Crop Trust
ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Opportunity in Focus

CROP TRUST

Copyright:
© Global Crop Diversity Trust

Contact:
Crop Trust
Platz der Vereinten Nationen 7
53113 Bonn, Germany
+49 (0) 228 85427 118
info@croptrust.org

Permission to Use:
This publication may be reproduced in whole or in part, and in any form, for educational or non-profit purposes without special permission from the copyright holder, provided that the source is acknowledged. No use of this publication may be made for resale or for any other commercial purpose without prior written permission from the Global Crop Diversity Trust (Crop Trust). Requests for permission for commercial use, stating the purpose and extent of the reproduction, should be addressed to: publications@croptrust.org.

Cover image: Amaranth at a Tricot trial at a farm in Kimashuku District, Kilimanjaro Region, Tanzania. Photo: Neal Palmer/Crop Trust

Crop Trust

Annual Report 2025

Opportunity in Focus

In This Report

Introduction

06 - Our Partners
07 - The Year in Numbers
08 - Leadership Message from the Chair of the Executive Board
09 - Leadership Message from the Executive Director

Highlights

11 - Key Moments of 2025
13 - A Year of Engagement
14 - Svalbard Global Seed Vault: 46,000+ Seed Samples Added
15 - Landmark Launches in Lima

Support to International Genebanks

16 - Support to International Genebanks

Support to National Genebanks

18 - BOLD Results for Crop Diversity Conservation to Use
22 - Power of Diversity: Charting the Path for Opportunity Crops
23 - Seeds for Resilience: Strengthening National Genebanks Across Africa
24 - Sweetpotato Project: Securing Diversity for Farmers and the Future

Building a Global Genebank System

26 - Genebank Quality Management Systems
27 - Digitizing Genebanks: Genesys and GGCE
28 - Genebank Academy
29 - Mainstreaming Crop Conservation Strategies in Plant Treaty Processes
30 - Responding to Risk: Emergency Reserve for Genebanks

Global Flagship Initiative

32 - Global Flagship Initiative: A Strong Start

Crop Trust in the Spotlight

35 - A Year of Communications
36 - A Year of Publications
37 - A Year of Stories

Administration

39 - Governance and Leadership
40 - Finance and Investments
41 - Building the Team Behind the Mission

