

UNDISCIPLINED ENVIRONMENTS

International Conference of the European Network of Political Ecology
Stockholm, 20-23 of March 2016

***Seeds as a Global Commons:
An Alternative Path for Growing a
Food Secure World***

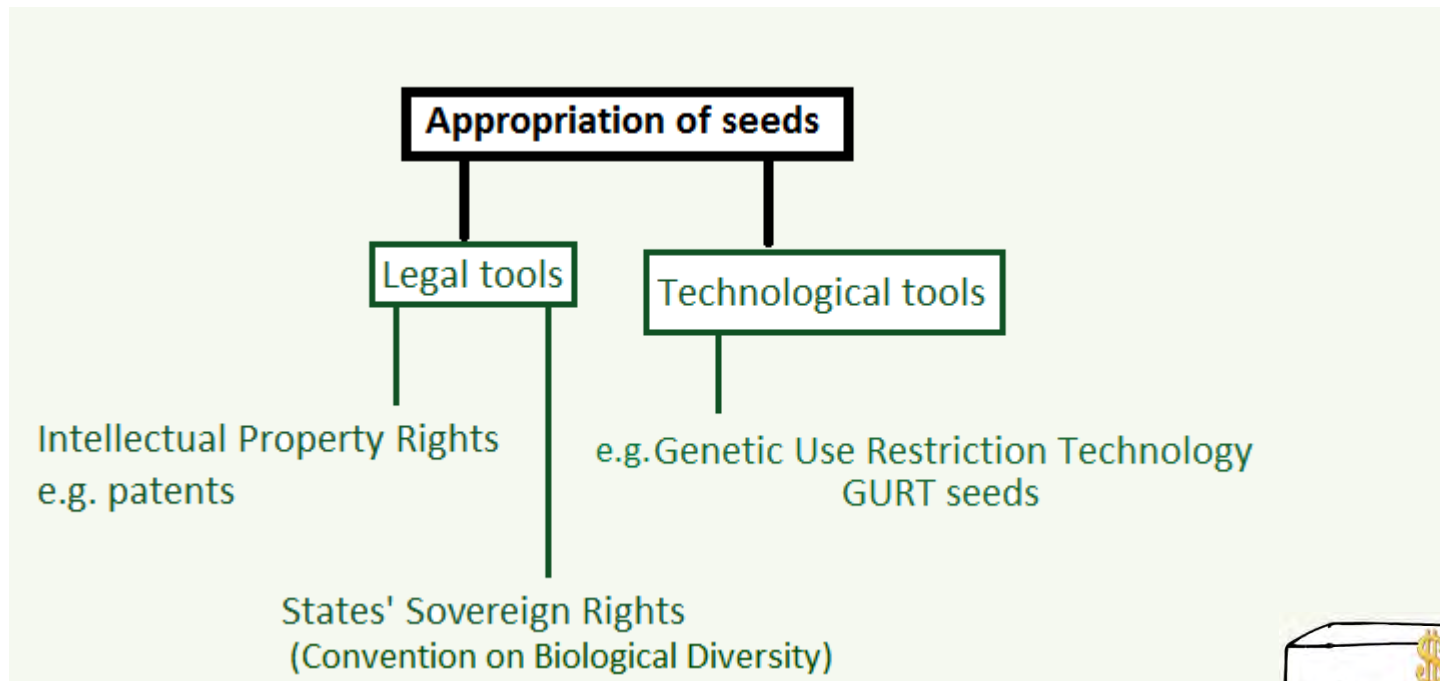
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Since the beginning of agriculture, seed access, use and exchange has been unfettered



Over the last decades, commodification of seeds has rendered their access more and more difficult



= **Hyper-ownership** of seeds &
claims of **misappropriation**



As a response, the *International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* was adopted (2001-2004)



+ **Recognition of Farmers' Rights** (Article 9)

These objectives are to be reached through the establishment of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing (MLS)

The MLS is a mechanism in which seeds are managed as a « **Global Commons** » for food security and sustainable agriculture for the benefit of humanity

- Facilitated access to all through a **virtual common basket of seeds** and the use of a **standard access contract** (SMTA)
- Recognizes Intellectual Property Rights
- Aims at providing money to the **Benefit-sharing Fund** (BSF)
- BSF = collective trust account to fund farmers' projects for sustainable use of seeds
- **Third Party Beneficiary** = guaranties that facilitated access is respected

