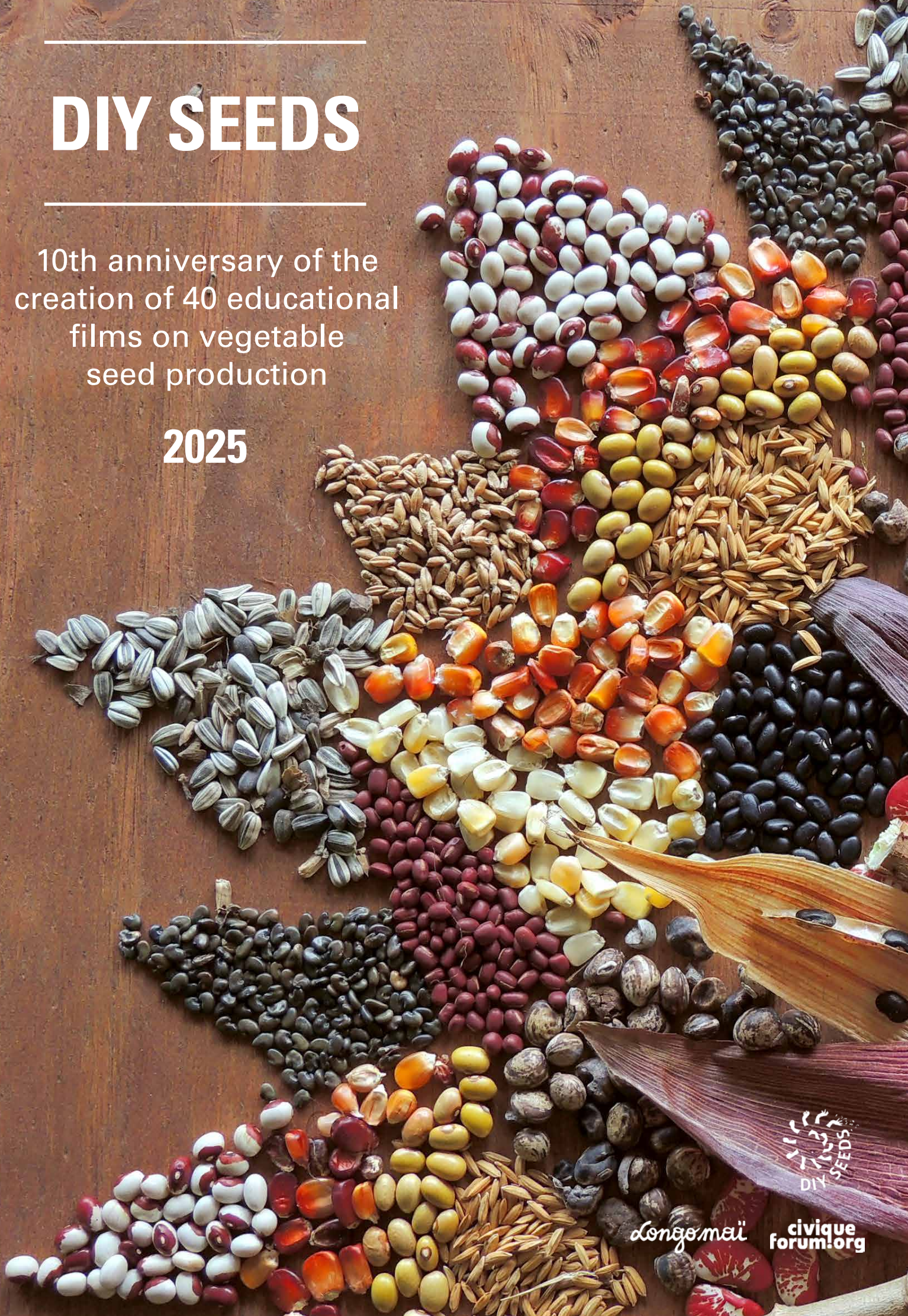


DIY SEEDS

10th anniversary of the
creation of 40 educational
films on vegetable
seed production

2025



Longemai

civique
forum.org

"NOTHING EXISTED THAT SHOWED EACH PLANT GO FROM SEED TO SEED"

Interview with the film producers, Sylvie Séguin, Martina Widmer and Olga Widmer



FILMING THE HARVEST OF LETTUCE SEED PLANTS AT SEED GROWERS WORKING WITH KOKOPELLI © DIY SEEDS

WHO TOOK PART IN THIS PROJECT?