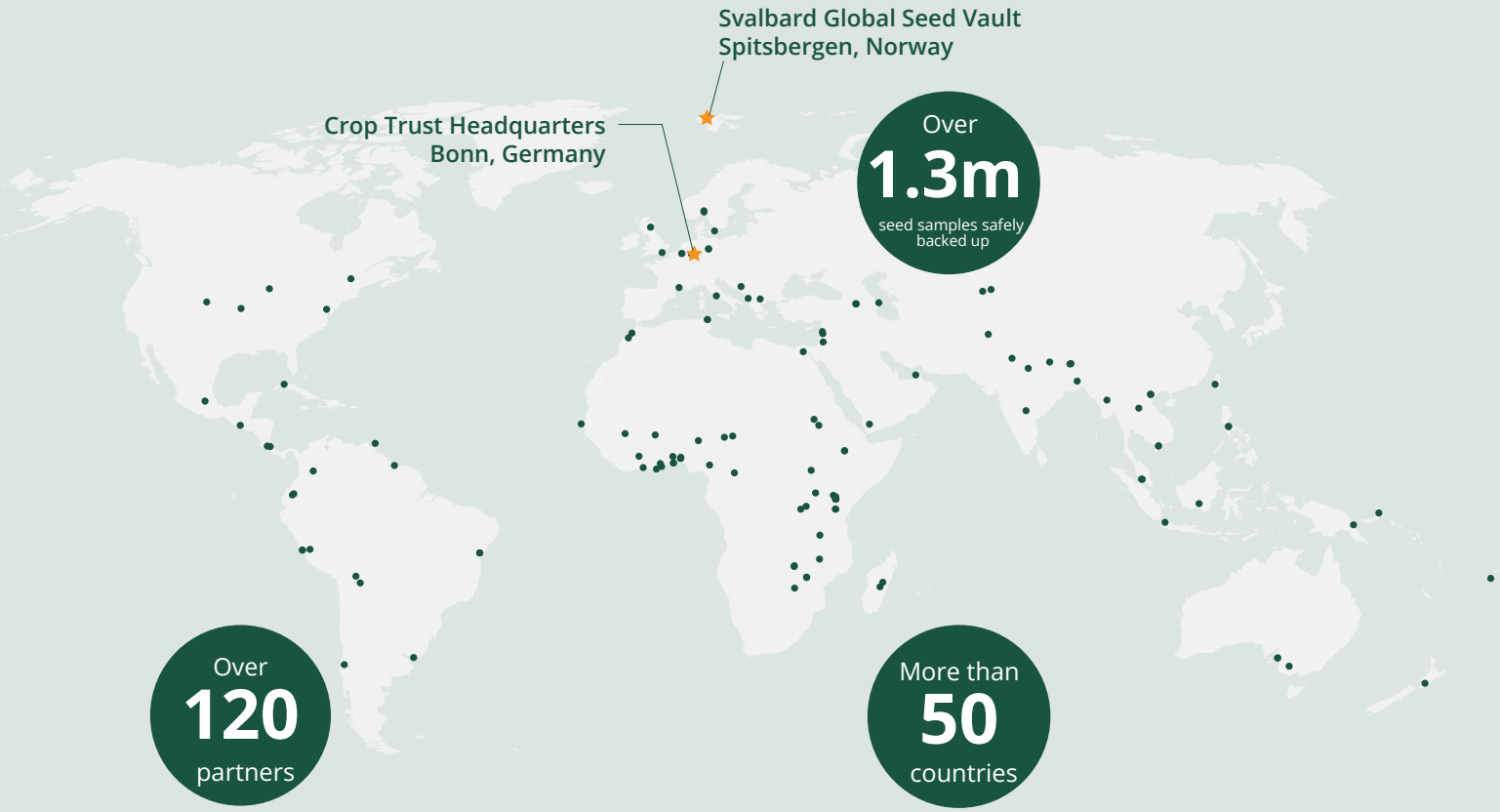
Appendix

42 - Acronyms and Abbreviations

Farmer Emeline Geremia Massawe, Kilimanjaro Region, Tanzania. Picture: Neil Palmer / Crop Trust

Introduction

Our Partners



The Crop Trust works with partners worldwide including national genebanks, international collections, international organizations and universities.

The Year in Numbers

Crop diversity conserved:

USD 17m

used to support international genebank operations, projects and other activities that strengthen crop diversity conservation and use, from alfalfa to zucchini.

Crop diversity used:

73,000+

seed samples and other genetic materials distributed in 2025 by international genebanks, including CGIAR genebanks.

Crop diversity safely backed up:

46,000+

seed samples added to the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. As of December 2025, the Seed Vault safeguards over 1.37m seed samples from 131 institutions worldwide.

Crop diversity documented:

4.46m

crop samples documented in the global platform Genesys, covering about 75% of the world's conserved crop diversity. In 2025 alone, genebanks added 160,000 sample records, improving global access to crop diversity.

Crop diversity highlighted:

2.9m

people were reached each month across Crop Trust social media, with 1,700+ media mentions and 110 stories, press releases, videos and other content.

Crop diversity financially secured:

USD 398m

market value of the Endowment Fund at the end of 2025, with USD 7.2m in project contributions received and new tech sector engagement.

Leadership Message from the Chair of the Executive Board, Catherine Bertini

At the Crop Trust, our mission is clear. We help strengthen the global system of genebanks to empower scientists, plant breeders and farmers to meet accelerating challenges and thus safeguard the future of agriculture. The year 2025 underscored that in uncertain times, we must work together all the harder on this vital task.

As ecosystems degrade, conflicts rage and the climate changes, genebanks are more than just repositories – they are engines of opportunity. The crop diversity they hold underpins the development of resilient varieties that can withstand high heat, persistent drought, and new pests and diseases. It underpins the diversification of agricultural landscapes and the food system as a whole.

By supporting genebanks worldwide, the Crop Trust ensures that breeders, researchers and farmers have access to the crop diversity needed to adapt agriculture to changing conditions.

Our Endowment Fund remains the cornerstone of this effort, providing stable, long-term support for essential genebank operations worldwide. This sustainable financing model ensures that unique and irreplaceable collections of crop diversity remain safe, accessible and available to all. In a challenging funding environment, we remain deeply grateful for the continued commitment of our donors.

In 2025, the Crop Trust turned commitment into action. We launched the Power of Diversity Funding Facility with initial funding from Germany and Ireland, to shape the conservation and use of opportunity crops. We continued to support safety duplication in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault through the Norway-funded BOLD project. And we advanced cooperation in areas that are crucial for the future – digitization of genebanks, emergency support to imperilled collections and tapping the conservation potential of botanical gardens.

With our partners, we convened experts, policymakers and genebank leaders throughout the year to plan the future together. Crop Diversity Day in Lima brought many of these voices together alongside discussions under the International Plant Treaty, highlighting progress and launching new initiatives.

This reflects the dedication and professionalism of our partners and the strength of collaboration across the global genebank community. We congratulate all our partner genebanks, and thank the many institutions and individuals working to connect an integrated global system for conserving and using crop diversity.

Our determination to strengthen that system remains unchanged. By opening pathways for innovation, resilience and cooperation, we reinforce food security, advance agricultural research and help bring about a more secure and sustainable future.

To guide our work, the Executive Board commissioned an independent external review of Crop Trust governance, leadership, impact and organisational effectiveness. It examined progress over the past decade and priorities for the next five years, with positive conclusions. Recommendations from the review will feed into our strategy over the next few years.

To all who support our mission – through funding, advocacy, research or partnership – we extend our sincere thanks. Together, we can secure a resilient food system for all, today and for generations to come.

Catherine Bertini
Chair of the Executive Board
Crop Trust

Leadership Message from the Executive Director, Stefan Schmitz

In 2025, the Crop Trust put opportunity into focus. Much of our work this year supported opportunity crops – local, traditional crops that have enormous potential to improve production and nutrition while opening the door to better lives and livelihoods for farmers, particularly women. Yet, they are overlooked by research and policy. Their potential depends on the strength of the global genebank system that conserves, improves and makes them available – turning stored diversity into real-world opportunity.

We saw how this can work. From our Food Forever Experience alongside the World Economic Forum in Davos in January, to Crop Diversity Day in Lima in November, we heard how opportunity crops can diversify diets and enhance incomes. We saw how new crop varieties developed by plant breeders open opportunities for farmers facing drought, heat, pests and disease. And we heard how well-supported genebanks provide the foundation for innovation in agriculture – enabling adaptation and progress.

