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CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Regeneration of Crop Diversity and Safety Duplication at the Svalbard Global Seed Vault Award Scheme

Background

The conservation and use of crop diversity, the biological foundation of agriculture, are necessary for the development of crops and farming systems that are resilient to the devastating effects of a rapidly changing climate and thus to ensure food and nutritional security for all. Genebanks currently maintain approximately 7.4 million samples of crop diversity worldwide. However, many of these samples are at unnecessary risk because they are not safety duplicated. Duplicating unique accessions in other locations is necessary to safeguard them from accidental loss in genebanks.

[The Svalbard Global Seed Vault](#) (Seed Vault) is widely recognized, including by the [International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture](#) (the Plant Treaty), as the ultimate insurance policy for the world's genebanks. It is an integral component of the global system of genebanks, providing a secure, low-cost, safety back-up of crop diversity collections. The Seed Vault is administered by the [Ministry of Agriculture and Food](#) on behalf of the Government of Norway. The [Nordic Genetic Resources Center](#) (NordGen) operates the facility and maintains a [public online database](#) of the samples stored therein. The [Global Crop Diversity Trust](#) (Crop Trust) provides support for the ongoing operations of the Seed Vault from its endowment fund. An International Advisory Council oversees management and operations. There are currently 1,081,026 samples in the Vault, from 66 countries.

The Seed Vault provides a vital layer of security when genebanks are at risk of losing unique accessions due to technical failure, natural catastrophe, conflict, or lack of resources needed to maintain the quality of orthodox seeds in storage. It has proven its worth with the back-



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up of more than 100,000 seed samples by ICARDA in 2008 and 2011. ICARDA was able to [retrieve](#) these safety duplicates and re-establish its collection after it was forced to leave its original site near Aleppo, Syria.

The Biodiversity for Opportunities, Livelihoods and Development (BOLD) Project

The BOLD Project, funded by the Government of Norway and coordinated by the Crop Trust, aims to strengthen food and nutrition security worldwide by supporting the conservation and use of crop diversity in genebanks. It began in 2021 and builds on the work and achievements of the [Crop Wild Relatives \(CWR\) Project](#) (2011-2021). One component within the BOLD Project will support the backing-up of crop diversity in the Seed Vault.

The Crop Trust, in coordination with the Plant Treaty Secretariat and the Coordinator of the Seed Vault (on behalf of the tripartite Svalbard Global Seed Vault partnership between NordGen, the Norwegian Ministry of Food and Agriculture and the Crop Trust), are therefore launching a Regeneration and Safety Duplication Award Scheme to support collection holders in low- and middle-income countries ([DAC/ODA countries](#)) to regenerate relevant collections and duplicate them at the Seed Vault. All types of collection holders based in a DAC/ODA country are invited to apply, but we particularly encourage collection holders that are currently under-represented among depositors to the Seed Vault, such as universities, indigenous and community seed banks, to apply to the award scheme. Priority will be given to collections that are available under the terms and conditions of the [Standard Material Transfer Agreement \(SMTA\)](#) of [the Plant Treaty](#). Depositors will need to sign the Seed Vault [Depositor's Agreement](#) with the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

The Crop Trust will coordinate this program and manage the grants.

Conditions for support under the Regeneration and Safety Duplication Award Scheme

Grants will be awarded based on the following criteria and priorities.



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A. Project proposals

This competitive grant scheme will support collection holders in [DAC/ODA countries](#) to regenerate and/or back up plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (including crop wild relatives) of crops and forages that are included in [Annex 1 of the Treaty](#) or that are otherwise available through the Plant Treaty's Multilateral System. We aim to support the regeneration of at least 40,000 accessions.

Applicants can apply for grants either covering both regeneration and shipment, or shipment only.

Applicants applying for grants for regeneration and shipment are expected to submit project proposals with a duration of no more than 2 years. Please see the indicative timetable in Section H below for more details. Proposals should clearly indicate the plant genetic resources for food and agriculture that will be regenerated and shipped, the time frame of the work, the implementing partners and any collaborators. Applicants should list major risks that could threaten the success of the project and describe mitigation actions. A well-justified budget that is consistent with the workplan is also expected.

The Crop Trust has designed templates that will facilitate the development of project proposals and budgets. Please note that the activities, risks and budget categories provided in the templates ([Appendix 1a&b](#)) are only suggestions to facilitate the process of proposal development. All proposals must be submitted using these templates ([Appendix 1a&b](#)). Proposals can be submitted in English, French or Spanish. Successful applicants will be expected to sign a grant agreement with the Crop Trust, which will include the Terms and Conditions reproduced in [Appendix 2](#). They will also be expected to follow the process for safety duplicating seeds in the Seed Vault described below, i.e. complete all forms in [Appendices 3-6](#), once the regenerated seeds are ready for shipment.

The grant scheme is also open to collection holders requiring only shipment support, if the collections to be safety-duplicated in the Seed Vault already have sufficient seeds available. In this case, applicants must provide proof that the material is viable and do NOT need to complete the proposal templates. They are, however, expected to complete [Appendices 3-6](#), i.e. the Crop Trust Shipment Support Request Form ([Appendix 3](#)), the Seed Vault Seed Deposit Questionnaire ([Appendix 4](#)), the Seed Vault Data Template ([Appendix 5](#)) and the Seed



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Vault Shipment Form ([Appendix 6](#)). Applicants will be asked to also submit quotes from a reputable logistics company. The Crop Trust will contact successful applicants and organize shipment pick-up or refund pre-financed shipments based on an invoice.

All partners depositing in the Seed Vault for the first time must sign the [Svalbard Global Seed Vault Depositors' Agreement](#). This document is available in 4 languages ([Spanish](#), [French](#), [English](#) and [Arabic](#) – [Appendix 7](#)). More information on the process for depositing seeds is available on the [Seed Vault depositors webpage](#).

