Good food comes from good seed. The Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security is building a movement for resilient seed systems across the country. Since 2012, this program of SeedChange has collaborated with farmers, researchers, and more than 100 partners to increase the quality, quantity, and diversity of ecological seed grown in Canada.

In 2019, we began a new phase of the program with a strong focus on on-farm research, capacity building, and policy engagement. We believe that these are critical areas of work for farmers and seed growers in Canada, but we also know that there are many other areas of the seed system that require support.

As we transition into this new phase, it is our pleasure to share some of our achievements to date and suggestions for how you can participate in this movement. We are excited to move forward, welcoming new partners who value the importance of seed diversity, and wish to engage in this essential and inspiring work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We begin by acknowledging those who have been passionately growing and sharing seed for decades, and who have laid the foundation for the thriving seed movement we see in Canada today. Since the start of our work, we have felt warmly welcomed by Canada’s seed saving and farming communities, and we are honoured to be part of such an important movement.

We would like to especially acknowledge the Indigenous communities of Turtle Island. Indigenous Seedkeepers have stewarded the seeds that are responsible for the agriculture we know today, and all seed work in Canada happens on their traditional and unceded lands. We are committed to learning from the original Seedkeepers of this land and to work with them to restore what has been lost through colonization.

Our program has been implemented across Canada in partnership with Seeds of Diversity Canada, University of Manitoba, University of British Columbia, and with the regional leadership of farming organizations across the country: FarmFolk CityFolk (British Columbia), Organic Alberta (Prairies), Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario (Ontario), and the Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network (Atlantic Canada).

We hope that we continue to honour the seed growers that have come before us, provide momentum to the seed leaders of today, and create space for new participants to work towards resilient seed systems for the future.
OUR MISSION
To build a Canadian seed system that promotes food security and is resilient in the face of climate change.

WHY SEED?
Virtually all the food we eat begins with the planting of a seed. Seeds are the beginning and the end of the agricultural cycle, the foundation of our food supply, and one of the best tools we have to adapt to climate change.

Seeds are packets of potential: they are responsible for flavour, nutrition, colour, and shape of our food, but they are also responsible for how a plant takes up nutrients in the soil and responds to diseases, pests, and other stresses. Climate change is bringing new stresses to farmers’ fields: preserving, improving, and creating seed diversity is one of the best ways we can help farmers adapt to, and mitigate, these changes.

The Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security is possible thanks to the generous support of Mrs. Gretchen Bauta, member of the Weston family and Trustee of The W. Garfield Weston Foundation. We thank Mrs. Bauta and The W. Garfield Weston Foundation for their vision and commitment, which has led to the establishment and ongoing success of this program.
Farmer leadership
We embrace the leadership of farmers. Farmers are the stewards of our food system and are most impacted by seed diversity loss – our work puts them in the driver’s seat.

Science-based
We are science-based. We combine the knowledge of farmers and researchers to create and adapt varieties for regional environments and sustainable farming practices.

Sector-wide collaboration
We are leaders in sector-wide collaboration. We work with civil society organizations, research institutions, farmers, government, donors, and other partners to solve problems that cannot be addressed individually.
Achieving resilience in seed systems is a complex goal, requiring action on many fronts simultaneously. In order to measure our program’s impacts over time, we developed six indicators of seed system resilience, with a vision statement for each.

Since 2012, our team has been working to achieve meaningful progress in each of these indicator areas, moving our seed systems closer to realizing these visions.

**Collaboration in the seed movement**: Seed savers, farmers, researchers, government, civil society organizations, Indigenous communities, new Canadians, and other key stakeholders are empowered to work together to build resilient seed systems.

**Capacity of seed producers**: Training and capacity-building for seed production is accessible to current and new seed producers across Canada. A critical mass of seed producers have the required capacity to grow and distribute sufficient quantities of quality seed adapted for their regions.

**Support for participatory research on seed**: Farmers are meaningfully engaged in and leading participatory research to improve and create varieties of seed that are adapted to regional ecological farming conditions and resilient in the face of climate change.

