



Saving the Seed: Genetic diversity and European agriculture (Natural Resource Management Set)

Renee Vellve

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Genetic diversity is essential to the security of agriculture. Without the availability of a wide range of plant varieties and the genetic resources they contain, crops cannot adapt to combat the ever-changing threats of pests, diseases and climatic change. Yet, with the increasing industrialisation of modern agriculture, farming has become a business which centres on a handful of new, genetically similar 'super seeds'. Plants must evolve in order to survive, but modern agriculture has replaced diversity with uniformity, and security with vulnerability.

Saving the Seed traces the decline of crop varieties in European farming and describes what is being done to safeguard genetic resources for the future. Conservation efforts by government and industry suffer from serious drawbacks, with wrangles over ownership and control of resources. The crucial work is being done by individuals and grassroots organisations, who largely go unrecognised and under-resourced. What is urgently needed are sound policies to promote the diversification of agriculture and an integrated strategy for safeguarding the genetic base of our food system. *Saving the Seed* contains the most up-to-date information available on genetic resources in Europe and on those working to save them. Renee Vellve is a researcher at GRAIN, a no-governmental organisation working to promote the sustainable conservation and use of genetic diversity, based on grassroots approaches to genetic resources management. Originally published in 1992

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