Kokopelli in France and Arche de Noah in Austria offered to pre-purchase over 2,000 DVDs. Their support undeniably encouraged us to go ahead with this ambitious idea. Kokopelli also provided us with seeds and documentation. At least forty people from Longo maï, including visitors, helped us by drawing up funding applications, lending their voices, translating, composing and playing the music... We filmed on several farms: at Longo maï, in the French Jura, in Burgundy, and at the farms of Kokopelli producers. Some of them specifically planted collections of vegetables to show the diversity of shapes and colours.

It's a good thing we had this network because when we started out we had no idea that this work would take three years. Then the requests for translations began to arrive. To date, around ten associations have taken on the translating of the films.

HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO USE FILMS TO PROVIDE SUCH CLEAR EXPLANATIONS?

We absolutely wanted to show all of the required gestures in contact with the plants and seeds. Olga concentrated on the hands of those involved. It was this that enabled us to simplify the spoken explanations. And then we needed patience, a lot of patience. Olga spent hours next to a bean plant waiting for a bumblebee to come.

2012 Start of the DIY Seeds project with the writing of the scenario and the first shots

2015 Release of 'Seed to seed', a boxed set of 4 DVDs in French, German and English (5,000 sets, then 3,000 more a year later)

2017 Release of the DVD boxed set in Portuguese, Spanish and English

2018 All the films are made freely available on the official website, on Vimeo and YouTube

2025 DIY Seeds celebrates its 10th anniversary. The films are available in 11 and soon 13 languages. Redesign of the website to host all the translations.

HOW DID YOU HAVE THE IDEA TO MAKE THESE FILMS?

Twenty years ago we knew nothing about seed production. Like many people we thought that it was very technical. In 2003 we took part for the first time in a training course organised by Kokopelli. When participating in seed swaps we realised that most people did not have much more of a clue than us. It was vital to preserve this know-how. Books and manuals existed, but nothing that showed all of the necessary gestures. The training courses were always in the spring. Those taking part could never observe the cycle from seed to seed.

Meanwhile, we were involved with European networks campaigning against the laws that restrict free access to seeds. We, however, felt that we could contribute more by facilitating the transmission of this know-how. Then Martina took part in a very theoretical course in Turkey where none of the farmers stayed past day one. This convinced us that we should make films.

Art has a real power to show, describe and reveal beauty.

The most difficult challenge was to manage the timing because the plants were not always ready when we wanted to film them. In the case

of cabbages we tried out several techniques to ensure that they flower and produce seeds. When it was impossible to film Myleine Guiard Schmid proposed a drawing. She created all of the illustrations and also the DIY Seeds logo. Art has a real power to show, describe and reveal beauty.



37 **VEGETABLES**
explained from seed
to seed



8 **"ABC" VIDEOS**
to learn the basics
of seed production



13 **VERSIONS**
available: Arabic,
Dutch, English, French,
German, Hungarian,
Portuguese, Russian,
Spanish, Turkish,
Ukrainian. And soon
Singalese and Pulaar.



7 **HOURS OF
EDUCATIONAL FILMS**
Each video lasts for
around ten minutes.
If you count all of the
different versions that
makes over 65 hours
of film.

Producing one's own seeds is vital

Sowing the harvested seed: the gesture seems simple and has been repeated by people since the birth of agriculture. By separating production from reproduction, industrial capitalism has succeeded in standardising and patenting life forms.