We advanced opportunities through our continued support for international genebanks, and celebrated the AfricaRice genebank reaching a new stage in our long-term partnership. The International Potato Center opened its new Cryo Vault, expanding global capacity to safeguard crops that cannot fully benefit from the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, such as potato and sweetpotato. We rolled out digital tools for genebanks to manage and share their collections and launched new knowledge resources to support the global crop diversity conservation community.

This year, we continued to strengthen the global system of national genebanks that opens these opportunities. We launched the Power of Diversity Funding Facility and engaged farmers to conserve valuable opportunity crops in seven countries. National genebanks made major deposits to Svalbard, backed by the BOLD project. Our Seeds for Resilience partners broke ground on the new facilities they need to safely store seeds.

We also invested in people and partnerships – perhaps the greatest source of opportunity. Through the Genebank Academy, we opened new pathways for aspiring plant scientists. With partners such as the World Vegetable Center, we launched the Vegetables4Life initiative to elevate the importance of vegetable diversity. And through collaborations with botanical gardens, we strengthened the networks that sustain crop diversity worldwide.

Crop diversity is more than just something to protect. It needs to be used. When conserved and shared effectively, it opens opportunities for innovation, resilience and improved lives and livelihoods.

This Annual Report highlights the progress made in 2025 and the vital contribution of the donors and partners who make this work possible. In a time of growing challenges for global food systems, conserving crop diversity is one of the most practical and powerful investments we can make for the future.

I invite you to join us in this mission. By supporting the Crop Trust and the global genebank system, together, we can ensure that the diversity of our crops continues to create possibilities for generations to come.

Stefan Schmitz
Executive Director
Crop Trust

Jute mallow leaves being prepared for use in the popular Beninese dish, crincrin or Ninnouwi. Photo: Neil Palmer / Crop Trust.

Highlights

Key Moments of 2025

In 2025, Crop Trust advocacy and activities advanced efforts on the three strategic goals outlined in the *2030 Strategic Plan: Food Forever*. The Strategic Plan was put in place in 2023 to guide the action towards our mission to conserve crop diversity for the long term and ensure it can be used to develop more sustainable, resilient and healthy agrifood systems.

Goal 1: Long-term Support for the Maintenance of Essential Genebank Operations

Focus on permanently covering the costs of essential operations of international genebanks under Article 15 of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (International Plant Treaty) by 2030.

- Celebrated the **AfricaRice** genebank reaching a new stage of long-term support and the **International Potato Center** opening a new Cryo Vault.
- Partnered with the International Plant Treaty Secretariat to revitalize the coffee collection at the **Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center**.
- Conducted external reviews of genebanks at the **International Livestock Research Institute** and the **International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center**.
- Launched a costing study to determine support needs for **World Vegetable Center** genebanks.
- Launched a **Genebank Academy** to train genebank staff on digital tools for data management and best practices for operations.
- Provided **USD 17 million in support for genebanks, including long-term and time-bound support** for important collections of crop diversity.

Goal 2: Time-bound Support for the Upgrading, Collecting and Use of Crop Diversity

Project support for upgrading genebank facilities, conserving threatened crop diversity in genebanks and enhancing the availability of crop diversity.

- **BOLD** delivered major advances for the global genebank system in 2025, celebrating releases of new crop varieties and forty-two partners depositing over 33,000 seed samples in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. The project helped launch the Genebank Academy, expanded the Opportunity Crops Knowledge Base and introduced an interactive experience on conservation and plant breeding. BOLD also strengthened genebank collaboration, supported emergency actions to protect at-risk collections, and completed seed systems assessments to improve farmer access to crop diversity.

- The **Power of Diversity Funding Facility** engaged more than 250 stakeholders across seven countries to identify priority opportunity crops rooted in local diets and resilience. With crops selected, the project moved into implementation, advancing gap analyses, genebank reviews and plans to strengthen seed systems and value chains.
- **Seeds for Resilience** was extended for two years, with focus shifting to upgrades of essential infrastructure and genebank renovations. Project activities strengthened national genebank data management and advocacy.
- The new **Securing Our Seeds** project launched with support by the Google AI Collaborative: Food Security, enabling the Crop Trust to continue work at the forefront of digital innovation and conservation in genebanks.

Top: Stefan Schmitz, Executive Director of the Crop Trust, at the 2025 Munich Security Conference. Bottom: Opening ceremony at the Crop Diversity Day 2025.

Goal 3: Increasing Global Awareness of the Importance of Crop Diversity

Efforts to deepen and broaden institutional partnerships and strategic communications and outreach that elevate crop diversity on the global development agenda.

- **Convened global stakeholders** around innovation and investment in the genebank system, including Crop Diversity Day 2025 and high-profile outreach alongside GB-11.
- **Elevated crop diversity** in global policy discussions, engaging climate, security and development communities at the UN Bonn Climate Meetings, Munich Security Conference, and cross-sector dialogues.
- **Expanded strategic partnerships**, including the Global Conservation Consortium for Food Plants and the Google AI Collaborative: Food Security, while strengthening engagement with governments, donors and private-sector stakeholders.
- **Amplified the value of multilateral cooperation and opportunity crops** through coordinated storytelling, publishing 110 stories and multimedia features while reaching nearly three million people each month via social media.
- **Strengthened engagement with partners and stakeholders** through targeted campaigns, the Dish newsletter and a Devex partnership during GB-11 that expanded outreach to the global development audience.

A Year of Engagement

In 2025, the Crop Trust strengthened its global presence, positioning crop diversity at the center of major conversations shaping the future of food systems. From AI to climate adaptation and global security, the organization worked to ensure that crop diversity is recognized as a solution.