**Availability of quality Canadian seed**: Farmers and gardeners are able to access a diversity of regionally adapted, ecologically grown varieties of vegetable and field crop seed in the volumes they need.

**Preservation of Canada’s seed diversity**: Programs are in place to support public seed collections, seed savers, and farmers, to preserve and distribute samples of a large number of crop varieties, especially those that are regionally valuable and endangered.

**Advocacy for a resilient seed system**: The public and policymakers are champions of a seed system for Canada that supports farmers’ rights to save seed and promotes the advancement of public-domain, regionally-adapted, biodiverse, ecological seed.
Since we started our work in 2012, we have seen enormous progress in the seed sector and are proud to share our assessment with you. These assessments are based on qualitative evaluations, and quantitative progress reports conducted by each of our team members.

SeedChange is helping advance Canada’s commitments on avoiding genetic erosion and supporting sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (Articles 6.1 and 5.2 of The International Treaty for Plant Genetic Resources for Agriculture).

- Axel Diederichsen, Ph.D., Curator, Research Scientist, Plant Gene Resources Canada
Some organizations working on seed, but inconsistent across Canada, and little collaboration among organizations.

Basic seed saving training available, but more intermediate and advanced training needed for all scales and types of farmers.

Limited public vegetable seed breeding programs in Canada, and an absence of ecological breeding programs at academic institutions.

100+ national and regional partners working together on seed programming, hundreds of farmers connecting with the seed movement and each other.

350+ training events and almost 9000 participants attending training since 2015; first national e-learning course on organic vegetable seed production.

70-100 farmers participating in on-farm variety improvement development projects every year; first participatory organic vegetable breeding program launched in 2018; 20+ research partners in Canada and the U.S.
### 2012

**SCALING UP THE AVAILABILITY OF QUALITY CANADIAN SEED**

Very few varieties of organic/ecological vegetable and field crop seed produced on a farm-scale in Canada; many farmers get their seed conventionally untreated and/or outside of Canada.

### 2018

**SCALING UP THE AVAILABILITY OF QUALITY CANADIAN SEED**

A few producers in Canada offering bulk quantities of local ecological vegetable and field crop seed, but still limited in terms of widespread availability and ability to be competitive with the conventional seed sector.

### PRESERVING CANADA’S SEED DIVERSITY

**2012**

Fewer than 10 public seed collections in Canada before 2013.

**2018**

250% increase in seed collections in Canada; 60-100 farmers/year grow-out and save 499 crop varieties on-farm; new regional seed bank serving farmers in Atlantic Canada; international online platform supporting community seed initiatives started in 2018 (Community Seed Network).

### ADVOCATING FOR A RESILIENT SEED SYSTEM

**2012**

Very little awareness among policymakers and the public of the importance of seed and its role in biodiversity and climate change; some regulatory and legislative barriers to farmers’ rights, biodiversity, and public access to seed and genetic material.

**2018**

Advocacy work still in early stages and will grow in the next phase of the program; policymaker and public awareness of resilient seed systems is low and pending changes in regulation/legislation may disadvantage farmers.
We have a strong foundation to reach our vision for resilient seed systems, and a commitment to continue our work in the long-term. In addition to ongoing active participation in Canada’s seed movement, we will focus our resources on three areas: on-farm research, capacity building, and policy engagement.

**ON-FARM RESEARCH**

We will provide national leadership for participatory on-farm research to maintain, improve, and create high quality, diverse Canadian seed by:

- Creating and improving new varieties of seed through participatory plant breeding and variety improvement.
- Building the capacity of farmers, research partners, government, and other agricultural practitioners to adopt participatory seed research projects across Canada.
- Enhancing on-farm seed conservation capacity of farmers and civil society partners.