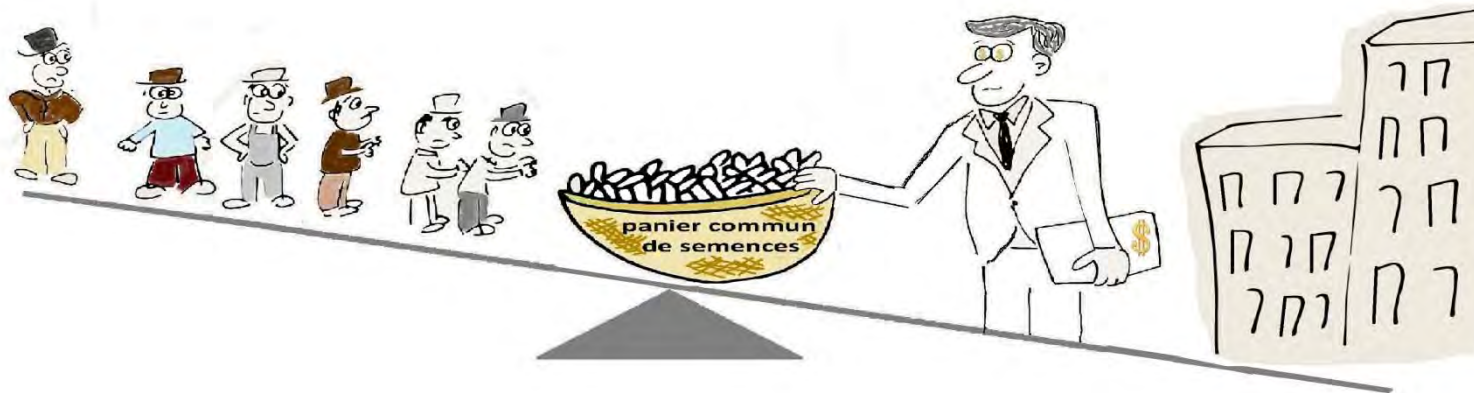


The MLS manages seeds in a creative and collective way.
But is it functioning effectively?

- Facilitated access to seeds: CGIAR continues to actively distribute seeds from its collections but this is **not the case for many contracting parties**
- BSF: **Very little money**, especially in the eyes of developing countries & difficult valuation of non-monetary benefit-sharing
- Third Party Beneficiary: Seems to function effectively (but only when triggered)
- Issues about **participation in decision-making** of all seed users (and above all farmers)
- Timid recognition of **Farmers' Rights** at the international law level

There are difficulties in the implementation of various Treaty instruments

- **Imbalance of rights** penalizing farmers
- **Hyper-ownership** over seeds maintained



= Contrary to global commons governance

In 2013, the Governing Body of the Treaty decided to initiate a (complex) review process

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- **Enhance the MLS:**
 - Widening the list of seeds to be accessed through the MLS?
 - Reviewing the SMTA
 - Identifying where /why countries have difficulties in providing access
- Review the Funding Strategy to secure sufficiently **stable & long-term funding**
 - Review the payment schemes and rates to fund the BSF (to make it more attractive to the seed industry)
 - Identify other potential sources of funding

BUT: review process seems to get entangled in increasing **complexity**

- need to simplify the system not make it even more difficult to implement

Diapositive 8

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CFrison; 21/03/2016

Approaching the review process through the lens of the Commons: What governing principles for an effective Global Seed Commons?

- Formal recognition of food & nutrition security as well as poverty alleviation as **overall objectives of the Treaty**
- Formal international recognition of **Farmers Rights** (alike IPRs)
- Full participation of **all stakeholders & rebalancing of power among them** = Inclusive multi-stakeholder approach
- **Political will** of Contracting Parties = Set global seed management high on their agenda & dedicate the necessary financial and technical resources
- Positive engagement by the **private sector** = Access seeds through the MLS & participate in the monetary and non-monetary benefit-sharing

Seeds as a Global Commons: How to create an Alternative Path for Growing a Food Secure World?

Maintaining an equilibrium in the man-seed relationship by protecting and promoting two main characteristics:

- **The evolutionary nature** of domesticated seeds
- **The interdependence** between man and seeds

=> need to preserve the use and flow of seeds between all users

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Thank you

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