- The Crop Trust deepened engagement with climate practitioners and policymakers, hosting a high-level side event at the UN Bonn Climate Meetings and contributing to global discussions on crop diversity and climate-resilient food systems.
- Crop diversity entered the security dialogue. Through collaboration with the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the Crop Trust convened cross-sector dialogues, contributed to discussions at the Munich Security Conference and supported a new report framing agrobiodiversity as a strategic asset.
- New alliances, including the Global Conservation Consortium for Food Plants and the Google AI Collaborative: Food Security, expanded partnerships in crucial areas of science, policy and public engagement.

Across regions, the Crop Trust expanded its donor and partner base. Engagements with governments and stakeholders opened new pathways for funding and collaboration. We strengthened our connection with the private sector, with a Food Forever Experience alongside the World Economic Forum in Davos and a talk at the International Seed Federation World Seed Congress, showing interest from non-traditional partners.

New partnerships extended beyond policy circles. At New York Climate Week, the Crop Trust and the New York Botanical Garden and Botanic Gardens Conservation International launched the Global Conservation Consortium for Food Plants, linking genebanks and botanical gardens while engaging the public more directly. The inaugural member meeting of Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security in Bonn advanced a shared agenda for scaling innovation in dryland regions.

Later in the year, Crop Diversity Day 2025 in Lima brought together global stakeholders ahead of the 11th Session of the Governing Body (GB-11) of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Like much of our engagement throughout the year, the Day focused on a simple truth – innovation, partnership and investment are essential to building a strong global genebank system.

Top: Simon Heck (CIP) and Josette Lewis (Crop Trust) open the Pachamanca, a unique cultural experience and lunch at Crop Diversity Day 2025 in Lima, Peru. Bottom: Food Forever Experience at The World Economic Forum's 2025 meeting in Davos.

Svalbard Global Seed Vault: 46,000+ Seed Samples Added

In 2025, deposits into the Svalbard Global Seed Vault showcased the power of collaboration in securing the future of food. Eight new depositors joined longtime contributors in adding more than 46,000 seed samples to the Vault's icy shelves. As of the end of the year, 131 depositors had deposited 1.37 million seed samples at the Svalbard Global Seed Vault.

Collaboration makes this possible. The year marked the final deposits by partners supported by the Crop Trust's BOLD project. Over five years, the Crop Trust collaborated with 42 partner institutions to back up their collections in Svalbard for long-term safekeeping. This cooperation and support brought crucial agricultural and cultural heritage to Svalbard from Bolivia, Brazil, Indonesia, Suriname, Zimbabwe and beyond.

Following the February deposit ceremony, the Crop Trust hosted the Svalbard International Dialogue to deepen collaboration. The goal? Strengthen the global system for conservation and use of crop diversity. The Dialogue opened space for genebank leaders to share perspectives and hear from visionaries, including Dr Cary Fowler and Dr Geoffrey Hawtin OBE – both 2024 World Food Prize Laureates.

The Dialogue explored strategies to build a more resilient global food system on a foundation of crop diversity. Participants highlighted the urgent need to raise awareness and communication around crop diversity. They also explored outreach, while emphasizing the vital role of national genebanks in safeguarding their countries' agricultural diversity. "We should continue to look to the long term because the Seed Vault was built for the long haul," said Dr Kent Nnadozie, Secretary of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, in a call to action urging collective efforts to strengthen global conservation.

The June deposit featured a longstanding collaboration as Seed Savers Exchange marked its 50th anniversary with new deposits of 16 crop varieties. Seed Savers has deposited every year since the Vault opened, conserving valuable seeds for America's farmers. In total in June, 14 genebanks deposited over 11,200 seed samples, including many of cultural significance. For example, Can Tho University in Vietnam added 1,000 rice samples cultivated in the Mekong Delta.

In October, 20 genebanks added more than 21,000 seed samples. The largest deposit came from the Philippine Rice Research Institute, a first-time depositor. The World Vegetable Center genebank in Tanzania also made the largest-ever deposit of traditional African vegetable seeds. These large and first-time deposits represent a lot of effort by many people. The Crop Trust must recognize the collaboration by all who help make the Svalbard Global Seed Vault an effective back-up of the world's crop diversity.

The Svalbard Global Seed Vault operates as a partnership of the Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Nordic Genetic Resource Center (NordGen) and the Crop Trust. It can hold more than four million seed samples.

The Svalbard Global Seed Vault. Photo: Michael Major / Crop Trust

Landmark Launches in Lima

We organized the Crop Diversity Day 2025 in Lima in advance of GB-11 with focus on innovation and partnerships, kicking off a week of engagement for the Crop Trust.

Co-hosted by the International Plant Treaty Secretariat and the International Potato Centre (CIP), the Day gathered experts and decision makers to explore how action on crop diversity can shape a more resilient, nutritious and equitable future. This event featured perspectives from thought leaders and notable highlights:

- First deposit to the CIP Cryo Vault – This new cryopreservation facility, the first of its kind in Latin America, officially received its first deposit, potatoes and groundnut from Ecuador's Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Agropecuarias (INIAP).
- Launch of Vegetables4Life – This global initiative led by the World Vegetable Center brought opportunity crops into the spotlight and reflects growing momentum to rescue, conserve and promote the use of vegetable biodiversity.
- Launch of the Genebank Academy – Hosted online by the Crop Trust, this new platform provides access to high-quality online training for genebank professionals, students and researchers worldwide.