**CAPACITY BUILDING**

We will help grow the next generation of seed producers by delivering ongoing, on- and off-farm education on high-quality seed production of vegetables and field crops by:

- Delivering comprehensive training to producers on seed conservation, production, and development.
- Developing and disseminating educational resources for all scales and types of seed farmers.
- Establishing regional hubs to support farmer-to-farmer learning on seed production.

**POLICY ENGAGEMENT**

We will engage with government to develop policies that support the advancement of public-domain, regionally-adapted, biodiverse, ecological seed by:

- Developing policy solutions to produce and distribute genetic material developed by farmers and through participatory plant breeding programs.
- Positioning the issue of seeds and biodiversity in the eyes of key agricultural stakeholders in order to create a supportive climate for government action.

In 2019, SeedChange is partnering with the Indigenous Seed Keepers Network on a new pilot initiative to support Indigenous Seed Sovereignty in Canada. The work will begin by connecting with Indigenous Seed Keepers to engage in dialogue about their seed keeping practices and explore how to support their leadership for seed and food sovereignty.

To learn more, please contact Nicole Davies at ndavies@weseedchange.org.
Seed work is slow work - there is so much to do and no single individual or group can do it alone. We share these concrete calls to action as suggestions for how to contribute to Canadian seed work, and we welcome ongoing engagement on how we can all work together to truly build resilient seed systems in Canada.

CALLS TO ACTION: WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Seed security resources
- seedsecurity.ca/en/resources

Organic seed production course
- cog.ca

Business resources
- bcseeds.org

Production and marketing resources
- pivotandgrow.com

The Market for Organic and Ecological Seed in Canada
- seedsecurity.ca/en/resources

SEED GROWERS AND FARMERS
SAVE SEED AND TEACH OTHERS

Without you, we would not have seeds and we would not have food. Thank you for all that you do.

Save good quality seed

We have a comprehensive set of online training resources, including a “Train the Trainer” toolkit, a bibliography of resources for seed production and seed banking, and numerous videos and webinars. If you are an aspiring vegetable seed grower, enrol in the Canadian Organic Growers online course on Organic Vegetable Seed Production. Get in touch with your regional coordinator to learn more about resources and training in your area.

Scale up your seed production

Research by the Canada Organic Trade Association clearly shows that we need more regionally-grown seed in Canada to meet the demand of organic and ecological farmers. Use the business resources provided by our partners at BC Seeds and the production resources and marketing resources provided by the Prairie Organic Grain Initiative to understand both the economic and production dynamics of how to scale up your vegetable seed and/or field crop seed operation.
Conduct a variety trial

Variety trials help farmers, seed growers, and plant breeders identify the best performing varieties for food, for seed, and to create new varieties. Get in touch with your regional coordinator to participate in any of our national and regional variety trial programs, or learn how to conduct variety trials on your own farm.

Breed your own variety

In collaboration with the University of Manitoba, the University of British Columbia, and other research partners, we support farmers in developing their own varieties of wheat, oats, potatoes, and market garden vegetables. Get in touch with your regional coordinator to participate in any of these breeding programs, or to learn how to breed your own farm variety.

Share your knowledge

Lead seed workshops in your region, host field days on your farm, become a seed mentor, and work with regional partners to find other ways to support aspiring seed growers.

You have so much knowledge to share and the next generation of seed producers are hungry to learn. Get in touch with your regional coordinator if you’d like to partner on seed training in your community.

Buy local seed

Use the Ecological Seed Finder to support local seed producers and buy local seed. There are also online directories available showing which farms and companies sell local seed in British Columbia and Atlantic Canada. If regional seed growers are not producing the varieties you need or not enough, let them know! It’s the only way we can increase our capacity to provide better seed for farmers in Canada.
FARMER ASSOCIATIONS AND FOOD SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS
INTEGRATE SEED INTO YOUR PROGRAMS

Foster collaboration across the value chain

The next time you host an event or conference, or create a forum to explore food issues, consider putting seed on the agenda. Invite seed growers and/or plant breeders to help inform the important conversations you are having around food systems and food security.