According to the FAO (UN Food and Agriculture Organization), in the space of a century 75% of cultivated biodiversity has disappeared and yet as Ananda Guillet, director of Kokopelli, points out *"the autonomy of a population depends on its food autonomy."*

Today, most commercial seeds come from industrial selections (F1 hybrids, GMOs). They are sterile, only available on payment, patented and unsuitable for agroecological cultivation because they require inputs.

In contrast, heirloom seeds are royalty-free, reproducible, possess great genetic diversity and are selected naturally on farms and gardens to suit local conditions.

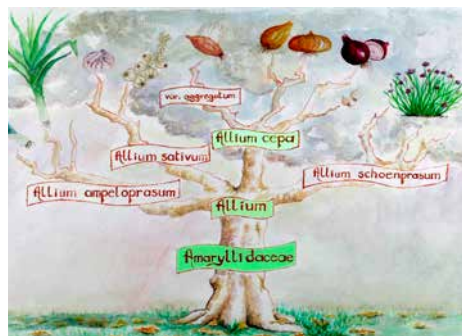
Producing our own seeds has become an act of resistance reinforcing our food independence. With a little knowledge of botany, some time and patience you will be able to admire flowers and insects in symbiosis. Then, at the end of the cycle, you will be able to harvest a whole profusion of seeds.

If you really prefer to buy seeds, choose networks of producers seeking to protect cultivated biodiversity.

For legislation on seeds and GMOs :
→ [Inf'OGM](#)

LET'S DISCOVER THE ONION

Each of the films on specific vegetables is in four sections. Let's take the example of the onion, the most viewed of our videos.



1 | BOTANICAL CLASSIFICATION AND DIVERSITY

The onion belongs to the *amaryllidaceae* family and the *allium cepa* species. Pictures show various shapes and colours.

2 | POLLINATION

Onion flowers are hermaphroditic and need insects to be fertilised. The film explains how to avoid cross-pollination between varieties.

3 | LIFE CYCLE

Onions are biennial plants. They form their bulbs in the first year, produce flowers and seeds in the second year. The video explains how to select and preserve seed-bearing plants.

4 | EXTRACTION, SORTING AND CONSERVATION

After explaining each stage, the film gives tips on how to increase the germination capacity of seeds.

These sequences can be viewed separately. Each video lasts around 10 minutes, can be downloaded and is accompanied by the written transcript. The commentary alternates between female and male voices, and is recorded at a speed suited to learning.

HOW THE FILMS ARE USED

EXPERIENCES FROM THREE COUNTRIES

IN FRANCE **Adopt a variety**

In Lyon amateur gardeners, trained with the DIY Seed films, are reviving the region's prestigious horticultural past.



JOHAN COTTREEL CLEANING FLAX. © CRBA

At the CRBA (Applied Botany Resource Centre) in Charly near Lyon amateur gardeners have been given the chance to adopt a variety since 2011. Several dozen small gardens in the region of Lyon and elsewhere in France have been designated for the cultivation of seed-bearing plants with the aim of enriching the CRBA's vegetable and cereal conservatory.

REGENERATED OLD VARIETIES

The seed conservatory houses 2,000 varieties and populations, regional or otherwise, adapted to climate change. Population varieties are made up of a set of individuals with a broad genetic base. "At the Vavilov Institute in Russia we found around a hundred varieties of vegetables, cereals and fruit that were grown over a century ago", explains Johan Cottreel who is responsible for the conservatories. These varieties are then regenerated in at least 9 m² of land by their volunteer adopters. They are asked to

record their observations, to take photos and at the end of the season to return the seeds they have produced. In return, the CRBA offers them four varieties of reproducible seeds.

Before starting out, adopting gardeners receive training. "Until last year this lasted two days. In the beginning I only showed the DIY Seeds drawings. The botanical trees speak volumes and help to explain possible cross-pollination between species", explains Johan who discovered the films at a plant fair. "I used the videos to show things that couldn't be seen during training courses, such as biennial varieties".