Following Crop Diversity Day 2025, the Crop Trust organized two notable events. A coordination meeting was held to engage genebanks included under Article 15 of the Treaty. Then, the Global Conservation Consortium for Food Plants launched in Lima. This new initiative connects botanical gardens, genebanks and other Treaty stakeholders to protect edible biodiversity for future generations. A Global Steering Committee – including the Crop Trust, Botanic Gardens Conservation International, the International Plant Treaty and leading gardens and genebanks – sets the direction of the initiative, led by the New York Botanical Garden for the first five years.

During the GB-11 week in the Peruvian capital, the Crop Trust played several key roles. The Crop Trust was represented in the opening session by Chair of the Executive Board Catherine Bertini, reported to Treaty Contracting Parties, and organized side events on the Svalbard Global Seed Vault and the Global Crop Conservation Strategies.

At the opening of GB-11, Catherine Bertini called for collective action, saying, "Our food tomorrow depends on the diversity we safeguard today. Let us act with unity, urgency and vision to protect the foundations of agriculture".

To engage attendees at GB-11, the Crop Trust co-hosted The Journey of a Seed interactive exhibition. This immersive experience traced the path of crop diversity – from nature and farmers' fields to genebanks for conservation and research, to the Svalbard Global Seed Vault or the CIP Cryo Vault for safety duplication, and back to fields as improved crop varieties.

Stefan Schmitz, Executive Director of the Crop Trust, outlining funding for the Vegetables4Life Initiative through the Crop Trust's Power of Diversity Funding Facility at Crop Diversity Day 2025.

Farmer in Safi region examining a durum wheat plot planted on his farm. Photo: Ahmed Ismaili / Crop Trust

Support to International Genebanks

Support to International Genebanks

In 2025, the Crop Trust strengthened crop diversity conservation and use worldwide by supporting individual genebanks and promoting collaboration among institutions that manage important collections.

We conducted external reviews of the genebanks at the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) in Ethiopia and the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) in Mexico. The Crop Trust also undertook a costing study to determine the financial resources needed to support World Vegetable Center (WorldVeg) genebanks in Tanzania and Taiwan.

In collaboration with WorldVeg, the Crop Trust launched Vegetables4Life. The initiative aims to rescue and conserve vegetable biodiversity and tap into its potential for nutritious diets, improved livelihoods and climate resilience. The launch took place at *Crop Diversity Day 2025* in November in Lima, Peru, ahead of GB-11.

This year, the Crop Trust furthered its collaboration with the Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF). Together, we developed a long-term strategy for the conservation and use of tropical food and agroforestry trees through conservation production orchards, a key component of robust *ex situ* conservation strategies.

We partnered with the International Plant Treaty Secretariat to revitalize the Article 15 coffee collection at the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) in Costa Rica. With funding from the German development agency GIZ through the Joint Funding Facility, 2,400 plants – representing 400 samples – were transplanted in CATIE's new field site in 2025. Emergency funds enabled CATIE to move an additional 200 accessions. We also held a workshop on coffee in Abidjan, supported by the Federal Government of Germany.

Compared to rice or maize, coffee and cacao may seem like luxuries. But for many people, it's their entire livelihood. Photo: Marlon del Aguila Guerrero / CIFOR

Jackfruit tree, Kawanda, Uganda. Photo: Natalia Rodriguez / Crop Trust.

Support to National Genebanks

BOLD Results for Crop Diversity

In 2025, the Biodiversity for Opportunities, Livelihoods and Development (BOLD) project achieved several key milestones that will improve crop diversity conservation and use in partner countries, with positive outcomes for the global genebank system.

- Forty-two genebank partners across the globe regenerated more than 44,000 seed samples, with over 33,000 samples backed up in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault.
- Expedited seed multiplication of durum wheat in Morocco and released three new crop varieties – alfalfa in Kazakhstan, durum wheat in Nigeria, and potato in Peru.
- Launched the *Conserving & Using Crop Diversity* interactive experience to educate about crop diversity conservation and use, with a plant breeding game and quiz.
- Built the Opportunity Crops Knowledge Base into a useful tool for scientists, researchers and policy-makers interested in tapping the potential of these crops.
- Launched a Genebank Academy with courses that train genebank staff on digital tools for data management and best practices for operations.
- Connected genebanks to each other and worked with national genebanks on ways to communicate activities and achievements, bringing the voice of genebanks to important conversations.
- Supported Emergency Reserve activity in Ecuador, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Ukraine to protect at-risk collections and facilities.
- Completed seed systems assessments in four countries to inform a pilot project that will increase farmers' access to crop diversity in genebanks.

After the harvest of the BOLD plots in the region of Tiznit, a farmer shows the yield advantage of Jawahir against a check variety. Photo: Ahmed Ismaili / Crop Trust

Capacity and Resource Development

In 2025, capacity and resource development for national genebanks remained in focus. Forty-six in-person and virtual training events were held on quality management systems (QMS), data management and basic genebank operations, engaging partner genebanks across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. This included:

- A QMS workshop hosted by the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT.
- Multicountry policy-related capacity-building workshops for Balkan, Central Asia, and Caucasus regions organized with the International Plant Treaty.
- A joint workshop in Bangkok with the UNFCCC Regional Collaboration Centre Asia Pacific and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies examining integration of crop diversity conservation and use into National Adaptation Plans and Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement.

The Genebank Academy was launched featuring online courses for the genebank community. These courses cover operational best practices and data management, enabling all genebanks to access knowledge on crop diversity conservation and use through a centralized platform.