Integrate seed into farmer training programs

Get in touch with the regional coordinator in your region to deliver training programs, or integrate seed production and plant breeding knowledge into existing training programs.

Support the “seed-to-table” movement

Eaters have been powerful advocates for the local food movement - they can do the same for the local seed movement. Raise awareness about the importance of seed diversity and how good seeds make ecological production possible. Get in touch with the regional coordinator in your region and work with farmers and seed growers to develop variety tastings to showcase regional seed diversity and to highlight the essential role of seed in the food system.

The vision is bold. It really has taken ecological seed issues to a whole new level. Because this area of endeavour – whether it happens on small farms or a big institution like this – has never received the kind of attention or financial support that The Bauta Family Initiative has given us.

- Dr. Martin Entz, University of Manitoba

Find your regional coordinator
> seedsecurity.ca/team
COMMUNITY SEED COLLECTIONS  
CONNECT, SHARE, AND LEARN FROM EACH OTHER

Join the Community Seed Network

The Community Seed Network (CSN) is an initiative started by seed savers across North America with support from SeedChange and Seed Savers Exchange. The CSN connects and supports community seed initiatives by providing resources, information, and a platform for networking.

- **Connect** using the CSN's directory of community seed initiatives and seed savers across North America to find seed leaders in your community!
- **Share** seeds with other growers via Seeds of Diversity Canada and Seed Savers Exchange and share ideas with seedy folks via the CSN Facebook group.
- **Learn** about the basics of community seed production and the best practices of how to run a community seed collection using the resources shared through the Community Seed Network and Seeds of Diversity Canada.

RESEARCHERS AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS  
ENGAGE WITH FARMERS ON PARTICIPATORY SEED RESEARCH

Support participatory seed research

We have developed a model for participatory on-farm variety trials and plant breeding projects, and we see a huge potential for growth in using participatory methods including farmer leadership in seed research. Check out our newsletters, our research publications, and connect with our research manager to discuss how to integrate participatory research into your program.

Integrate seed into agricultural curricula

Ensure curricula for agricultural programs include knowledge and skills related to seed production, regulations on seed and genetic material, and research skills (e.g. plant selection, varietal improvement, on-farm plant breeding). As a starting point, engage with the Canadian Organic Growers to learn about their online course on Organic Vegetable Seed Production.
CALLS TO ACTION: WHAT CAN YOU DO?

The Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security has galvanized the Canadian seed community. Myself and other seed growers have benefited from the resulting synergy.

- Kim Delaney, Founder of Hawthorn Farm Organic Seeds, Ontario

ALL OF US
KNOW WHERE YOUR FOOD AND WHERE YOUR SEED COME FROM

Eat
Encourage seed diversity through the food you eat. Learn to love unusual varieties of fruits and veggies, and buy from local farmers who use ecological seeds whenever you can. If we don’t eat it, we risk losing it.

Grow
Grow food and challenge yourself to plant a variety of interesting seeds from local seed producers. Save seeds from your crop and share them with others. For info on saving seeds from common garden crops, get your How to Save Your Own Seeds guide from Seeds of Diversity Canada. Seeds of Diversity can also point budding seed enthusiasts in the direction of a local seed saver, with their Canadian Seed Catalogue. Or find local seed grown where you live with the Ecological Seed Finder.

Learn
Learn more about the world of seeds. The laws, regulations and markets related to seeds are changing worldwide, and climate change adds a new layer of challenges for seeds and farmers. Sign up to the SeedChange email list to stay in touch.
Advocate

Speak out against policies that restrict farmers' rights to save seed, and speak in favour of policies that enable the development of public domain, regionally-adapted, biodiverse, ecological seed. Our team authored a primer on Canadian seed regulations in 2014. It provides useful background, and keep in mind that there is a review of these very policies being discussed in 2019.

Start a conversation

Spread the seeds of awareness – our underground heroes can't speak for themselves. Tell your friends, family, and grocer why you care about food grown from ecological, locally-adapted seeds. Encourage your networks to support the many organizations working for seed diversity. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter for resources to share with your friends.

