



Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations



WOCAT



# Challenges and opportunities for developing policies and legislation for Farmer Managed Seed Systems at the global level.

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E-LEARNING SERIES

Sustainable Forest Management Impact Program on  
**DRYLAND SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPES**

# Seed Laws and PGRFA: a brief recap

## Seed policies, laws, regulations:

1. Assure quality and variety identity
2. Set out governance mechanisms for seed sector

## *Typically regulate:*

- **WHAT:** Procedures + standards for **variety registration, inspection and seed testing**
- **WHO:** Registration requirements for seed producers or vendors.



# Key questions

## Farmer-led seed systems:

- May include released varieties (from long ago, or now)
- Can include commercial activities

## *Key questions :*

- How does seed legislation affect exchange or commercialization in farmer-led systems?
- Challenges and opportunities for **dynamic & resilient** farmer-led seed systems?



# Status and Trends of Seed Policies

COMMISSION ON GENETIC  
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- For the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture request: analysis of the ***Status and Trends of Seed Policies*** was conducted (2019: CGRFA-17/19/9.3)
- Based on **texts** of seed legislation in FAOLEX:  
> 4000 documents, **94 countries, + 2 regional legislative unions**
- **15 questions** assessed the extent to which seed-related legislation may constrain on-farm diversity of PGRFA

# Status and Trends of Seed Policies

## Select findings

- Many provisions **unclear**, or **incomplete** (e.g. scope of seed law)
- **28 percent** of the countries studied require registration for varieties of all crops and certification for all marketed seed
- **19 percent** provided for specific incentives or discounts for small-scale farmers involved in seed production
- **20 percent** recognise farmer seed systems and allow for registration of **Farmers' Varieties / Landraces (FV/LRs)**

# Follow-up study

## Select findings

- **Follow-up** with two groups, :
  - **7 Countries**- legislative provisions potentially 'restrictive' Varieties/Landraces
  - **11 Countries**- legislative provisions potentially 'favourable'
- Survey National Focal Points **14 questions** about implementation of seed legislation in their country, particularly relating to **FV/LRs**
- **Limited differences** between potentially 'restrictive' and 'favourable' sets of countries.
- No indication that enforcement of seed laws or policies restricted the commercialization of seeds of unregistered FVLs.

# Follow-up study

## Some Reflections

- Farmers' groups or other organizations **may not be seeking** to register FVLs.
- Alternative standards – do they support farmer-led activities?
  - Variety registration
  - Quality Declared Seeds
- Absence of restriction is not same as active promotion of FVLs or farmer-led activities.

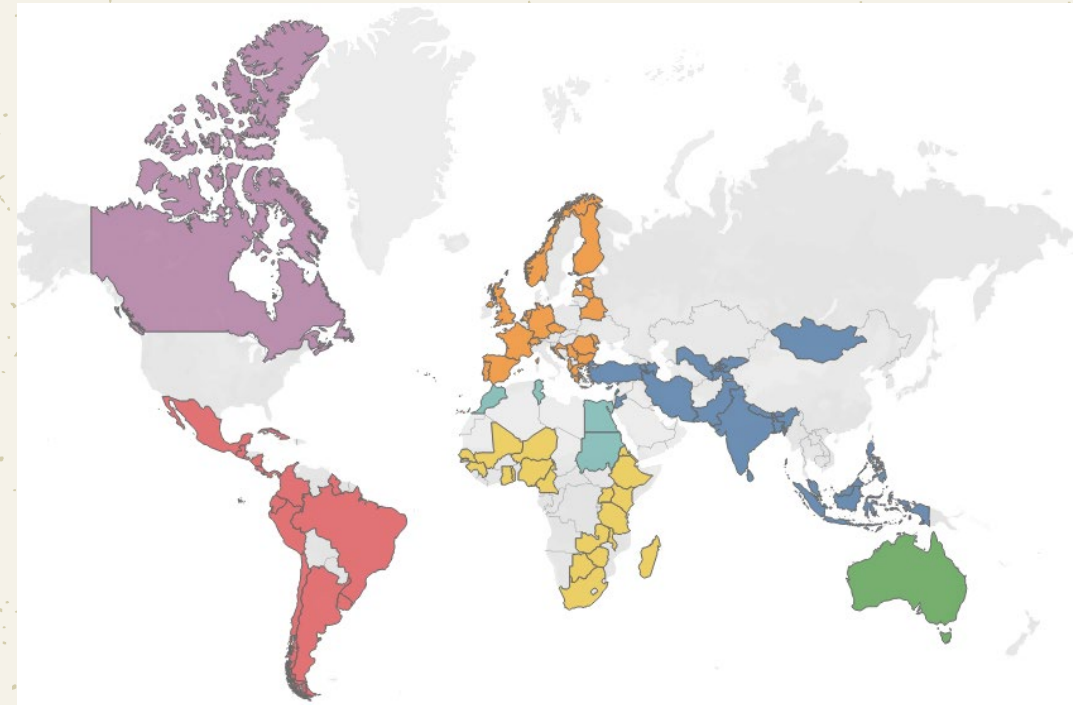


# Variety release: 2012 - 2019

## Variety registration/release

- 82 countries reported to 3<sup>rd</sup> State of World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
- Improved crop varieties (CVs): ~51 000 registered
- FV/LR: ~520 registered
- 29 countries

| Crop group   | Total (82 countries) |        |     |
|--------------|----------------------|--------|-----|
|              | Species              | CVs    | FV  |
| Cereals      | 27                   | 15 026 | 92  |
| Vegetables   | 85                   | 14 251 | 68  |
| Oil plants   | 15                   | 4 862  | 11  |
| Fruit plants | 132                  | 4 544  | 231 |
| Forages      | 151                  | 3 174  | 7   |
| Ornamentals  | 173                  | 2 578  | 0   |
| Pulses       | 32                   | 2 177  | 20  |