Making New Diversity Available

BOLD aims to broaden the genetic base of seven key food and forage crops – alfalfa, barley, durum wheat, finger millet, grasspea, potato and rice.

As part of this effort, the project supported the release of three new crop varieties in 2025:

- Tozimdi, a newly developed drought- and heat-tolerant variety of alfalfa, was released in Kazakhstan to allow cultivation of alfalfa as a rain-fed crop.
- A new potato variety called CIP-Asiryq was developed by BOLD partners to grow late blight-resistant potatoes adapted to the Andean highlands.
- A new durum wheat variety was released in Nigeria.

In Morocco, seed multiplication of the new Jawahir durum wheat variety was fast-tracked by the government after it showed yield gains that can exceed 40 percent on farms under severe drought conditions.

Work continued on the other crops as well. High-performing lines of finger millet were advanced in Tanzania and Uganda. Grasspea breeding lines with low levels of the toxin ODAP were identified for testing in Bangladesh, India and Nepal. For rice, two Nông dân lines in Vietnam advanced toward official varietal release.

This year, the GridScore NEXT plant phenotyping application was developed to improve field trial data collection in plant genetics, pre-breeding and crop improvement research.

Genebanks and Seed Systems

In 2025, the Genebank and Seed Systems Toolkit and country-level assessments provided the foundation to transition from seed system research to implementation. Assessment findings were validated through multi-stakeholder consultations and translated into actionable interventions to enhance farmers' access to crop diversity held in their country's genebank. Building on this evidence, pilot project proposals were developed in four countries. These outline structured approaches to strengthen seed systems, increase farmers' access to crop diversity and link genebanks more effectively with farmers and other downstream actors.

Detailed action research plans were developed to systematically assess the effectiveness and impact of these interventions, generating evidence on what works.

Major achievements of the year included:

- Published the Spanish version of the Ecuador seed system assessment report.
- Launched the first pilot project in Ecuador, including training and tricot trials on maize, beans, and potatoes at a highland site.
- Developed action research frameworks to assess the performance and impact of pilot interventions.

As BOLD seed systems work shifts to action and implementation, the project has established the partnerships, capacities and evidence base needed to connect genebanks with farmers and support more resilient and effective seed systems.

Top: Farmer checking alfalfa collection in Kazakhstan. Bottom: BOLDER partners meet in Bonn. Photo: Luis Salazar / Crop Trust

Safety Duplication at the Svalbard Global Seed Vault

The year 2025 marked the end of a four-year effort to support developing country regeneration and multi-level safety duplication of priority crop samples, with a goal to secure this diversity in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. The effort was a resounding success.

By the end of 2025, partners had regenerated 44,623 samples, exceeding the target of 40,000. A total of 33,497 were secured through first-level safety duplication at national, regional or international genebanks, with 34,881 accessions deposited in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault for second-level safety duplication.

As part of this effort partner genebanks received equipment and infrastructure improvements, including freezers and moisture meters. Training supported seed regeneration, processing, viability testing and data management. Seed fairs and field days were held to strengthen links between farmers, researchers and genebanks. The project leaves a solid legacy – collections duplicated and backed up in the arctic Seed Vault, improved infrastructure and technical capacity, and a stronger genebank network.

Communications, Engagement and Outreach

In 2025, the Crop Trust highlighted the diverse work of our BOLD project team and partners around the world. A dedicated BOLD project liaison in the Crop Trust communications team led the effort to raise visibility of project activity and success stories:

- Twenty-six BOLD stories were published on the Crop Trust website and amplified on social media, including on partner channels.
- Four press releases were pushed to media outlets, one on the BOLD supported deposit into the Svalbard Global Seed Vault and three on new varieties.
- *Conserving & Using Crop Diversity* launched, encouraging users to explore how crops we eat are conserved, studied and used to build a more secure food future.
- Opportunity crops were the focus of the Crop Chronicles and took center stage at the *Opportunity Crops: a BOLDER Approach to Food Security* event in Bonn.
- A Communications Community of Practice was established with 10 national genebanks developing communications action plans and strategic outreach materials to highlight their work online and in their country's media.

Crop Trust communications also supported technical development of the Opportunity Crops Knowledge Base, ensuring the platform is optimized to document, organize and share knowledge.

BOLDER (Building Opportunities for Lesser-known Diversity in Edible Resources)

A major focus of the Building Opportunities for Lesser-known Diversity in Edible Resources (BOLDER) initiative of the BOLD project in 2025 was the expansion of the Opportunity Crops Knowledge Base. A technical team met regularly to refine its structure and explore links with other platforms, including Genesys. The BOLDER team worked to strengthen the research foundation of the knowledge base, developing crop pages, partner profiles and informative briefs. A set of 477 academic and technical references related to neglected and underutilized species was compiled for the platform.

In addition to the Knowledge Base, the BOLDER initiative worked on several key areas for opportunity crops:

- A Food Systems Specialist and photojournalist were brought on board to document crop diversity in food systems, focusing on collecting research insights and opportunity crop value chains in Ghana, Benin, Tanzania and Uganda. Opportunity crop knowledge was shared through a GROW webinar that brought together experts working on crop diversity conservation and use.
- In September, BOLDER partners met in Bonn to review progress on the knowledge base and coordinate upcoming activities.

Biodiversity for Opportunities, Livelihoods and Development (BOLD) is a 10-year project funded by the Government of Norway. It builds on the successes of the Crop Wild Relatives Project.

