

N'DJAMENA DECLARATION ON FARMERS' RIGHTS, SEED SOVEREIGNTY AND THE FUTURE OF AFRICA'S FARMER-MANAGED SEED SYSTEMS

N'Djamena, Republic of Chad

2–4 June 2026

WE, the participants of the 4th Pan-African Conference on Seed Governance, representing farmers' organizations, civil society organizations, women and youth movements, academics, researchers, local governments, parliamentarians, media professionals, regional institutions and development partners from 20 African countries, gathered in N'Djamena, Chad from 2 to 4 June 2026 under the leadership of the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA);

RECOGNISING that Farmer-Managed Seed Systems (FMSS) remain the primary source of seed for millions of African farmers, providing 90% of used seeds and constitute the foundation of agricultural biodiversity, climate resilience, food sovereignty, nutrition, cultural identity, local knowledge systems and rural livelihoods across the continent;

ACKNOWLEDGING the African Union's ongoing efforts to develop a Policy Framework and Strategy for Farmer-Managed Seed Systems and the opportunities these instruments provide to strengthen recognition of farmers' seed systems within the implementation of Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) 2026–2035 and Agenda 2063;

CONCERNED that recognition alone is insufficient if it is not accompanied by strong legal protection, secure policy space, adequate financing, democratic governance and effective implementation mechanisms that safeguard farmers' rights and seed sovereignty;

ALARMED by the growing concentration of power within global seed, new biotechnologies that are harmful to biodiversity, digital agriculture and data industries, and by increasing pressures arising from restrictive seed laws, intellectual property regimes, plant variety protection systems, digital sequence information governance, and the expansion of corporate influence over African food systems;

FURTHER CONCERNED by emerging forms of bio digitalisation that convert biological resources, genetic diversity and traditional knowledge into digital assets without adequate safeguards for farmers' rights, community consent, benefit-sharing and African data sovereignty;

WE HEREBY DECLARE:

1. Farmers' Rights are non-negotiable and must be fully recognized, protected and implemented across Africa. Every farmer must enjoy the right to save, use, exchange, improve, reproduce and sell farm-saved seed, consistent with African realities and international obligations as set out in Article 9 of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) and Article 19 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants (UNDROP).
2. Farmer-Managed Seed Systems are autonomous, legitimate and dynamic systems that must not be subordinated to commercial seed sector interests or treated merely as transitional pathways into "formal" seed systems.
3. Seed diversity is central to Africa's resilience. Local varieties, landraces and Indigenous knowledge systems constitute strategic assets for climate adaptation, nutrition, ecological sustainability and community well-being.

4. Farmers, especially women, are indispensable custodians, innovators and leaders within seed systems and must be recognized, supported and represented in all decision-making processes concerning seed governance.
5. Biodiversity, seeds and associated knowledge are collective heritage and public goods that must not be enclosed, privatized or appropriated through intellectual property systems, digital technologies or corporate concentration.
6. Digitalization and bio digitalization must be governed in ways that protect community rights, prior informed consent, benefit-sharing, transparency, accountability and African control over biological and digital resources.

WE CALL UPON:

African Union Member States to develop specific seed laws, plant variety protection legislation and related regulations that strengthen customary farmer seed practices.

Regional Economic Communities and the African Union Commission to ensure that the Farmer Managed Seed Systems Policy Framework and Strategy explicitly protect farmers' rights as recommended in Article 20 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants (UNDROP), prevent regulatory overreach and safeguard Farmer managed seed systems autonomy during national domestication processes.

Governments to include Farmer Managed Seed Systems into National Agricultural Investment Plans, climate adaptation strategies, biodiversity frameworks and public budgets with dedicated financing mechanisms.

Development finance institutions, donors and development partners to align agricultural investments with agroecology, biodiversity conservation, farmer-led innovation and community resilience rather than promoting narrow input-intensive agricultural models.

African governments and regional institutions to establish robust frameworks for African data sovereignty, governance of Digital Sequence Information (DSI), protection of traditional knowledge and equitable benefit-sharing arising from the use of Africa's biodiversity.

Parliamentarians champion legal reforms that recognize and protect farmers' rights and ensure democratic oversight of seed, biotechnology and data governance policies.

Civil society organizations, farmer organizations, researchers and social movements to strengthen continental solidarity, knowledge exchange, evidence generation and accountability mechanisms for monitoring implementation of the Farmer managed seed systems agenda.

WE COMMIT TO:

1. Building stronger alliances across Africa to promote seed sovereignty and farmers' rights, as well as local animal breeds;
2. Supporting community seed banks, farmer-led breeding initiatives, territorial markets and agroecological transitions;
3. Developing characterization mechanisms and quality insurance criteria for Farmer managed seed systems
4. Promoting legal, policy and financial frameworks that strengthen rather than undermine farmer-managed seed systems;

5. Monitoring the domestication and implementation of the African Union FMSS Policy Framework and Strategy to ensure that recognition translates into meaningful protection, investment, autonomy and decision-making power for farmers.
6. Working for the protection of Farmers' Rights in the Digital Age
7. Advocating to ensure fair Governance of Digital Sequencing Information and Benefit Sharing and for investment in African Public Research and Digital Infrastructure;
8. Strengthening African Data Sovereignty, including embedding biodigitization within Agroecology and Food Sovereignty Frameworks
9. Engaging African States on the African continental free trade Area (AfCFTA) Intellectual Property Rights Protocol for a *suis generis* Plant Variety Protection (PVP) system that suit African social, cultural and economic realities.

As we conclude this historic gathering in N'Djamena, we affirm that the future of Africa's food systems depends on the protection of farmers' rights, the strengthening of agroecology and the enhancement of farmer-managed seed systems.

Our message is clear:

Africa's seeds belong to its peoples. The future of seed governance must be rooted in sovereignty, justice, biodiversity, democracy and the rights of farmers.

Done at N'Djamena, 4 June 2026