for interviews. Light refreshments will be served.

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TUESDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2020

9:00 - 15:15 The 2020 Svalbard Seed Summit

Location: Kulturhuset

The seed summit on *Genetic diversity for more resilient food systems* will look at the urgent need of safeguarding crop diversity due to the impact of climate changes on food production. The seed summit will take advantage of having representatives of some 30 genebanks from around the world present to share their expertise and knowledge. The full program of the 2020 Svalbard Seed Summit is pasted below.

15:15 - 15:45 Message from the members of the Advocacy Group for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG Advocates)

Location: Kulturhuset

The Prime Minister of Norway, Erna Solberg, and her delegation of esteemed guests will meet the participants of the 2020 Svalbard Seed Summit. The SDG Advocates will present the outcome of their meeting and discuss the issue of crop diversity and food security with the summit participants.

16:30 Transport from Kulturhuset to Seed Deposit Event

17:00 - 17:40 Seed Deposit Event at Svalbard Global Seed Vault

Representatives from some 30 different genebanks around the world will gather outside the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway, will say a few words and the male choir, "Store Norske Mannskor", will give a short performance. The Norwegian Minister of Agriculture and Food will invite representatives of each attending genebank to carry one of their boxes to the doors of the Seed Vault where NordGen receives them.

17:40 - 18:15 Press Q&A with High Level Delegation, Svalbard Global Seed Vault

Media representatives are invited to a small Q&A with the Norwegian Prime Minister and her delegation of esteemed guests. Technical experts from NordGen, Crop Trust and the International Advisory Panel to Svalbard Global Seed Vault as well as the Norwegian Minister of Agriculture and Food will also be present.

18:15 Transportation back to Longyearbyen

End of media program

Disclaimer: please be aware that minor changes in the program might occur.

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INTERVIEW REQUESTS

We encourage you to make any interview requests in advance. See contacts below.

Norwegian Prime Minister's Office

- H.E. Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway

For interview requests, contact Anne Kristin Hjukse, ahj@smk.dep.no, +47 99 21 46 10

Office of the President of Ghana

- H.E. Nana Akufu-Addo, President of Ghana

For interview requests with the president, a contact within the delegation from Ghana will be provided at a later stage.

The SDG Advocates

- Muhammad Sanusi II, Emir of Kano, Nigeria
- Hindou Ibrahim, environmental activist and geographer, Chad
- Graça Machel, politician and humanitarian, Mozambique
- Alaa Murabit, doctor, Libya
- Edward Ndopu, humanitarian, South Africa

For interview requests, contact Espen Gullikstad, +1 (347) 935 2359

Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food

- Olaug Bollestad, Minister of Agriculture and Food

For interview requests, contact Heidi Eriksen Riise, heidi-eriksen.riise@lmd.dep.no
+47 975 17 227

Crop Trust

- Stefan Schmitz, Executive Director, Crop Trust
- Hannes Dempewolf, Head of Global Initiatives and Senior Scientists, Crop Trust
- Manuel Rosini, Head of Partnerships, Crop Trust

For interview requests, contact: Cierra Martin, Cierra.martin@croptrust.org, +49 (0) 171 1165036.

NordGen

- Lise Lykke Steffensen, Executive Director, NordGen and
- Åsmund Asdal, Seed Vault Coordinator, NordGen.

For interview requests, contact Sara Landqvist, sara.landqvist@nordgen.org, +46 763 03 33 88

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International Advisory Panel to the Svalbard Global Seed Vault

- Yasmina El Bhaloul, Chair of the International Advisory Panel

For interview requests, contact Sara Landqvist, sara.landqvist@nordgen.org, +46 763 03 33 88

Seed Depositors

At the event, some 30 genebanks from all corners of the world will deposit seeds and most of them will be represented. Seeds will be deposited from:

- The Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa), Brazil
- Agricultural Research Institute of Burundi, Burundi
- University of Costa Rica, Costa Rica
- Crop Research Institute, Czech Republic
- International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), Colombia
- International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Ethiopia
- Leibniz Institute of Plant Genetics and Crop Plant Research (IPK), Germany
- Julius Kühn Institute, Germany
- International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, India
- University of Haifa, Israel
- Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute, Lebanon
- Institut d'Economie Rurale, Mali
- International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), Mexico
- Institute of Plant and Agricultural Sciences, Mongolia
- International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), Morocco and Lebanon
- Myanmar Seed Bank, Department of Agricultural Research, Myanmar
- Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC), Pakistan
- International Potato Center (CIP), Peru
- International Rice Resource Institute (IRRI), Philippines
- Banco Português de Germoplasma Vegetal, Portugal
- Suceava Genebank "Mihai Cristea", Romania
- Baekdudaegan Seed Vault, South Korea
- Agricultural Plant Genetic Resources Conservation and Research Centre (APGRC), Sudan
- NordGen, the Nordic Countries
- World Vegetable Center in Taiwan (AVRDC), Taiwan
- National Republican Center of Genetic Resources, Tajik Academy of Agricultural Science, Tajikistan
- Department of Agriculture, Thailand
- National Rice Seed Storage Laboratory for Genetic Resources, Thailand
- Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, United Kingdom
- Warwick Genetic Resources Unit, United Kingdom
- Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, United Kingdom
- Cherokee Nation, USA
- Seed Savers Exchange, USA
- National Plant Germplasm System, U.S Department of Agriculture, USA
- SADC Plant Genetic Resources Centre (SPGRC), Zambia