Power of Diversity: Charting the Path for Opportunity Crops

- In 2025, more than 250 stakeholders across seven countries identified priority opportunity crops through national consultations.
- Countries selected crops rooted in local diets and resilience, from fonio in Nigeria to amaranth in Kenya and peach palm in Colombia.
- The Funding Facility moved into implementation, advancing gap analyses, genebank reviews and plans to strengthen seed systems and value chains.

Opportunity crops – often nutritious, climate-resilient and deeply rooted in local traditions – have long been overlooked by research and investment. In 2025, the Power of Diversity Funding Facility helped change that trajectory.

The Power of Diversity Funding Facility moved from launch to implementation, marking a critical first year in elevating opportunity crops within national and global food systems.

Across seven countries, more than 250 farmers, scientists and policymakers came together through national consultations to identify which opportunity crops should be prioritized for investment, research and scaling. These dialogues marked the first major milestone of the Funding Facility, establishing a shared direction grounded in local knowledge and national priorities.

In Colombia, stakeholders highlighted peach palm and chayote for their strong nutritional value and market potential. In Nigeria, fonio and pigeon pea were selected for their resilience and importance in local diets. Zambia prioritized cowpea and sorghum, while Kenya focused on amaranth and finger millet – crops valued for versatility and cultural significance.

Participants during a stakeholder consultation in Colombia to select opportunity crops. Photo: Nico Wilms-Posen/Crop Trust

In India, consultations led by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation chose horse gram and minor yams. Through previous consultations under the BOLDER project, Tanzania and Uganda selected a broader set of crops: Bambara groundnut and sweetpotato leaves in Tanzania and pumpkin and amaranth in Uganda.

Following these decisions, the partners moved into gap analysis – a methodology that helps determine which species, regions or ecosystems are underrepresented in genebank collections. In collaboration with the BOLD project, participants from Colombia, Ecuador, Kenya, Morocco, Pakistan and Zambia dove deep into the topic through a two-week-long training at the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT's hub in Colombia.

AGROSAVIA, the only Latin America-based partner, underwent a genebank review in late 2025, with positive results. "Accepting an external review was an act of trust and openness, as well as an act of institutional maturity: a willingness to open the door to learning, improving and moving towards world-class standards," shared AGROSAVIA's Agrobiodiversity Department Lead, Dr Carolina González. Value chain analyses have been initiated and data collection commenced in Colombia, Zambia, Kenya and Nigeria.

The next phase of the Funding Facility will focus on securing the diversity of these crops in genebanks, characterizing and evaluating the collections and strengthening value chains through a competitive grant scheme to ensure that these crops are not only conserved, but also cultivated, marketed and consumed.

At the same time, the Funding Facility is working to elevate opportunity crops within national policy frameworks, helping governments recognize their role in building more resilient, nutritious and diverse food systems. This includes the facilitation of policy dialogues and knowledge sharing to better integrate these crops into food system planning.

Workshop participants during opportunity crop consultations at NACGRAB, Nigeria. Photo: Marta Millere/Crop Trust

The Power of Diversity Funding Facility is a multi-donor initiative with initial funds from the Government of Germany and Government of Ireland. It is dedicated to conserving, cultivating and promoting the consumption of opportunity crops across Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Seeds for Resilience: Strengthening National Genebanks Across Africa

- 2025 was a year of transition for Seeds for Resilience, which was extended by two years.
- Focus shifted from implementation support to upgrades of essential infrastructure.
- Project activities strengthened national genebanks and engaged on the value of crop diversity conservation and use.

In 2025, the Crop Trust and our Seeds for Resilience partners concentrated on improving seed-drying facilities at the national genebanks of Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia. We worked with a Zambia-based civil engineering partner to plan the renovation of existing structures and the construction of a new satellite genebank facility in Ghana.

In Zambia, work began in October at the National Plant Genetic Resources Centre (NPGRC) at the Zambia Agricultural Research Institute. In Kenya, asbestos first needed to be removed from existing structures at the Genetic Resources Research Institute (GeRRI) buildings. The project used contingency funds to replace the roof, which was completed by the end of the year and then the infrastructure upgrade tender was launched.

Reliable electricity is critical to a genebank, yet power supply remains far from guaranteed in the partner countries. Zambia, in particular, faces frequent disruptions linked to drought-affected hydropower generation. In 2025, the project worked with the GIZ Project Development Programme on feasibility studies for solar power implementation at the genebanks in Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya.

Seeds for Resilience continued to empower genebanks to function effectively. To improve use of the GGCE data management system, staff from all partner genebanks attended GOAL Data Management workshops and staff from Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria participated in follow-up workshops.

The project recognized that efficient administration is as important as good science for effective genebank operations. New computers were provided to the finance department at the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) and accounting software was provided to the National Centre for Genetic Resources and Biotechnology (NACGRAB) in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, Seeds for Resilience supported efforts to raise the national profile of genebank work. NACGRAB hosted an advocacy workshop in May to encourage policymakers and senior government officials to strengthen support for conservation and use of crop diversity infrastructure and financing. Representatives from the Federal Ministry of Innovation, Science and Technology and the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security attended, with the event generating local media coverage.

At the international level, all four genebank managers participated as national focal points in the GB-11 meeting and recognized the project's contribution. Leadership from GeRRI in Kenya also took part in an International Plant Treaty-led workshop in Tanzania.

