



PRESS RELEASE

ICARDA deposits vital seeds in Svalbard Vault, securing food for generations to come

Beirut, Lebanon. Today, the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) successfully deposited 15,420 seed samples for long-term conservation in the Svalbard Seed Vault. The seeds will play a critical role in the development of climate-resilient crops for generations to come.

In 2015, ICARDA was the first organization in history to request the withdrawal of seeds from the Svalbard Vault – a response to the fact that although the 141,000 accessions constituting the ICARDA active genebank in war-torn Aleppo were stored safely, they could no longer be regenerated or distributed to breeders and researchers.

ICARDA planted the seeds retrieved from Svalbard for multiplication and reconstitution of the collections. As of today, ICARDA holds in-trust 26,000 and 20,000 seed accessions in its genebanks in Lebanon and Morocco.

ICARDA holds in trust one of the world's largest and most unique collection of landraces and wild relatives with a total of 153,000 different samples of major winter cereals, food legumes, forage and rangeland species from the 'Fertile Crescent' in Western Asia, the Abyssinian highlands in Ethiopia, and the Nile Valley, where earliest known crop domestication practices were first recorded. Many plants are now extinct in their natural habitats.

Quotes:

ICARDA Board Chair Ms. Margret Thalwitz:

“As today's commercial crop seed industry concentrates its efforts on a relatively narrow genetic base, the materials from the ICARDA collection offer immeasurable value both as public goods and as inputs into future research.”

“ICARDA's ancient varieties have survived for thousands of years through adaptation and evolution. They offer a huge potential to find solutions to the ever-increasing challenges in dry areas where depletion of soil and water resources are an imminent threat to productivity, livelihoods and food security.”

“ICARDA's efforts are all geared to find solutions for improving productivity and employment in

rural areas. The use of these precious seeds could be one of them.”

Mr. Aly Abousabaa, ICARDA Director General:

“Collaboration between the Norwegian Government, NordGen, the Crop Trust, CGIAR and ICARDA shows what is possible when international partners come together to find solutions to pressing regional and global challenges.”

“We are demonstrating today that we can rely on our genebanks and their safety duplications, despite adverse circumstances, so we can get one step closer to a food secure world.”

Dr. Ahmed Amri, ICARDA’s Head of Genetic Resources, ICARDA:

“Genebanks not only conserve seeds for tomorrow, but also provide germplasm for breeding programs today. At ICARDA, researchers develop new crop varieties that are tolerant to drought, salinity, extreme hot and cold temperatures, resistant to new strains of diseases and insects.”

“Given the adverse impacts of climate change, our genetic resources are becoming crucial for developing crops for users’ nutritional needs in the future.”

Ms. Marie Haga, Executive Director of the Crop Trust:

"Having witnessed the first-ever withdrawal from the Svalbard Global Seed Vault by ICARDA in 2015, it is personally emotional and heartwarming to see these seeds return to the vault today. This proves that the system we are developing to safeguard crop diversity actually works.”

“With the return of ICARDA’s seeds, we have taken the global community one step further towards a more food secure world.”

The shipments to Svalbard have been entirely funded by the [Crop Trust](#), which operates the Seed Vault in partnership with the Government of Norway and NordGen.

The Svalbard Vault, located 1,300 kilometers south of the North Pole, is used to preserve duplicate samples of seeds held in genebanks worldwide. It currently holds 880,000 samples from almost every country in the world.

#seeds4tomorrow

About ICARDA

The International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) is a global agricultural research organization working with countries in the world’s dry and marginal areas to deliver sustainable systems solutions that increase productivity, improve rural nutrition, and strengthen national food security. ICARDA is a member of CGIAR, a group of 15 international agricultural research centers that produce public goods science. www.icarda.org

You will find visuals the 22.2. at 17 hours CET [here](#).

For more information, please contact:
Andrea Gros – ICARDA Head of Communication:
e-mail: a.gros@cgiar.org
twitter: @icarda_cgiar

For media resources on ICARDA's genebank activities, please visit: <http://www.icarda.cgiar.org/media-resources>