This year, the botanist has stopped giving training courses altogether. "The first adopters have all the basics they need with DIY Seeds. With vegetables that have not been filmed in a video I provide fact sheets and I'm there to answer any questions the gardeners may have."

➤ crba.fr

IN BRAZIL **"With DIY Seeds, it was possible in 10 minutes"**

The production of free seeds is a question of economic survival for the small Brazilian farmers who feed the country.

In Brazil agriculture has two faces: farmers growing large-scale cereal crops intended for livestock and exports, and the small family farmers. "The latter are the ones who ensure the country's food sovereignty", explains Manuel Delafoulhouze, the Franco-Brazilian agricultural engineer behind the distribution of DIY Seeds in South America. "The videos came at the right time, just as the seed centres were getting organised and the family farmers needed to free themselves from the industrial seed companies. They have always produced their own seeds, but in order to sell, particularly to restaurants and canteens, they had to grow varieties that were not part of their eating habits, such as carrots or lettuce". They therefore bought non-reproducible industrial seeds which

require many inputs. "Their economic model became too fragile".

WATCHING THE FILMS ON MOBILE PHONES

In 2015 Manuel discovered the films and contacted the producers, proposing to make a Portuguese version with the Biodiverso association. It came out in 2017, at the same time as the Spanish version.

Besides providing practical tips to producers the seed films have helped to increase recognition of their traditional know-how. "You can never observe all the stages of a plant. With DIY Seeds you can do it in 10 minutes". Manuel uses the films in the presentations he organises in schools and with farmers in the state of Paraná in the south of Brazil



© BIODIVERSO

where he works. Making the films available on Internet in 2018 greatly helped to make them more widely known. "The farmers rarely had DVD players."

Brazil is the country with the third highest number of views on Internet, after France and Germany.

IN LEBANON

“The films have been with us from the start”

In the Bekaa valley the Buzuruna Juzuruna farm school produces and distributes regional seeds that have disappeared due to industrial agriculture and war.



SORTING LENTILS, PEAS AND CHICKPEAS FOR DISTRIBUTION IN CANTEENS
SUPPORTING DISPLACED LEBANESE PEOPLE © CHARLOTTE JOUBERT/BUZURUNA JUZURUNA

Lebanon is amongst the 30 countries with the highest population density. Food autonomy has always been complicated, even more so since 2023 and the war between Israel and Hezbollah. Traditional seeds are virtually non-existent and its agriculture is dominated by industrial seeds and the use of inputs. This is not the case in neighbouring Syria which has managed to partially maintain a more traditional agriculture.

Unfortunately since 2011 the civil war in Syria has caused havoc in the country's agricultural sector. It was at that time that the 15th Garden collective began to seek solutions to the growing famine in the revolutionary Syrian cities under siege. It organised the collection of traditional seeds and created vegetable gardens wherever possible (on roofs, in refugee camps...).

“SEEDS AND CINEMA”

In 2015 the DIY Seed films came out as a DVD set. Zoé Beau and her brother Ferdinand used the mobile cinema association created by their parents to organise a tour of France called “Graines et Cinéma” with aim of supporting 15th

Garden. Ferdinand remembers : “it was a time when a lot of attention was paid to Syria in France, also due to the big wave of refugees and the photo of the small boy washed up on a beach which became famous worldwide”. He had discovered 15th Garden when he was in Lebanon as an agronomy student. At each event Zoé and Ferdinand showed a film about Syria and a DIY Seed video, organised a seed swap and explained the importance of traditional seeds in enabling the Syrian population to feed itself. “Many of the people who participated in these events were interested in gardening. We did not want the event to be too heavy. The DIY Seed videos were perfect for that.”

The next year Zoé and Ferdinand organised a second seed collection in France, this time appealing to professional and organic seed producers. They decided to go to Lebanon and start a seed farm and an agroecology school. This was the beginning of the Buzuruna Juzuruna project which they founded with Walid el-Youssef, a Syrian farmer who had found refuge in Lebanon. Today the

team is made up of twenty people from Syria, France and Lebanon.

