

2020 ANNUAL BRIEF

History in the Making: Seed Vault Welcomes Record Number of Depositors

In 2020

42

genebanks sent seeds to the Seed Vault

9

new genebanks added to the Seed Vault depositor family

82,501

seed samples deposited

3

Seed Vault openings for seed deposits

In total

1,074,533

total number of seed samples safeguarded

1,116

genera represented

87

genebank depositors



Partners of the Seed Vault and SDG Advocates: Stefan Schmitz, Crop Trust; Lise Lykke Steffensen, NordGen; Olaug Bollestad, Norwegian Minister of Agriculture and Food; Hindou Ibrahim, Association for Indigenous Women and Peoples of Chad; Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of Ghana; Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway; His Highness Muhammadu Sanusi II Emir of Kano; Agnes Kalibata, Special Envoy for the 2021 Food Systems Summit.

Seed Summit enacts Arctic Call to Action for Food Security and Climate Change

The Seed Vault offers the world's genebanks storage for safety duplicates of their seeds. After the completion of the technical upgrade of the Seed Vault in late 2019, new and old depositing genebanks participated in a major seed deposit in February 2020. The event welcomed participants from five continents, including representatives from 35 genebanks. In the Seed Summit that preceded, the participants urged countries to make use of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault as part of their strategy for securing their important seed collections. The co-chairs of the UN SDG Advocates, the Norwegian Prime Minister, Erna Solberg, and the President of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, signed the [Arctic Call to Action for Food Security and Climate Change](#) at the Seed Summit.

“ We promise you - we are strongly committed to keep the seeds safe.”

Olaug Bollestad,
Norwegian Minister of Agriculture and Food

Technical Upgrade

A major technical upgrade of the Seed Vault facility, funded by the Norwegian Government, was finalized in 2019. The upgrade included a completely new tunnel leading from the entrance to the storage rooms 100 m inside the mountain, a new cooling system and a new maintenance building for technical equipment and working rooms.

The International Advisory Panel

An International Advisory Panel (IAP) of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault provides advice on policy and other technical and legal issues. The IAP met in Svalbard in February 2020. The group inspected the Seed Vault and discussed strategies for attracting new seed depositors and new security routines as well as the launch of a 100-year seed longevity experiment for the Seed Vault.



Members of the IAP for the 2020 meeting: Yasmina El Bahloul, INRA, Morocco (Chair), Ahmed Amri, ICARDA, Morocco, Juan Lucas Restrepo, Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, Italy, Kristin Børresen, Graminor, Norway, Godfrey Mwila, Zambia Agriculture Research Institute, Zambia, Rosa Lia Barbieri, Embrapa, Brazil, and Külli Annama, Estonian Crop Research Institute, Estonia.

New 100-years Experiment

How long are seeds viable? Samples of 13 crops were chosen as part of a new 100-year seed longevity experiment and the first seeds placed in the Seed Vault in August 2020. For the next 100 years, the samples will be tested for germination ability every tenth year. Genebanks located in Thailand, India, Portugal, Brazil, Germany and the Nordic Countries produce the seeds for the project.

COVID-19 Challenge

Despite the pandemic, the operation of the Seed Vault and the seed deposits have been carried out as planned in 2020. During the October opening for seed deposits, the Seed Vault received 15 000 new seed samples from eight genebanks. Other genebanks, however, had experienced challenges with the preparations of their seeds and had to postpone their seed shipments.

New depositors in 2020

Baekdudaegan National Arboretum, South Korea
Cherokee Nation, USA
Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique, Morocco
John Innes Centre Genetic Resources Unit, United Kingdom
Julius Kühn Institute, Germany
Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute, Lebanon
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, United Kingdom
Suceava Genebank “Mihai Cristea”, Romania
University of Haifa, Israel

Nine New Depositors

Of the 42 genebanks that deposited seeds in 2020, nine were sending seeds for the first time. Among them was the Cherokee Nation, a sovereign tribal government of the US, which sent safety back-up seeds of beans and squash, as well as seeds of corn held sacred to the tribe. In doing so, the Cherokee Nation became the second indigenous community in the world to safeguard culturally emblematic crops in the Seed Vault. Also for the first time, seeds of species maintained *in situ* in meadows were deposited in the Seed Vault. The United Kingdom's Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew deposited seed mixtures from wild pastures of Highgrove, which is the private residence of the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall.

“ This global effort towards conservation of agricultural crop systems is an example of best practice in how our world should tackle common challenges.”

Nada Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo
President of Ghana

About the Svalbard Global Seed Vault

Svalbard Global Seed Vault is the largest safety backup of the world's crop diversity. Situated 78 degrees north of the equator, the Seed Vault offers genebanks optimal storage conditions for their safety duplicates. The Seed Vault is established and owned by Norway and operated in a partnership between the Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Nordic Genetic Resource Center (NordGen) and the international organisation Crop Trust.