All project activities, including shipment of seeds to the Seed Vault and uploading of data on Genesys, must be completed no later than 31 January 2024.

B. Eligible applicants

All types of collection holders based in [DAC/ODA countries](#) are eligible to apply for a grant. Applicants must be located in countries that are [Contracting Parties](#) to the Treaty or else demonstrate that they are compliant with the terms of the Treaty, i.e. can make material regenerated and/or shipped to the Seed Vault available under the terms and conditions of the Standard Material Transfer Agreement (SMTA) of the Treaty. A [Questionnaire](#) has been designed to assess your eligibility for this award scheme. Please feel free to contact the helpdesk if you need help in completing this questionnaire.

C. Crops and type of germplasm

Materials deposited in the Seed Vault are maintained under permafrost conditions supported by refrigeration, thereby creating a storage temperature of -18°C. Hence, only crops and crop wild relatives that can be stored as seeds, i.e. can be dried to a low moisture content (3-7%) and will remain viable under low temperatures (orthodox seeds), can be safely stored in the Seed Vault.

D. Availability and duplication of the germplasm

The grant recipient must ensure that the accessions to be regenerated and/or shipped under this scheme *are* available under the terms and conditions of the Standard Material Transfer Agreement (SMTA) of the Treaty. The materials identified for duplication should not already be deposited in the Seed Vault and should have been safety-duplicated in a suitable genebank that meets international standards. These international standards are defined in



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paragraph 4.9, section 4.9.1 of the revised [FAO Genebanks Standards](#) for the conservation of orthodox seeds.

E. Budget requirements

Budgets must be consistent with the proposed activities. Budgets for regeneration and shipment grants should be submitted using the Crop Trust Budget Template ([Appendix 1b](#)). Funds provided by the grants scheme can be applied to a range of different budget items, including personnel, consultancies, equipment, local travel, field and/or laboratory supplies, services, shipments etc. We have proposed some budget categories to facilitate the process of building a budget. Please feel free to revise as necessary. Based on evidence, applicants are eligible to apply their institutional overhead rate on direct costs, up to a maximum of 15% of the total budget. All budgets should be prepared in USD. Applicant institutions should be able to provide evidence that they hold a bank account that can receive USD funds from a foreign donor.

F. Reporting

Projects will run for a maximum of 2 years. Annual technical reports showing progress in achieving outputs, and financial reports showing progress in expenditures, will be expected on 31 January 2023. Final technical reports giving a consolidated cumulative picture of all achievements made since the start of the project, including the execution of the workplan, and corresponding financial reports, will be expected by 31 January 2024. All project activities, including shipment of seeds to the Seed Vault and uploading of data on Genesys, must be completed no later than 31 December 2023.

An electronic copy of the passport data on the regenerated and safety duplicated germplasm should be submitted together with the annual and final reports. Additionally, this data must be made publicly available online ([Genesys](#) and the [Seed Vault Portal](#)).

G. Submission of applications

Proposals may be submitted in English, French or Spanish, using the Crop Trust official proposal template ([Appendix 1a&b](#)). Completed proposal templates can be shared electronically by uploading them to the following [link](#).



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H. Deadline for submission of applications:

All applications for the grant scheme must be received at the Crop Trust via the link specified above no later than **31 October 2021**. The indicative timetable below shows other important deadlines.

Indicative timetable

| Project stages | Deadline |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Launch of Call | 1 October 2021 |
| Submission of proposals | 31 October 2021 |
| Expert panel review and communication of results | December 2021 |
| Signature of grant agreements | January 2022 |
| Implementation period (Year 1) | 1 January 2022 – 31 December 2022 |
| Year 1 progress reports submitted | 31 January 2023 |
| Implementation period (Year 2) | 1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023 |
| Year 2 progress reports | 31 January 2024 |
| Approval of final reports and closure of projects | 31 June 2024 |

The deadlines on the indicative timetable are subject to changes at the discretion of the Crop Trust.

I. Review of applications

All applications will be reviewed by an expert panel established by the Crop Trust. The expert panel will include representatives from the Crop Trust and the Treaty Secretariat, the manager of the Seed Vault, and others. The selection panel may communicate with



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applicants in order to seek any necessary clarifications on the received proposals. The decision of the panel on the approved proposals shall be final.

J. Notification of grant award

Successful applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application, and the next steps, in writing, by the end of December 2021. All applicants that have not yet signed the Svalbard Global Seed Vault Depositors Agreement will be expected to sign it together with the grant agreement.

K. Helpdesk

The Crop Trust will establish a helpdesk to facilitate the preparation and submission of proposals. Applicants are invited to send emails to BOLD_helpdesk@croptrust.org should they require support in the preparation and submission of proposals or shipment requests. The helpdesk will operate in English but enquiries in French and Spanish could be accommodated if necessary.

List of appendices

- [Appendix 1a – BOLD Project Proposal WP4 Templates](#)
- [Appendix 1b – BOLD WP4 Project Budget Template](#)
- [Appendix 2 – Crop Trust Standard Agreement Terms and Conditions](#)
- [Appendix 3 – Crop Trust Shipment Request Form](#)
- [Appendix 4 – Seed Vault Seed Deposit Questionnaire](#)
- [Appendix 5 – Seed Vault Data Template](#)
- [Appendix 6 – Seed Vault Shipment Form](#)
- [Appendix 7a, b, c, & d – Seed Vault Deposit Agreement in Spanish, French, English and Arabic](#)

All appendices listed above are relevant for all applicants applying for grants for regeneration and shipment. Applicants applying for grants covering only shipment should only complete Appendices 3–7.