In Arabic Buzuruna Juzuruna means “Our seeds are our roots”. The farm which is at Saadnayel in the fertile Bekaa valley offers a catalogue of 250 Palestinian, Syrian, Iraqi and Lebanese varieties adapted to the local growing conditions and culinary tastes. On its two hectares there are a nursery, a seed house and vegetable seed gardens. 20 hectares have been reserved for cereal and leguminous crops.

“The DIY Seed films were a founding act in our project and have been with us for 10 years”. Half of the films have been translated into Arabic thanks to 15th Garden. They are used during Buzuruna Juzuruna training courses for farmers, gardeners, children and environmental activists. They are also shown in refugee camps. “At the farm we often take another look at certain sequences when we need them. And above all, since 2020 we have relaunched our ‘Seeds and Cinema’ tours in Lebanon, during which we screen the videos”.

IN THE CHAOS OF WAR

Since 2023 the war in Lebanon has disrupted the farm's operations. “In autumn 2024, at the height of the Israeli bombing, we were forced to leave. It had become too dangerous. We distributed our produce which we couldn't sell anyway. And we started putting samples of our seeds in a safe place”, recalls Ferdinand.

At the end of 2024, the fall of President Bachar-el-Assad put an end to 50 years of dictatorship. Since then, the Syrians of ‘BuJu’ have been thinking about returning to their country to start agroecology projects. The idea is also on the minds of Syrians in Syria and in the refugee camps near Saadnayel. “We were invited to spend a month in the north of Syria to meet farmers, talk about free seeds and agroecology. We also went to the Damascus, Aleppo and Idlib regions. Syrians are keen to try new things, to innovate”.

Les Graines de la dignité, a film about and produced by Buzuruna Juzuruna, will be released soon. Subscribe to the [Instagram](#) account for more information.

SPREADING THE SEED MESSAGE

Thanks to the many translations, the DIY Seed films can be followed throughout south and north America, in parts of Europe and Africa, in Arabic-speaking countries, in Ukraine, Russia and in the Indian Ocean.



FATIMATA NIANG, TRANSLATOR FOR THE FINA TAWA PROGRAMME, IN THE RECORDING STUDIO © ENTREPRENEURS DU MONDE

A new translation is always initiated by a request arriving from somewhere in the world. The DIY Seeds team validates the project and often supports it financially. In the beginning, the sale of DVDs covered the cost of the translations. Now that the films are freely available on the internet, donations via the [DIY Seeds website](https://www.diyseeds.org) are used to finance the new versions (see opposite).

COMING SOON IN PULAAR

One of the latest versions underway is in Pulaar, a derivative of Peul spoken in Senegal. Khady Diagne of the NGO "Entrepreneurs du monde" is supporting the Fina Tawa programme which is responsible for the translation. Fina Tawa runs a WhatsApp group that connects over 1,000 agricultural producers in the region of Matam. These are mainly groups of women who grow vegetables near the river Senegal to feed their community and sell the surplus. According to Khady, "it was while searching the internet for educational videos on agro-ecology and seeds that we came across DIY Seeds". 11 videos of vegetables and the 8

ABC videos will soon be translated and made available on the phones of producers. "Each stage is filmed or drawn. That's exactly what we were looking for because most farmers are illiterate and uneducated". The aim is to help them become self-sufficient so that they no longer have to buy hybrid seeds every year. "In 2024 the river flooded a large part of the harvest. If we'd had reproducible seeds, we could have replanted as soon as the water receded. The farmers are trapped. They have got into the habit of buying hybrids since the arrival of industrial seed companies in the country. Knowledge is being lost and the sale of surpluses no longer generates enough income because of the cost of seeds and inputs".

Finalisation of the Pulaar version is imminent and will have required almost a year of work by two translators, an editor and Khady for the follow-up. "Inch Allah, we will make good use of these films to train as many producers as possible", Khady hopes.

