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EU seed regulation

Inspired by Vandana Shiva's visit Europe should take the lead in shifting the flawed logic of seed laws



International activist and scientist Dr [Vandana Shiva](#) is currently travelling the world on a campaign on seed freedom and has published, together with the '[International Commission on the future of Seed](#)' a small book called "[The Law of the Seed](#)".

- [Watch the recorded livestream of Vandana Shiva's public lecture The Law of the Seed](#)

Legislation related to seed - at global and European level - is currently being shaped by a handful of corporations, privileging uniformity, monocultures and privatisation without any basis in science or respect of natural cycles. The Law of the Seed aims to put at its centre farmers' and citizens' freedom to use seeds in a way that respects biodiversity, farmers' rights and democratic systems. Scientific and legal frameworks that govern seeds should not criminalise citizens and compromise the future of the planet. Vandana Shiva came to the EP at the invitation of the Greens/EFA, whom she considers political allies. The primary reason for her visit was the importance of Europe for the global seed market (at least 60% of global exports of seeds come from the EU) and therefore also the importance of the EU legislation on seed marketing and registration. Following the trend imposed by successive EU legislation since the 1960's and in parallel with the rise of industrial farming, the newly proposed [European legislation on the production](#)

[and marketing of seeds](#), published by the European Commission on 6 May constitutes a serious threat to long-term biodiversity and food production. The new Regulation as it currently stands favours only the multinational seed industry, which is heavily linked with the pesticide and artificial fertiliser industries, and will further push farmers into industrial agriculture systems. During her visit to the European Parliament, Vandana Shiva met with various stakeholders in order to spread the word and share information on the dangers posed by the newly proposed EU seed marketing regulation and the flawed logic underpinning the global legal framework related to seed.

In the morning she addressed the Development committee where, we regret to note, only one non-Green MEP attended. At this meeting, Vandana touched upon the situation of seeds in developing countries. She reminded of the fact that 72% of food provided in the world comes from small farms - most of them being located in developing countries - therefore the more we destroy small farms, the more we destroy the biodiversity and natural systems that are intertwined with these small(er) scale modes of food production. Because of the market leadership of a handful of agro-chemical companies and the grip they have on seed-related laws, small farmers have lost control over the management of traditional varieties and plant genetic diversity has been eroded. The use of costly fertilisers and pesticides together with standardised seeds has also had an impact on farmers' lives. Since 1991, in India, suicide among farmers has reached a worrying level. The country is [losing](#) over 2,000 farmers every single day and the overall number of farmers has dropped by 15 million. Seed is Life, it is not a raw material, and as Vandana explained, there are sustainable solutions to feed the world and which could help reverse the tragic figures on suicides. Local production must be streamlined to provide more options to small farmers to develop their own crop and agricultural systems at community level. In addition to this, ecological processes such as [Participatory Plant Breeding](#) (PPB), reconciling agro-biodiversity and farmers' needs, should be intensified. Vandana also met and discussed with Belgian and European NGOs. Young farmers and seed savers organisations challenged her with questions on the future of organic agriculture in Europe. In particular, they expressed their fears concerning the regulation's proposal to restrict the quantities of seeds benefiting from the exemption and set a [limit of maximum 10](#) employees for companies allowed to place such varieties on the market (Article 36, 1.a)). This rule would make it impossible for a majority of small and medium-sized businesses in the sector to sell their seeds. According to some seed savers organisations present, seeds should remain in the public domain and kept out of the official [Common Catalogue of Seeds](#). Furthermore, the [Common Catalogue of Seeds](#) should be a voluntary system and not a mandatory one. Vandana Shiva's afternoon in the European Parliament started with a specific meeting with the Greens/EFA, organised at her request. The exchanges focused above all on the different points in the proposed seed marketing regulation that the Greens/EFA wish to fight against so that Europe can take the initiative and start the shift in the logic underpinning the seed laws in favour of greater protection of biodiversity and small farmers' and breeders' rights. The Greens/EFA group believes that the EU seed marketing regulation should respect seed diversity. We must be allowed to keep planting, saving and exchanging seeds freely, as seed diversity depends on constant use of diverse seeds that are able to adapt to climatic changes, pests and diseases. This is the best way to ensure long-term food security. Furthermore, compulsory registration and certification of varieties is disrespectful of farmers' rights, benefiting only big seed and agro-chemical companies and eroding biodiversity. Farmers must be free to access and use their own varieties of seeds which are not designed to require chemicals to produce the maximum yield. Farmers should not be penalised for using seed that does not fit with corporate interests or specifications. EU seed law is currently shaped so as to concentrate power and seed ownership among a handful of big agrochemical corporations who benefit from an increasing number of monopolies and patents at the expense of any ecological or social responsibility. The Greens/EFA group believes that Europe should take the lead in transforming the flawed logic underpinning the seed regulation. Not only because at least 60% of global exports of seeds come from the EU, but also because "it is not only about a crisis of food and agriculture, it is also a [crisis of democracy](#)". The Greens/EFA group is the only political group at European level that has been taking this issue seriously and the only one that will lead the political resistance against

this new legislation. Together with NGOs supporting small breeders' and farmers' rights and the preservation of biodiversity, and in line with the arguments highlighted in Vandana Shiva's Law of the Seed, the Greens/EFA group will focus on preserving seed diversity in the new legislative proposal.



As stated at the [public lecture](#) with Vandana Shiva, which closed her inspiring visit to the European Parliament, as a political group, the Greens/EFA will work directly on the drafting of this law. The first exchange of views on the report to be voted in the European Parliament will take place on 30th September in the [Committee for Agriculture](#). Throughout the legislative process the Greens/EFA group will work to defend its red line in amendments to this report. This battle can be won, but it cannot be done without the support of civil society and citizens. For this reason, together with Vandana Shiva, the Greens/EFA will launch on 2nd October a referendum on Seed and Food Freedom in the framework of both the '[Navdanya campaign](#)' on seed freedom and the Greens/EFA 'European [Food Campaign](#)'. This referendum is a powerful tool to voice your opinion on the kind of food you want and therefore the kind of seed law you wish to see in place in Europe. Follow the development on the proposed seed regulation on the Greens/EFA [Food Campaign](#) website.

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Contact person



Nelly Baltide

Advisor on Development

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