For interview requests, contact Sara Landqvist, sara.landqvist@nordgen.org +46 763 03 33 88

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SOCIAL MEDIA

We welcome you to post photos and updates of your participation, and ask that you kindly tag the Seed Vault (@global_seed_vault), Crop Trust (@croptrust), NordGen (@nordgen), and the Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food (@landbrukogmat) use hashtag: #SeedVault2020 in your outreach.

Follow us:

- The Svalbard Global Seed Vault: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#)
- The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#)
- The Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#)
- The Office of the Prime Minister in Norway: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#)
- Crop Trust: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#)
- NordGen: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#)

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THE 2020 SVALBARD SEED SUMMIT

Genetic diversity for more resilient food systems

The global community has committed to end hunger by 2030 and has identified genetic diversity as an important target on the way. All food production starts with a seed, whether the crop is consumed by humans or as feed to farmed animals. Major reports in recent years stress the need for genetic diversity. The 2020 Svalbard Seed Summit will highlight the growing need for genetic diversity for more resilient food systems.

PART 1: THE NEED AND USE OF GENETIC DIVERSITY

- 09:00 - 09:05: **Opening and welcome to the 2020 Svalbard Seed Summit**
- 09:05 - 09:25: **Keynote speak: Why genetic diversity is needed to get food on your plate**
Simran Sethi, journalist and author
- 09:25 - 09:40: **Global goals and international interdependence:**
Why we all depend on each other feed ourselves and achieve the SDGs
Yasmina El Bhaloul, Chair of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
- 09:40 - 09:55: **Gene banks at risk and the role of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault**
Hannes Dempewolf, Global Crop Diversity Trust
- 09:55 - 10:10: Q&A and discussion
- 10:10 - 10:30: Tea & Coffee
- 10:30 - 10:45: **Two sides of the same coin: The complementarity of gene banks and on-farm conservation**
Godfrey Mwila, Zambia Agriculture Research Institute
- 10:45 - 11:00: **Farmers' Rights to genetic resources and food security**
Regine Andersen, Fridtjof Nansen Institute
- 11:00 - 11:15: **How collaboration between farmers, breeders and genebanks may boost climate resilient farming**
Marco Wopereis, World Vegetable Centre
- 11:15 - 11:30: Q&A and discussion
- 11:30 - 11:45: **Presentation of communique from the 2020 Svalbard Seed Summit**
Mariana Yazbek, ICARDA

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11:45 - 12:30: **Roundtable discussion**

12:30 - 13:00: **Lunch**

PART II: TECHNICAL SESSION: EX SITU CONSERVATION

This session of the Seed Summit will address technical issues of relevance to the management of gene banks and to facilitate the sharing of experiences among the representatives of gene banks present.

13:00 - 13:10: **Challenges faced by national genebanks in managing seeds for conservation and use**

Shakeel Jatoi, Bio-resources Conservation Institute, National Agricultural Research Centre, Pakistan

13:10 - 13:30: **Q&A and discussion**

13:30 - 13:40: **Lessons learned from ICARDA's withdrawal and redeposit of seeds to the Svalbard Global Seed Vault**

Ahmed Amri, ICARDA

13:40 - 14:00: **Q&A and discussion**

14:00 - 14:10: **Long-term seed storage experiments at Svalbard: what do we hope to learn?**

Åsmund Asdal, Seed Vault Coordinator, NordGen

14:10 - 14:30: **Q&A and discussion**

PART III: MESSAGE FROM THE HIGH LEVEL GROUP

15:15 - 15:45: **Message from the high level group**

Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway

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PRACTICAL INFORMATION

All media are required to cover the costs of accommodation and flights and make all necessary booking arrangements. Flights to Longyearbyen are provided by Norwegian and SAS. More general information about Svalbard and what you should know before travelling there is available at [Visit Svalbard](https://www.visit-svalbard.no/).

Transportation

Except for the transportation to and from the seed deposit event, media are responsible for their own transportation during their visit. There are public shuttle buses between the airport and the hotels. Hotel staff can provide information about times. The fee is 75 NOK and you should be able to pay with a credit card. The distance between the airport and Longyearbyen is about 5 kilometres, but as the area is not polar bear secured, we do not recommend you walking from the airport.

- Bus transport from Kulturhuset to the seed deposit event Tuesday: departure at 16:30
- Bus transportation from the seed deposit event back to Kulturhuset : departure at 18:15

All participating media representatives have to travel to and from the Seed Vault with the busses provided. There will be control of the accreditation badges and no car are allowed on the road to the vault during the seed deposit event.