✉ foundationfinatawa.org

Have you got a minute spare?

Like us, you are convinced that access to free and reproducible seeds is vital and eminently political.

For the past ten years, the DIY Seeds educational videos have been explaining step by step how to produce and select your own seeds. The more of us there are who have the necessary know-how the more we will be maintaining or recreating cultivated biodiversity and thereby preserving our food independence.

To achieve this, the DIY Seeds films must circulate as freely as heirloom seeds. All of the content is freely available on the Internet and continues to be translated so that more and more people can use them.

This free access has a cost: several months of work for each translation.



Make a donation to the European Civic Forum, the international solidarity network which has been funding the DIY Seeds adventure from the outset.

Even €1 is worth it. And if you can, opt for monthly support.

Thank you !

✉ www.diyseeds.org/en/support-us



**IF YOU WANT TO TRANSLATE THE FILMS AND TEXTS INTO ANOTHER LANGUAGE
CONTACT US BY PAR EMAIL ✉ DIYSEEDS@PROTON.ME**



THE TEAM

Behind DIY Seeds there are above all five people campaigning for free access to seeds. However, none of this would have been possible without the help of dozens of other gardeners active in networks for the protection of cultivated biodiversity.



MARTINA WIDMER AND SYLVIE SEGUIN

Martina Widmer from the European Civic Forum and Sylvie Seguin from the Longo maï cooperative have been working in vegetable gardening and seed production since the early 2000s.

Having taken part in a number of seed swaps and also in campaigns to denounce European seed legislation on cultivated biodiversity, they have participated in the creation of seed gardens in the Longo maï cooperatives.



OLGA WIDMER

Film director, camerawoman, editor, Olga Widmer has been involved in making documentaries since the early 2000s on a wide variety of subjects linked to social, rural, agricultural and migration subjects. In her films she has also produced many portraits.

✉ olgawidmer.com



MYLEINE GUIARD SCHMID

Myleine is a film director, artist, camera operator and teacher. She specialises in animated films. She explores a sensitive cinema in which documentary and fiction often overlap. Her film "Histoires d'entrebambes" has been selected and awarded prizes in over 20 international festivals.

✉ myleineguiardschmid.com



MAXIME LECOQ-GAILLARD

Maxime is a R&D IT engineer working on meaningful projects. When he's not developing free software, you can find him on his organic farm where he is developing a seed production workshop.

THE NETWORK

You can find all of our partners on our website



LONGO MAÏ

Founded in 1973, the Longo maï movement is a network of ten agricultural co-operatives in six European countries. They produce cereal, forage and vegetable seeds.

✉ www.prolongomai.ch

THE EUROPEAN CIVIC FORUM

The European Civic Forum is an international solidarity network. It is active, among other things, in defending reproducible seeds and peasant farming that respects social rights.

✉ www.forumcivique.org

Longo maï and the FCE are the organisations which, thanks to your donations, are funding the DIY Seeds adventure. Today the money collected is used to support new translations and to keep the DIY Seeds website alive.

FILMS AVAILABLE IN FREE ACCESS

➤ WWW.DIYSEEDS.ORG



Botanical classification



Extraction,
wet-processing, drying
and sorting of seeds



How to choose seeds?



How to select plants
for seed production



Technical insulation



Manual Pollination
of Cucurbitaceae



Pollination



What is a seed?



Artichoke



Aubergine
or eggplant



Bean



Beetroot



Broad bean



Broccoli



Brussels sprouts



Cabbage



Cardoon



Carrot



Cauliflower



Celery



Chard



Chicory



Corn



Corn salad



Cucumber



Fennel



Hot pepper



Kale



Kohlrabi



Leek



Lettuce



Melon



Onion



Parsnip



Pea



Pepper



Radish



Savoy cabbage



Spinach



Squash



Sunflower



Tomato



Turnip



Watermelon



Zucchini
or courgette

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10TH ANNIVERSARY OF DIY SEEDS

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