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Press release

## **European seed movement calls: Raise our forks for diversity!**

*New international petition demands that EU institutions rehaul seed law proposal*

**Brussels, Florence, Schiltern – Today several seed movement organisations launch the EU-wide petition “Raise our forks for diversity!”. They demand significant improvements of the EU seed legislation proposal tabled by the European Commission in July 2023. Members of the European Parliament and EU Agricultural Ministers are asked to ensure that the seed laws support diversity on fields and in gardens, and lay the foundation for sustainable, resilient and diverse seed and food systems in Europe. “The EU seed law reform is a key decision for the future of our food and agriculture. We have to raise our forks for diversity on our fields and plates and against laws that only serve the agro-industry”, the organisations demand. “Every voice for diversity, every signature counts now!”**

The petition’s main demand: diversity must be the over-riding priority of the EU seed laws.

The current proposal instead threatens the conservation and circulation of crop diversity and fails to respect farmer’s rights to seeds. The controversial laws which are being renegotiated concern the “EU Seed Regulation”, i.e. the rules of the EU seed market. The current rules were introduced in the 1960s and set standards which were developed for industrial agriculture. Diverse seeds and diversified varieties have largely been outlawed or confined to niches, facing excessive bureaucratic burden, depending on the EU Member State. Agro-industrial players have been pushing for the new rules to go even further in the direction of a uniform agricultural model.

“With this seed law proposal we run the risk of global corporations gaining control over our food. It excessively burdens the important work of seed savers and disregards farmer’s rights to circulate their seeds for compensation. Many diversity actors would need to give up their work, with crop diversity being irretrievably lost. Such rules are completely unfit for our future, especially in times of climate and diversity crises. The proposal is unacceptable”, says Magdalena Prieler, seed policy officer for ARCHE NOAH in Brussels. ARCHE NOAH is a seed saver organisation with offices in Austria and Brussels, conserving, breeding and circulating rare varieties and species.

“Agriculture Ministers and the European Parliament must act now to promote the diversification of our seed systems, allowing specific derogations into the new seed law! The proposal must support on-farm conservation and sustainable use of agro-biodiversity, including new varieties developed for local conditions through participatory and decentralised breeding programs. Seed diversity is the key for healthy, diverse and tasty food. It is time to act to finally enhance diversity in farmers’ fields and in gardens, supporting local varieties, and respecting farmer’s rights. Every citizen can now raise their forks and voices for diversity together with us”, says Riccardo Bocci, executive director of Rete Semi Rurali in Italy, the Italian seed network regrouping 40 organisations”.

### **The petition demands:**

- The conservation and sustainable use of locally adapted crop diversity must be the over-riding priority of the EU seed laws
- The human right of farmers and gardeners to harvest, use, exchange and sell their own seeds must be implemented fully
- The marketing of diverse and locally adapted varieties by regional seed producers must be facilitated
- Newly approved varieties must not be dependent on pesticides or synthetic fertilisers

Sign the petition here: [www.raiseourforks.org](http://www.raiseourforks.org)

*The petition is currently available in English, Flemish/Dutch, German and Italian. For the launch it is supported by ARCHE NOAH (Austria/Brussels), ProSpecieRara Deutschland (Germany), Rete Semi Rurali (Italy), Vitale Rassen (Belgium) and other Belgian and Dutch organisations. More language versions will be available at a later stage.*

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Rete Semi Rurali is the Italian Farmers' Seeds Network. It was established in 2007 and as of today consists of 40 members. The commitment of RSR consists in supporting farmers, both at technical and institutional levels, in the creation and dissemination of self-reliant and sustainable organic farming systems. RSR places seeds at the forefront of such commitment, promoting the idea that each soil needs its own seed and that "alternative" agricultural models - such as organic or biodynamic farming – can work only if based on appropriate and specifically adapted varieties. RSR has 4 areas of work: Community Seed Banks, Research Action, Community and Policies.

ARCHE NOAH is a Central European seed savers organisation with offices in Schiltern/Lower Austria, Vienna, and Brussels. It was established in 1990 as an initiative of gardeners, farmers and journalists, concerned with the future of seeds and heirloom varieties. Today, ARCHE NOAH has about 17,000 members and regular supporters. By conserving around 5,500 varieties, the organisation has one of the largest private collections in Europe. ARCHE NOAH works on conservation, education and development of rare varieties, the political framework, as well as making cultivated plant diversity more available for gardeners and farmers.