

# International farmer Seeds Gathering



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*Antibes, France 2024*

**FINAL REPORT**



## Editorial

*"During these meetings, I realised that anyone using farmers' seeds, on whatever scale, could find a global echo for their convictions".* **Pierre A., meeting participant**

Against a backdrop of widespread climate change and the dramatic erosion of cultivated biodiversity, farmers' seeds play a crucial role in preserving agricultural ecosystems and ensuring people's food sovereignty. Numerous testimonies during the meetings helped us to fully understand the extent of this role. These seeds, passed down from generation to generation, embody an inestimable cultural and biological wealth. They are the fruit of the know-how of farmers the world over, who have adapted them to local needs, climatic conditions and the specific agronomic challenges of their territories. However, they face many threats, including agricultural standardisation, the massive loss of know-how, patents on living organisms, GMOs and restrictive regulations. **The International Farmers' Seeds Meeting was organised with the aim of bringing together farmers, groups, researchers, NGOs, decision-makers politicians and committed citizens.** As part of a collaborative approach, the event provided an

opportunity to strengthen the exchange of knowledge, raise public awareness and promote concrete solutions for a more resilient and ecological agricultural future.

**The general aim was to share the knowledge and know-how associated with farmers' seeds, while highlighting their central role in adapting to the climatic and geopolitical challenges of our time.**

We were thus able to :

- Promoting exchanges and networking between farmers and collectives from all over the world in order to share experiences and strengthen solidarity.
- To raise awareness among the general public of the issues surrounding cultivated biodiversity, and in particular its role in global food security.
- To help consolidate the place of farmers' seeds at the heart of the urgent agro-ecological transition.

*"What I take away from these meetings is the urgent need to strengthen and develop cultures of cooperation between us, throughout the world, and to systematically reposition the seed (...) in food issues. In short, the energy of these meetings makes us all want to be, despite our frailties, much more curious and much more ambitious. If there's one slogan I'd pick out, it's: "Onions make us strong".*

Emmanuel Antoine, Graine de Liberté, participant and exhibitor.



# STEERING COMMITTEE



Founded in 2003, the Réseau Semences Paysannes (Farmers' Seed Network) coordinates a movement of collectives dedicated to the exchange of knowledge, expertise and seeds between practitioners. These collectives work in fields and gardens, using agricultural practices adapted to farmers' seeds. The Network supports autonomy and cultivated biodiversity as a fertile common good, in opposition to the appropriation and patenting of living organisms. It provides information on regulations and promotes the dissemination and circulation of free and reproducible seeds, right down to our plates.

SOL is an agricultural and citizens' association which, for over 40 years, has been working to support farmers, highlight the role of farmers in society and provide them with SOLutions for a fairer world. We work in France and internationally to promote agriculture that respects both the land and people.



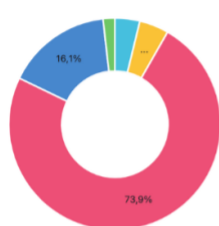
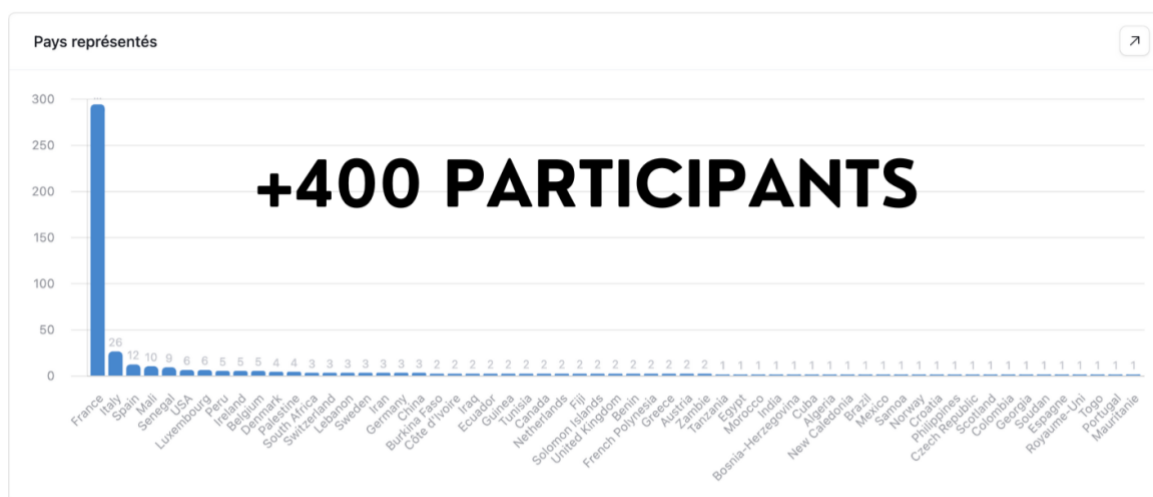
The MSPM is a collective of farmers, gardeners, citizens, elected officials, chefs and researchers who have been campaigning since 2018 for the development of farm seeds in the Alpes-Maritimes bioregion. More than 50 producers on both sides of the French-Italian border organise the recovery, multiplication and distribution of around 100 local varieties.

From training in seed production to the creation of a sustainable supply chain, the MSPM is committed to a local and sovereign food model woven into a network of regional, national and international resistance.

The European Coordination Let's Liberate Diversity! (ECLLD) is an international organisation dedicated to the dynamic management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. Its core belief is that the diversification of our food systems can be achieved through the collaborative efforts of the various actors involved in cultivated biodiversity. The Coordination consists of a strong network of 21 members with a network of 170 national organisations operating in 20 European countries with a membership base exceeding 35,000.



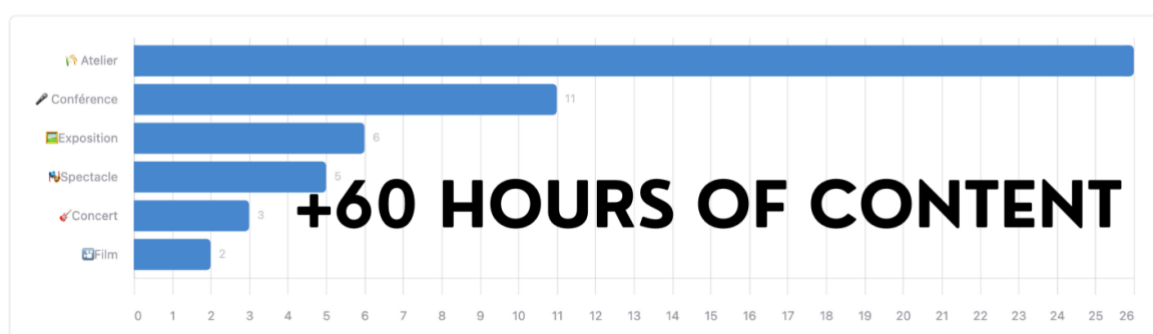
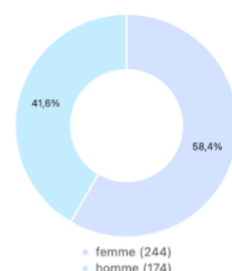
## Key numbers that define our movement & gathering!



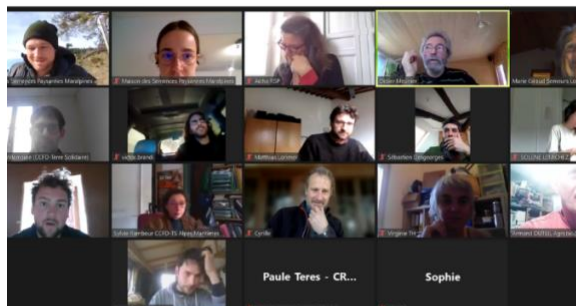
## 5 CONTINENTS

Continent

- Asie (17)
- Amérique (20)
- Europe (331)
- Afrique (72)
- Océanie (8)



# 6 DAYS OF MEETINGS



# +40 ORGANISATIONAL MEETINGS

# +130 INCREDIBLE VOLUNTEERS



# +13 VOLUNTEER INTERPRETERS

# +3,000 HOME- COOKED MEALS





## Other numbers...

- **On farms:** 82 people hosted for between 3 and 5 days on 13 French and Italian farms.
- **Between peers:** in Antibes (Alpes Maritimes, Espace du Fort Carré) - over 400 participants.
  - 2 days, 18 technical workshops, 1 plenary session around 4 major conferences
- **General public:** in Antibes (Alpes Maritimes, Campus Vert) - over 800 participants 1 day, 1 association forum, 26 stands, 8 workshops and conferences, 6 artistic performances (show, choir, dance workshop, plant parade, etc.), 4 exhibitions, 2 film screenings and 3 concerts.
- **16 volunteer interpreters** in French, English, Spanish, Italian, Hindi and Arabic, coordinated by a specialist association
- **1 radio station:** Radio Tout Terrain, in collaboration with other radio stations (Radio Aïoli / Radio Semilla / le Podcast Cultivez la Biodiversité / Going To Seed / Seeds Carriers) organised and broadcast all day long programmes on farmers' seeds [in podcasts](#)
- **3 general videos:** [https:](#)
- **9 podcasts and videos** of workshops and conferences, currently being put online on an external platform
- **Photos** taken by a professional journalist: [farm reception](#), [peer-to-peer day](#), [general public day](#)
- **5 national and local press coverage** (France Inter, Nice Matin, France PACA)



## General review

### Building technical and political content

**A steering committee** was set up to oversee the organisation, made up of the 4 organising associations represented by: Maxime Schmitt, co-president of the MSPM, Aïcha Bourad, economic issues and European coordination coordinator at the RSP, Clotilde Bato, general delegate of SOL, Matthias Lorimer and Gabriele Maneo, coordinators of Let's Liberate Diversity!

Caroline Formont (3 months ) and Alice Champseix (9 months) were recruited to coordinate the event, and the steering committee also benefited from the support of Marie Schmitt for administrative and logistical matters.

- **A Programming working group was** set up, made up of resource persons linked to the networks of the four organising associations, including researchers, activists, farmers and seed producers (Confédération paysanne, INRAE, Manufacture paysanne, Agrobio Périgord, CCFD-Terre solidaire, members, supporters and employees of the Réseau Semences Paysannes, SOL, MSPM and LLD, etc.).
- **A wide range of conferences and workshops:** Inspired by the methodology used to organise the CRID Summer University, a call for proposals was issued for the workshops on the Thursday and Friday peer-to-peer days. In order to ensure that everyone was represented, it was asked, as far as possible, to propose workshops/sessions led by three organisations, including at least two from different countries. The choice was made to give priority to proposals for sessions led by several collectives, involving a diversity of countries of origin of the collectives and/or speakers, in order to enrich the viewpoints on the different themes addressed. The call for proposals was shared by CCFD-Terre solidaire and SOL with part of its network of partners in the South.





- 25 proposals were studied by stakeholders, mainly from Europe but also from Africa (Niger, South Africa);
- 18 proposals were selected, dealing with farmers' seed issues on :
  - Selection (2 workshops),
  - Production (1 workshop),
  - Storage (1 workshop),
  - Machinery (1 workshop)
  - Collective organisation (participative guarantee systems, 1 workshop)

and the challenges of :

- regulation and patenting (3 workshops),
- collective organisation and networks (1 workshop),
- seeds and migration (3 workshops),
- gender and seeds (1 workshop),
- the microbial life of seeds (1 workshop),
- evolving populations (2 workshops),
- farmers' organisations and research bodies/gene banks (1 workshop).

The content of these workshops is summarised and detailed in a "diary" report of the meetings. Conferences on topics that are accessible and relevant to raising public awareness of farmers' seeds have been selected:

- conference on new GMOs,
- conference on farmers' cereals and food resilience,
- conference on the Andean approach to agroecology,
- conference on the link between identities/migrations and seeds,
- workshop to raise awareness of seed migration,
- A workshop for the general public on vegetable seed production.



## **A common theme for a plenary session: migration and seeds**

During the 2019 General Assembly of the Réseau Semences Paysannes (hosted by Graine des Montagnes in the Hautes-Alpes, France) at a time when many farmers' collectives were deeply engaged with the issue of farmers' seeds, a border patrol in support of migrants was organized. This experience prompted participants to (re)consider the connections between travel, exile, migration, and farmers' seeds across time and space.

The diversity of food we know today depends on human movements and the circulation of plants over generations on a planetary scale. The history of agriculture is a history of migrations, and its development still depends to a large extent on these flows. Exchanging seeds and know-how between farmers within a region, a country or between continents enables farmers to adapt more effectively to the consequences of climate change, to increase the diversity of plants grown in a region and to preserve cultivated biodiversity.

## **A festive and artistic event**

A [call for participation](#) was launched for this associative forum and 32 responses were received from associations from different countries to present their work, their seeds and their activities to the general public.

The event was an opportunity to mobilise artists and groups, including Radio Tout Terrain (a radio station in the Roya valley), the Italian theatre group Nouvelle Plague, which put on a show about farmers' seeds, the Roya choir group, the artist Aurore Emaille, who made a film about seeds, and others.

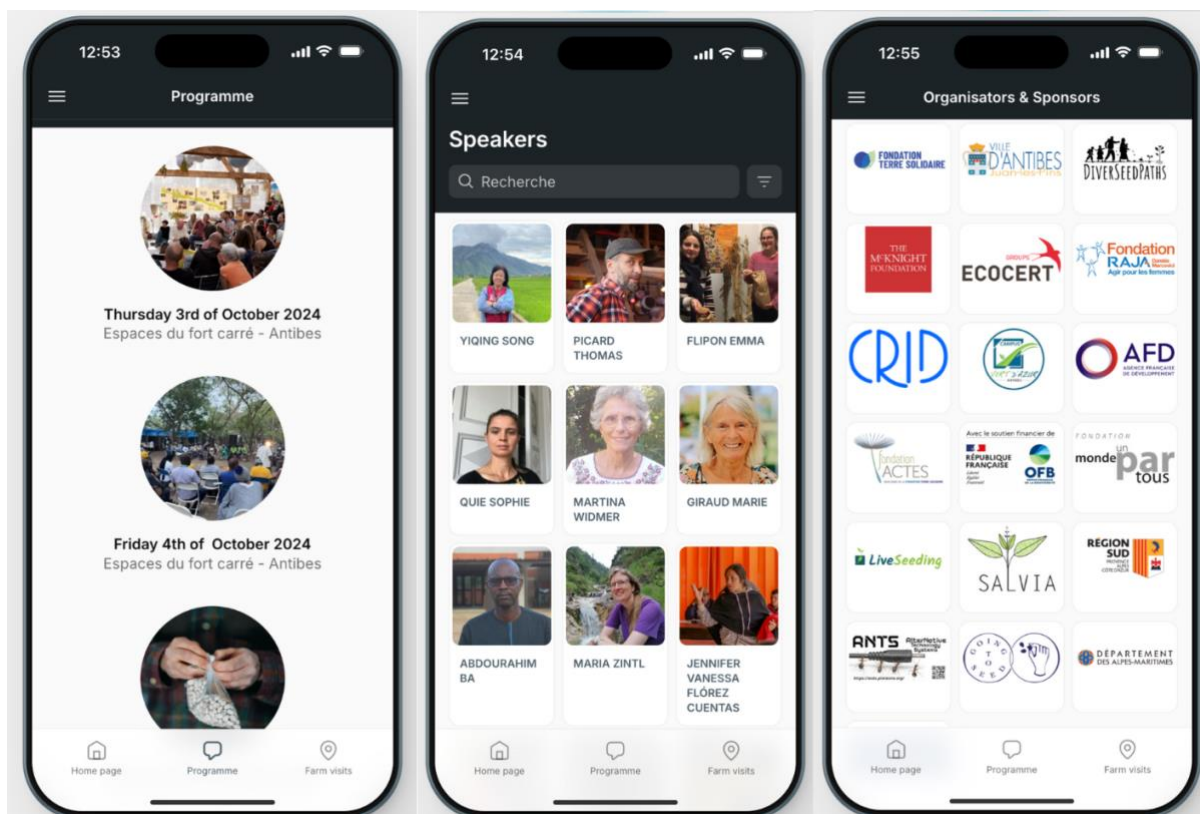
A team of 6 women made 7 costumes from plants and organised a plant-based fashion show.



## Making it easier for everyone to sign up and take part

- An [automated registration system](#) was set up and launched, with a range of prices to make the event more accessible to all (standard price 180 euros, gift price 300 euros, reduced price 90 euros). Registration for workshops was also [automated and launched in September](#).
- A [dedicated application for participants](#) was launched at the beginning of September to bring together all the information about the event.
- The programme was also available online and on paper for the general public day. All registration and programme information was available **in at least French and English, but the registration link was also available in Spanish and Italian.**





## Funds

Funding was provided by a wide range of national, local, and international organizations, both public and private. To all of them—THANK YOU!



### Aid in kind :

Funding for international partners: in a number of associations have also invested time and funding to bring in their partners, including CCFD-Terre solidaire, Buzuruna Juzuruna, Slowfood in conjunction with the Terra Madre international festival, the MC Knight Foundation, Longo Maï, Going to Seed, the Rosa Luxembourg Foundation and Terre et humanisme.

Materials and equipment: we benefited from the free loan of the Fort carré by the town of Antibes; the provision and installation of large marquees by the town of Château neuf de Grasse; donations of organic produce from the Biocoops maralpines; and materials and supplies from the Raja company via the Raja Danièle Marcovici Foundation.

## To find out more



### European/American networks

This edition of the Rencontres Internationales has been merged with the General Assembly and the forum of the European network Let's Liberate Diversity!, of which the Réseau Semences Paysannes is a member.

The merger of these two events meant that European, American and Chinese associations belonging to the LLD network were able to take part in the event.

### Partners from the South

The construction of the international part of the Meetings was the fruit of collaboration between SOL and the other associations mentioned in the "budget" section. This collaboration enabled participants from sub-Saharan Africa, the Maghreb/Middle East, Peru, Senegal, India, Togo, Palestine, Iraq and Iran to attend.

The partners were selected for their pre-existing partnership links with the organising structures and their knowledge of seed-related work. Attention was paid to gender balance: out of 86 international partners, 40 were women. A great deal of work went into obtaining visas for the partners: of the 89 international partners planned, 66 were actually able to take part in the Meetings (12 visas were refused, 8 were cancelled due to the war in Lebanon and Palestine, 1 for personal reasons and 2 for health reasons).

Other international partners have also signed up from South Africa, Benin, Colombia, Senegal and elsewhere. As well as an 8-strong delegation from Oceania.

### ● Reception at the farms

Priority was given to international participants, but the farm visits were open to all, subject to availability. 82 people took part in these farm visits.

The farms were mobilised within the pre-existing networks of the Maison des Semences Paysannes Maralpines in the Alpes-Maritimes and in Italy and the Réseau Semences Paysannes :

In France:

- 1001 Vegetables/Triticum
- Agrobio Périgord/Mazorca



- Graine des Montagnes
- Longo Maï
- GRAB/CRB/Potager d'un curieux
- Maison des Semences Paysannes Maralpines / Cavagne Farm
- Maison des Semences Paysannes Maralpines / Rocambole Garden
- Maison des Semences Paysannes Maralpines / arboriculture course
- Maison des Semences Paysannes Maralpines / Lamenthargue Farm

In Italy:

- Il Fagiolo Magico
- Sasha de Bettini Farm
- Collective from Cuneo
- Consorzio de la Quarantina

The international partners and other registrants were allocated to the farms according to their choice of sectors. Partners who did not speak French or English were grouped together with partners who could translate the exchanges simultaneously.

### **Offering sustainable food during the event**

- A self-built kitchen in the Espaces du Fort Carré
- Made with local products
- As much as possible from products derived from farm-saved seeds

The products were bought from producers in the Alpes-Maritimes and the equipment was collected from the MSPM network and Emmaüs.







## Testimonials

*"Chloé took us into her home and family for three days. It strikes me that people whose work is guided by seeds are often like that: seeds mean more than work. We visited farms and experimental stations and Chloé shared with us what it means to her to try to do research that is truly useful to farmers. And for all the doubts she had, and which we seemed to have in common, whether we were from Benin or the Netherlands, it was impressive to see how farming and plant breeding can benefit when farmers and researchers really do their best to understand each other and work together."* Frederick Van Oudenhoven, **Oxfam Novib, Netherland**.

*"Because I was invited to the sow your resistance conference in Antibes, I was able to spend a month in Europe speaking at conferences in five countries. I met people with whom we are now doing cooperative projects. I learned a lot to take back to my groups. My heart melted at the social aspects of the conference: singing, dancing, a parade."* Joseph Lofthouse, **Going to seed, USA**

*"Les rencontres internationales, a symphony of wonders at every turn. A wonderful team, weaving the threads of this unique event with genius. The themes, chosen with luminous precision, converged in a dance of relevant and inspiring ideas. The delegations, dazzling, embodying the richness and infinite power of biocultural and human diversity. The hearts, open like fertile fields, welcoming seeds ready to be sown. What more could you dream of? An encounter that touches the soul and magnifies humanity and the entire planet."* Alain Patrick Dlugosz Salas, **Arariwakuna Project, Cusco, Peru**

*"I was particularly moved by the meeting held in France. I realised that a number of civil society players and NGOs are working to protect seeds and safeguard the rights of farmers around the world. At Torre Pellice, we were amazed by nature and their way of life based on peasant agro-ecology. RISF gave us a glimpse into a very dynamic world of farmers committed to protecting the environment. It allowed us to get to know producers from other countries. We spent 3 days with a Brazilian, a Mexican, a Frenchwoman, an Englishwoman, a Swisswoman and several Italians. We also exchanged farmer seeds in Italy and France"* Jean Dara, **Grad / COASP, Mali**

*"The 3 times Buzuruna Juzuruna (farm-school and first seed house in Lebanon) has taken part in the RSP meetings have always been a truly defining moment for the whole team. Wheat from our Iranian friends in Cenesta has become our flagship blend since the 2019 edition, and a number of meetings, trips, exchanges and partnerships have sprung up following each meeting... This year's event was particularly rich in terms of bringing together different links in our network that would have been impossible to bring together*



*in Lebanon. For example, it was impossible for our friends from southern Lebanon to meet those from Palestine, even though their farms are only a few dozen kilometres away. Following the meetings, we even extended them by a week, so that together we could begin a project to build a regional network bringing together farmers and activists from Palestine, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt who were present at the meetings".*

Lucas Wintrebert, **France / Lebanon**

*"An appropriate international framework for sharing and exchanging experiences between practitioners from all over the world; the issues raised and dealt with put the interests of farmers and the question of agricultural renewal at the centre of national and international debates; They are key moments for: Gain collective expertise on farmers' seeds, seize opportunities to forge strong links between participants, and demonstrate farmers' ability to convey a strong collective message in favour of an agro-ecological farming system that is healthy for the environment and for people. Strengthen exchange mechanisms between farming communities around the world. Improving farmers' processes for: rehabilitating, preserving, transmitting and developing traditional genetic resources. Promote opportunities for exchange and pooling of experience and practices in the field of: selection, multiplication and conservation of farmers' seeds".* Masse Gning, **FONGS, Senegal**

*"It's true that the Meetings were an opportunity for me to learn from my peers: I learned about new potato breeding methods from Italy and Peru and forged links with agroecological groups from the United States to Lebanon. Having said that, above all I was able to see a real need and potential for renewing and broadening an international dynamic on the issue of cultivated biodiversity and farmers' seeds."* Hugo Martorell, **sème l'avenir, Quebec Canada**

*"Through visits to farms, we have been able to discover that farmers can be self-sufficient in seeds. We're now at the beginning of our experiments in producing farmer seeds, and the impressive output from the Beaumesnil kitchen garden has shown us just how much potential we have."* **Moussa Fall of the Association des Villageois de Ndem (Senegal)**

*"The 2024 International Farmers' Seeds Meeting will be remembered as a great moment of hope in our contemporary history. They could have been front-page news: the 5 continents gathered together to plan a food future based on the richness of farmers' seeds. The meetings were an interlude of peace and fraternity, all linked by the same love of life on the fringes of today's violence and rejection of different cultures. Once again, we experienced how close and sincere collaboration with living things brings people together, whatever their culture, political system or religion. During this time, nothing was excluded, everything was added. Seeds and humans have always travelled; these journeys have shaped our age-old food systems. Our crops come from every continent. We are all linked by this common heritage. Through the travels of seeds, every farmer on*

*the planet has benefited from the work of other farmers since the emergence of different forms of agriculture several millennia ago."* Véronique Chable, **Researcher at INRAE, Rennes**





