



## The Svalbard Global Seed Vault

Deep inside a mountain on a remote island in the Svalbard archipelago, halfway between mainland Norway and the North Pole, lies the Global Seed Vault.

It is a fail-safe seed storage facility, built to stand the test of time — and the challenge of natural or man-made disasters. The Seed Vault represents the world's largest collection of crop diversity.

## The Purpose

It was the recognition of the vulnerability of the world's genebanks that sparked the idea of establishing a global seed vault to serve as a backup storage facility. The purpose of the Vault is to store duplicates (backups) of seed samples from the world's crop collections. It will secure, for centuries, millions of seeds representing every important crop variety available in the world today. It is the final back up.



more than  
**850,000**  
seed varieties conserved to date

## The Need

Worldwide, more than 1,700 genebanks hold collections of food crops for safekeeping, yet many of these are vulnerable, exposed not only to natural catastrophes and war, but also to avoidable disasters, such as lack of funding or poor management. Something as mundane as a poorly functioning freezer can ruin an entire collection. And the loss of a crop variety is as irreversible as the extinction of a dinosaur, animal or any form of life.

INTERACTIVE TOUR OF THE  
SVALBARD SEED VAULT ON  
[www.croptrust.org](http://www.croptrust.org)



## The Location

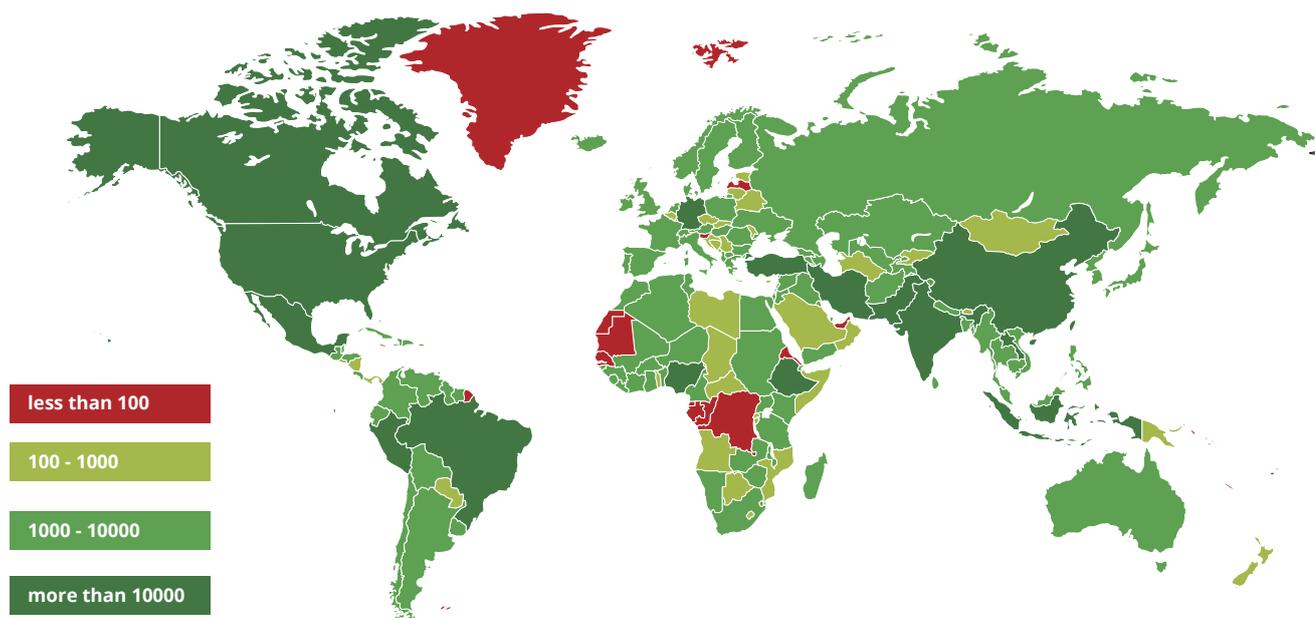
The Vault is in an ideal location for long-term seed storage, for several reasons:

- Svalbard is the farthest north a person can fly on a scheduled flight, offering a remote location that is nevertheless accessible.
- The location inside a mountain increases security and provides unparalleled insulation properties.
- The area is geologically stable and humidity levels are low and the Vault is well above sea level, protected from flooding.
- The permafrost offers natural freezing, providing a cost effective and fail-safe method to conserve seeds.

# The Storage

The Seed Vault has the capacity to store 4.5 million varieties of crops. Each variety will contain on average 500 seeds, so a maximum of 2.5 billion seeds may be stored in the Vault. Currently, the Vault holds more than 830,000 samples, originating from almost every country in the world. Ranging from unique varieties of major African and Asian food staples such as maize, rice, wheat, cowpea, and sorghum to European and South American varieties of eggplant, lettuce, barley, and potato. In fact, the Vault already holds the most diverse collection of food crop seeds in the world.

## Where the seeds in the vault originate from



### CROPS

## Top 10 Crop Conserved

Wheat	159,000
Rice	146,000
Barley	70,000
Sorghum	46,000
Bean	39,000
Corn	35,000
Millet	35,000
Chickpea	29,000
Kikuyu grass	22,000
Soybean	18,000

### GENEBANKS

## Top 10 Depositing Institutes

International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center  
International Rice Research Institute  
International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas  
International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics  
National Plant Germplasm System (USA)  
International Center for Tropical Agriculture  
Leibniz Institute of Plant Genetics (Germany)  
Plant Gene Resources of Canada  
International Institute of Tropical Agriculture  
Centre for Genetic Resources (Netherlands)



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