Support

Get to know SeedChange and the seed savers we work with in Canada and around the world. Connect with us or donate if you can.

RESOURCES

The Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security seedsecurity.ca

Seeds of Diversity Canada seeds.ca

Community Seed Network communityseednetwork.org

Ecological Seed Finder seeds.ca/seedfinder

SeedChange weseedchange.org

Learn about the seed movement in Canada > seedsecurity.ca

Meet seed savers around the world > weseedchange.org

Donate > weseedchange.org/donate

The personal connections made through The Bauta Family Initiative made [our pepper breeding] project possible. The importance of this breeding work cannot be underestimated! Farmer-led crop improvement has such great potential for introducing robust new varieties.

- Katherine Rothermel, Kitchen Table Seed House

> @weseedchangeorg

Learn about the seed movement in Canada > seedsecurity.ca

Meet seed savers around the world > weseedchange.org

Donate > weseedchange.org/donate
Our sincere thanks to all of the farmers and farming organizations involved in this work for their tremendous contributions to building resilient seed systems in Canada.

Atlantic Canada. Anjeanette LeMay Crowtz, Annapolis Seeds, Artful Acre & the South Knowlesville Community Land Trust Community Garden, Ashlea Viola, Barnyard Organics, Bernard & Francine Theriault, Broadfork Farm, Cheverie Farm, Cochrane Family Farm, Dakota Varen, Dalhousie University Agriculture Campus, Dirk Groenenberg, Earth Friendly Farm, Emmerdale Eden Organic Farm, Ferme Agricole Girouard, Ferme Spirale, Fundy Farms, Hallowing Mountain Farm, HeartBeet Organics, Hope Seeds, Janet Wallace, Kathleen Glasgow, Krista Peyton & Eric Antolick, L and R Farms, La Finquita, Mapple Farm, Nadya Bell, Nancy McLean, Nikian Farm, Norma-Jean Worden-Rogers, North River Organics, North Wind Farm, Nourishing Communities, PEI Farm Centre Legacy Farm, PEI Seed Alliance, Pembroke Farm, Perfectly Perennial Herbs & Seeds, Sacred Garden Farm, Sarah Pritchett, Seed to Spoon Farm, Side By Each Farm, Square One Organics, Steadyspade Farm, Suzana Herceg, Tree Phantom Arbour Farm, Twisted Brook Farm, Watershed Farm, Wild Rose Farm, Wysmykal Farm, Yonder Hill Farm. British Columbia. 4Elements Farm, 4th Sister Watershed Farm, Wild Rose Farm, Wysmykal Farm, Yonder Hill Farm. This list is not exhaustive.