Access to the Seed Vault

Please note that updated security procedures for the Svalbard Global Seed Vault means that only authorized personnel is allowed to enter the building. The seed deposit event will take place outside the Seed Vault.

Climate

The weather varies; you can check daily temperatures in Longyearbyen on yr.no. The mean temperature in February is -16 degrees Celcius; however, warmer periods between -2 and -8 have become more frequent over the last years. There is often a cold wind in Svalbard. This means that it can feel about ten degrees colder than the indicated temperature. February is also the month in which it typically snows the most. By the end of February, the days are still quite short but you may see the sun shining on the mountain tops around Longyearbyen for a couple of hours during the middle of the day. The skies will be beautifully coloured unless overcast. During the seed deposit event, the Seed Vault will be light up but an extra lamp is needed for those planning to conduct video interviews at this occasion. You may see the Northern Lights, also from the centre of Longyearbyen, which can be spectacular (there is a northern lights research centre just outside Longyearbyen).

Clothes

It is important that you bring warm winter clothes to the seed deposit, as it takes place outside the Seed Vault. You need to have equipment that will keep you warm for an hour outdoors. It could be as cold as -15 degrees Celsius, and there could be an additional wind-chill factor.

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Our recommendation: Bring the warmest clothes you own for walking outside. Dress in layers. Long woollen undergarments are one of the best things you can bring. Sweaters – light for inside; heavy for outside – a good winter coat and warm boots are essential. Do not forget gloves and a warm cap or hat, a scarf, thick socks, and boots or heavy shoes. You will appreciate having something to protect your ears.

It is customary in Svalbard to remove your shoes when entering buildings (including the hotels). This keeps the floors clean and dry. You may wish to bring a pair of slippers, or light shoes to change into for this purpose. Svalbard has shops selling some of the world's best cold-weather clothing, and there are small shops in the hotels selling hats, gloves, scarves, sweaters, jackets, etc. Such items are expensive in Svalbard, but very effective. Clothing rental is limited and primarily for snowmobile activities.

The dress code in Svalbard is informal. Be comfortable and dress “effectively” for the climate and culture.

Health & Safety

Much is made of the presence of polar bears. Indeed, they can be found anywhere, anytime in Svalbard. They are not commonly seen in or around the town of Longyearbyen, but they can be there, and every year some pay a visit. They are extremely fast and dangerous. Under no circumstances should you venture outside the village without being accompanied by someone with a gun. Walking within the village center is considered safe unless you are informed otherwise. The District Governor of Svalbard pays close attention to any presence of polar bears and informs the public about any need for precautions. You may also see reindeer and Arctic fox while in Svalbard. These are not dangerous.

Currency

The currency in use in Svalbard is the Norwegian krone (crown). You can get this at the bank or ATM machine at Oslo airport, or at the bank in Longyearbyen. Credit cards are accepted in restaurants, shops, etc.

Language

You can assume that everyone you meet in Svalbard speaks English and Norwegian.

Electricity

220V, AC. The standard European plugs are used.

Other

If you want to engage in tourist activities, there are several possibilities including dog sled and snowmobile trips. We advise to visit the local [tourist information office](#).

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FURTHER INFORMATION

Relevant links for further background information

[Svalbard Global Seed Vault's official website](#)

The Seed Vault is the largest safety backup of the world's crop diversity. Norway established and owns the Seed Vault. It is managed and operated in a partnership between the Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Nordic Genetic Resource Centre (NordGen) and the international organisation Crop Trust.

[The Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food](#)

The Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food is the legal and administrative body of the Seed Vault and has the overall responsibility for its management, security and funding.

[NordGen](#)

NordGen manages and operates the seed deposits in partnership with the Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food and Crop Trust. NordGen is the focal point for depositors, coordinates seed deposits and operates a publicly accessible online database of the deposited seeds.

[Crop Trust](#)

The Crop Trust works to establish an efficient global system of crop conservation, with the Seed Vault providing the last level of safety duplication of the world's genebanks. The Crop Trust provides financial support to select gene banks in developing countries for shipment of seeds to the Seed Vault.

[Statsbygg](#)

Statsbygg is the key adviser on construction and property to the Norwegian Government and is responsible for the construction and maintenance of the Seed Vault in accordance with the assignment by the Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Statsbygg is responsible for the daily maintenance, security, cooling and energy supply of the Seed Vault as well as for the recent technical upgrades.

[SDG Advocates](#)

At a UN Summit in 2015, UN member states agreed on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Secretary-General's SDG Advocates were subsequently appointed to mobilise the global community to achieve the SDGs.

[The International Treaty for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture](#)

A global agreement to safeguard the plant genetic diversity for food worldwide with currently 146 Member Countries. The Treaty entered into force in 2004 and created the impetus to establish the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. The Chair of the Governing Body of the International Treaty is also the Chair of the International Advisory Panel of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault.