AFSA
ALLIANCE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN AFRICA

# Recognise FMSS as guardians and breeders of biodiversity

This factsheet is the fifth of five highlighting key advocacy messages addressing gaps in the African Union's draft Farmer Managed Seed Systems Policy 2025. For full context, read it alongside the complete document available here.

**Farmer Managed Seed Systems (FMSS) are community-based seed systems led by smallholder farmers, especially women. They provide more than 80% of Africa's seed and are central to seed and food sovereignty. FMSS are:**

- Rooted in traditional knowledge and cultural practices.
- Biodiverse, resilient and cost-effective.
- Adapted to local agroecological conditions.
- Vital for climate adaptation, food security and ecosystem restoration.

## Core message

**The AU FMSS policy must explicitly recognise FMSS as guardians and multipliers of biodiversity—linking conservation to seed sovereignty.** Omitting this recognition risks separating biodiversity policy from seed policy, weakening both and marginalising the very farmers safeguarding Africa's genetic heritage.

The policy must:

- Include clear language affirming FMSS as biodiversity stewards.
- Integrate biodiversity goals across all FMSS policy provisions.
- Support in situ conservation through farmer-led seed networks.

## Call to action

- Bridge biodiversity and seed system policy through FMSS.
- Fund community-based conservation and local seed exchanges.
- Protect FMSS against genetic erosion and external threats.

## Link to key frameworks

- **CBD & Post-2020 GBF** – In situ conservation and traditional knowledge (Articles 8(j), 10(c)).
- **ITPGRFA Article 9** – On-farm conservation and Farmers' Rights.
- **UNDROP Article 20** – Right to biodiversity and participation in conservation.
- **Africa's Model Law** – Farmers' control over biological resources.
- **Agenda 2063, CAADP** – Climate resilience and sustainable food systems.

## Common objections & responses

- **Conservation is for parks, not farms:** In situ conservation on farms is vital for adaptation.
- **Need formal gene banks:** FMSS are living seed banks, constantly adapting and regenerating.
- **Focus should be on yield:** Biodiversity underpins productivity, resilience and nutrition.

## Case studies

Case studies of agroecological FMSS prove the viability and scale of this system. Read the full document here to find a range of case studies providing the evidence for FMSS based on agroecological principles and practices.