Ontario. Against the Grain Farms, Aster Lane Edibles, Bass Lake Market Garden, Bear Root Farm, Bearhaven Farm, Beet Box Co-operative, Belanger Organic Farm, Bird and Bee, Black Creek Community Farm, Black River Forest Garden, Canadian Organic Seed Company, Castor River Farm, Cedar Grove Organic Farm, Chick-a-Biddy Acres, Common Ground Farm, Cottage Gardener Heirloom Seed, Creek Shore Farms, Cubit's Organics, Drumlin Farm, Earth to Table Farm, Edible Antiques, Edwin County Farms, Eko Root Farm, Everdale, Farms @ Work, Fertile Ground CSA, Fiddlefoot Farm, Flat Earth Farm, Gaia Organics, Good Golly Gardens, Greta’s Organic Gardens, Hawthorn Farm Organic Seeds, Heather Maugham, Highland Gem Farm, Ignatius Jesuit Centre, Ironwood Organics, Jennifer Pittet, Just Food, K2 Milling, Kingston Area Seed System Initiative, Kitchen Table Seedhouse, Kolapore Gardens, Laapple Organic Farm, Lakehead University Agricultural Research Station, Loonsong Gardens, Matchbox Garden and Seed Co., Meeting Place Organic Farm, Mile Hill Farm, Mimosa Research Farm, Orchard Hill Farm, Patchwork Gardens, Pearce Farm, Peterborough Seed Savers Collective, Picnic Creek Produce, ReRoot Farm, Root Cellar Gardens, Roots to Harvest, Saugeen River CSA, Saunders Organics, SeedWorks Plant Breeding Club, Shared Harvest CSA, Sleepy G Farm, Small Spade Gardening, Soiled Reputation, Superior Seed Collective, Swallow Haven Farm, Swarthmore Farm Co-op, The Garden at Pearl Morissette, The New Farm, Three Forks Farm, Urban Harvest, Urban Tomato, Whole Circle Farm. Prairies. A'Bunadhs Seeds, Big Oak Farm, Carrots by Cam, Cedar Lane Farm Authentic Foods, Charles Geddes, Colin Wolfe, Craig Boychuk, Crocus Hill Garden, Dick Wellman, Dwayne Smith, Edwin Wieler, Frank & Marge Dyck, Gary Martens, Gordon Steinraths, Grow North Boreal Horticulture Project, Henry Thiessen, Howpark Farms, Jake Drozda, James Munroe, John Zaccharias, Jonah Langelotz, Kate & Doug Storey, Kirst Riste, Kroecker Farms, Lily & Rose Seed Processors, Loiselle Organic Family Farm, MARA, Matthew Wiens, Meghan/Connor Brydon, Monty Sandor, Moose Creek Organic Farm, Mumms Sprouting Seeds, Oak Valley Vegetables, Paul Gaucher, Peguiss Community Garden Project, Poplar Grove Farm, Prairie Heritage Seeds Organics Inc., Rachelle Ternier, Rio Frio Farm, Robert MacGregor, SR Farms, Stewart Wells, Ty and Janice Shelton, University of Manitoba, Upland Organics, Ward Middleton, Westman Agricultural Diversification Organization, Winston Gamache, Woodland Organics. Quebec. Alain Ravenelle, Botaphyte, Charles Bois, Christian Forget, Club de gestion des sols du Témiscouata, Co-op Agrobio du Quebec, Co-op les Potagers Partagés, Équiterre, Ferme Aquilon SNC, Ferme aux pleines saveurs, Ferme Cadet Roussel, Ferme Croque-Saisons, Ferme de la Berceuse, Fermes Longpré, Ferme Samson et fils, Ferme Tourne-Sol, Ferme Val-aux-Vents, Gabriel Beaulieu & Marin Hock, High Road Farm, Incubateur Agro-alimentaire Chaudières-Appalaches, Jardins de la Gaillarde, Jardins Darlington, Jardins de l’Ecumène, La croisée des cultures, La Ferme des Quatre-Temps, La Ferme Hantée, La Prucheraie, La Récolte de la Rouge, Laboratoire d’agroécologie et le Camp d’entrainement agricole de l’Université Laval, La Société des Plantes, Le Moulin des Cèdres, Le Noyau, Les Jardins de St-Félicien, Les Jardins de Tessa, Les Semences du portage, MAPAQ Saguenay-Lac StJean, Mario Doré, Pascal Paridaens, Pascal Royer, Santropol Farm, Seeds for Food, Sylvain Côté, Sylvain Raynault, Terre Mille Folia, Terre Promise.
We are a non-profit rooted in the notions of human dignity and equality, and focused on contributing to making the world a “better, kinder place for all” as our founder, Lotta Hitschmanova, put it. These guiding principles have remained the same though our work has evolved significantly since we began in 1945 in Ottawa as the Unitarian Service Committee of Canada (USC Canada).

Today, we are part of a global movement fighting for justice, health and sustainability by shifting the way we grow our food.

We work with farmers around the world to strengthen their ability to grow food sustainably, using locally adapted seeds. By harnessing the power of good seeds, farmers’ leadership and global solidarity, we help communities thrive.

Together, we can build a just, sustainable and well nourished world.