



**GENEVA
ACADEMY**

Académie de droit international
humanitaire et de droits humains
Academy of International
Humanitarian Law and Human Rights

Webinar – *The Right to Seeds in Europe*

**24 February 2021
18:00-19:30**

In the European Union (EU) and EU member states, seed laws and regulations were designed to further develop the agricultural industry on the continent, and farmers' rights have been largely neglected. Peasants' and farmers' seed systems and traditional knowledge have not been sufficiently supported. European seed diversity has suffered a drastic decline in recent decades, largely due to a normative framework that prohibits the marketing of peasant and traditional seeds and restricts the use of farm-saved seeds. National seed catalogues and the EU common catalogue were designed to promote industrial seeds covered by plant breeders' rights and agricultural standards, largely excluding peasant seeds, and in a number of countries the saving, exchange and sale of peasant seeds have been banned, while a European regulation bans or taxes the use of farm-saved seeds and patents on "native genes" of seeds are still not banned. This has discouraged and, in some cases, hindered the continuation of peasant farming activities.

To respond to these challenges, among others, the United Nations Declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas (UNDROP) was adopted by a large majority of countries in 2018. The UNDROP recognizes the right to seeds, and it provides that states shall 'elaborate, interpret and apply relevant international agreements and standards to which they are party, in a manner consistent with their human rights obligations as they apply to peasants'; 'ensure that seed policies, plant variety protection and other intellectual property laws, certification schemes and seed marketing laws respect and take into account the rights, needs and realities of peasants'; and 'support peasant seed systems, and promote the use of peasant seeds and agrobiodiversity'.

UNDROP's implementation represents a unique opportunity to rebalance the lack of support given to peasant seed systems in Europe, compared to the support given to industrial seed systems in recent decades. This is essential for the protection of the lives and livelihoods of millions of peasants, as well as the interest of all in the preservation of crop biodiversity.

In 2018, the European Parliament called for EU Member States to support the adoption of the UNDROP, and the European Economic and Social Committee called on European institutions and EU Member State governments to actively support the UNDROP in all future work leading up to its realization. Following these calls, and in accordance with the need to apply international instruments adopted by the UN General Assembly in good faith, the EU and EU Member States shall ensure that their laws and policies, as well as the international agreements to which they are party, do not lead to violations, but to a better protection of rights of peasants, including their right to seeds.

This webinar aims to discuss how UNDROP's article 19, which recognizes the right to seeds, shall be taken into account in the revision of EU rules on seeds. It aims to bring together parliamentarians, representatives of peasant organizations, seed networks, academics and experts from Europe.

Duration: 1h30

Draft Agenda

18:00-18:10 – Welcome and Introduction by Ramona Duminicioiu (ECVC)

18h10 – 19h20 Panel: The Right to Seeds in Europe

Moderation by Katherine Dolan, Arche Noah

Presentations (30 min.)

- The Right to Seeds in International Law – by Christophe Golay, Senior Research Fellow, Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights
- The UNDROP's Contribution to European Farmers' Right to Seeds – by Fulya Batur, Kybele
- Peasants' Seeds Systems and the EU Law: Which legal changes are needed in the EU in order to comply with the UNDROP? – by Guy Kastler, representative of the seeds WG of the European Coordination of Via Campesina (ECVC)
- Latest developments in the organic regulation (organic heterogenous material and organic varieties) - Eric Gall, Deputy Director of IFOAM Organics Europe

Reactions from Members of the European Parliament (10 min.) (tbc)

Questions from the floor to the panelists and responses (30 min.)

19:20-19:30 Closing Remarks by Antonio Onorati (ECVC)

Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in English, French and Spanish.

Registration is required, following [this Zoom link](#).

For any other information please write to right2seeds@eurovia.org.

[Click here to read the UN Declaration for the Rights of Peasants \(UNDROP\) in the different UN languages](#)

More information on Peasants' Rights in Europe is available online at:

[ECVC Work on the Rights of Peasants](#)

[Geneva Academy Project on the Rights of Peasants](#)

[Geneva Academy Project on the Right to Seeds in Europe](#)

[Geneva Academy Publication on the Right to Seeds in Europe](#)