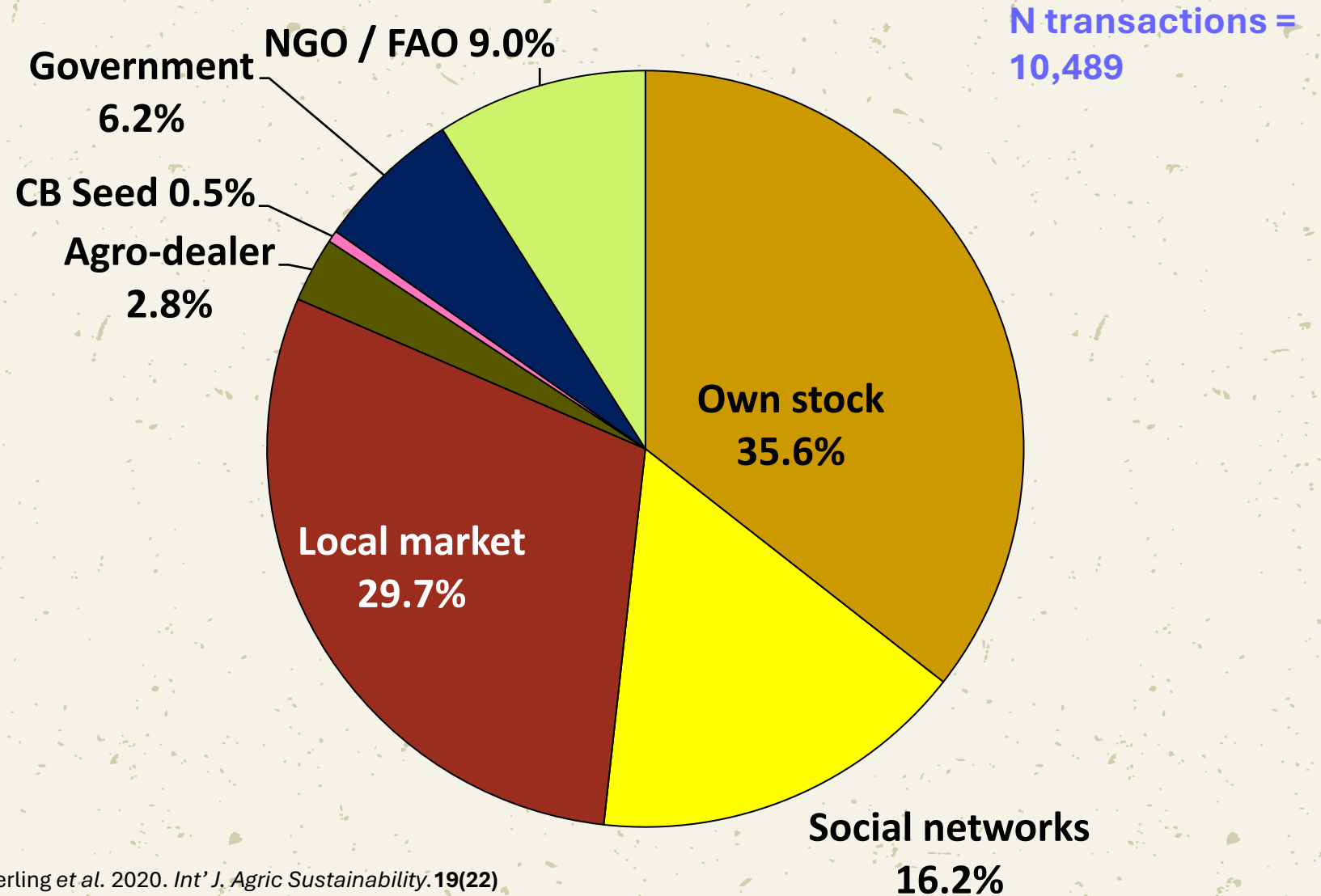
# Global Gaps and Needs

- Unaffordable quality seeds of suitable varieties
- Lack of national policies and legal frameworks to support development of FV/LR and underutilized species
- Insufficient research and utilization of FV/LR and underutilized species
- Limited public awareness



# Seed Systems Opportunities & Challenges

## Seed sources of all crops, % of transactions



# Seed Systems Opportunities & Challenges

**MOST CROPS** face challenges for marketing seed:

- Modest area / farmer,
- Low purchasing power vs crop value
- Last-mile challenges – remote, poor infrastructure
- How ‘better’ than local market seed?

## **Institutional Support**

- Development of **farmer-preferred** new varieties
- **Extension** - varieties and productive agricultural practices (e.g. climate-smart, etc).
- **Capacity-development** to farmer- and community-led seed enterprises : marketing or business strategy gets much less attention
- **Value chains** – to build sustainable demand

# FAO support: National seed policy formulation

- Following **request** by Member Nation
- FAO support based on **Voluntary Guide**
- Encourage wide and representative stakeholder involvement
- Outline policy areas that should be defined, propose technical options - **but country decides on process and final policy content**



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## Voluntary Guide for National Seed Policy Formulation



# Summary

- Enforcement of legislation to **suppress** commercialization of FV/LRs : seems uncommon.
- **Recognising** farmer-led seed systems may not mean these systems' activities are **facilitated**.
- Understanding full **impacts of seed legislation** needs in-depth fieldwork – interpretation, changes to behaviour.
- Dynamic and resilient seed systems need **tailored institutional and market support**, as well as enabling policy.