The year saw another tangible step forward in safeguarding national collections in the world's ultimate backup facility for seed samples. With project support, GeRRI deposited 749 accessions of priority crops, including pigeon pea, finger millet, pearl millet, sorghum, mung bean and cowpea, in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault in June.

Since 2019, Seeds for Resilience has supported the national genebanks of Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia. The project is supported by the Federal Government of Germany (BMZ), through the German Development Bank (KfW).

Sweetpotato Project: Securing Diversity for Farmers and the Future

- More than 300 sweetpotato landrace varieties were collected in Madagascar and Zambia, with 30 secured through long-term cryopreservation.
- Over 100,000 clean, disease-free vines were distributed to 355 farmers in Madagascar and Zambia.
- A total of 56 clean landraces were repatriated to farmers.

The Darwin Initiative-funded sweetpotato project successfully wrapped up with Malagasy and Zambian sweetpotato landraces now safeguarded in genebanks and returned to farmers as clean, disease-free planting material at scale.

In its final year, partners focused on distributing virus-free planting materials to farmers in Madagascar and Zambia, on-site learning visits with farmers, and donor reporting.

Lessons learned fed into the Crop Trust's wider work to secure cryopreserved clonal crop collections forever.

Over three years, the Sweetpotato Project worked to collect, clean, conserve and return sweetpotato landraces to farming communities – linking genebank conservation with real-world use.

In total, more than 300 sweetpotato landrace varieties from Madagascar and Zambia were collected. From this diversity, 30 landraces were secured through cryopreservation in the International Potato Center's genebank and newly-opened Cryo Vault, ensuring their long-term survival.

At the same time, the project prioritized farmer access. After being cleaned of pests and diseases, 56 landraces were repatriated to farmers in Madagascar and Zambia. Over the project's duration, over 100,000 clean vines were distributed to 355 farmers. This provided healthier planting material and helped farmers multiply and share these varieties locally.

In 2025, the project's final year, partners concentrated on consolidating impact and learning. Crop Trust representatives joined project collaborators for three on-site visits across Madagascar, meeting farmers who are growing out this diversity and disseminating vines to others. On these visits, the team observed crop performance, documented farmer experience and saw how access to clean, diverse planting material translates into stronger harvests and more reliable food and income sources.

Alongside engagement in the field, partners completed donor reporting and assessed lessons learned – particularly around maintaining and multiplying vegetatively propagated crops. These insights now inform the Crop Trust's broader cryopreservation work, strengthening global efforts to conserve clonal crop diversity securely, permanently and in ways that benefit farming communities.

The Darwin Initiative-funded project 'Sweetpotato, a model for food security and long-term conservation of biodiversity' was led by the Crop Trust in partnership with the International Potato Center (CIP), FIFAMANOR in Madagascar and ZARI – the Zambia Agriculture Research Institute.

Charlene looks into the distance while posing with a bundle of clean vines ready for sharing with farmers. Credit - Marta Millere / Crop Trust.

Amaranth seed samples conserved at the genebank of the World Vegetable Center in Arusha, Tanzania. Photo: Neil Palmer / Crop Trust.

Building a Global Genebank System

QMS: Building Capacity for Conservation

In 2025, quality management sytems (QMS) intensives were conducted at the national genebanks of Bhutan, Benin and Pakistan, offering targeted support in line with international genebank standards. These visits addressed challenges, verified procedures, and developed action plans for continuous improvement. A total of 46 staff members participated, strengthening institutional ownership of quality processes.

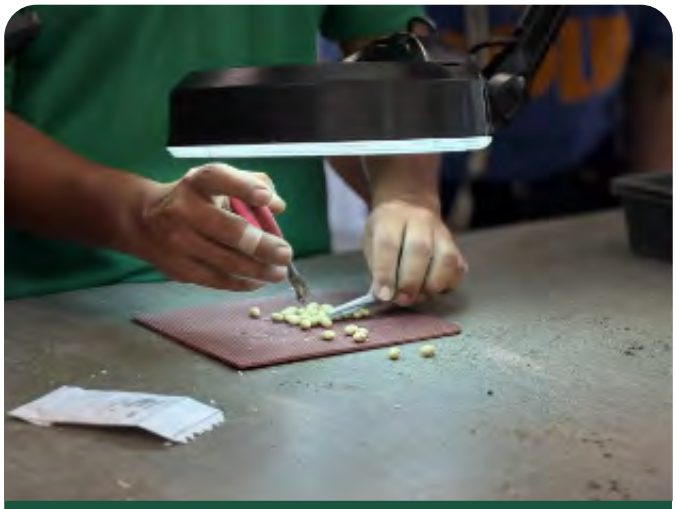
Genebank Operations and Advanced Learning workshops promote technical and operational skills in QMS, seed quality, data, risk and equipment management. In partnership with the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, a workshop was held at the Future Seeds genebank in Colombia, delivering hands-on training in seed processing, phytosanitary practices, equipment use and germination of challenging accessions. Fourteen staff members from seven countries participated through the BOLD project.

Online capacity-building further strengthened QMS implementation across partner genebanks. Training in seed science, policy frameworks, and data management supported a culture of quality. During the year, 20 virtual capacity-building events were held, including communities of practice, technical meetings, and thematic seminars.

Standard operating procedures (SOPs) remain foundational to QMS implementation. In 2025, support was provided to develop, audit and revise 30 SOPs covering regeneration, characterization and seed dormancy-breaking methods. This strengthens technical rigor and traceability.

“The adoption of a quality management system has raised conservation standards among genebank staff to international levels, preserving diversity with rigor and consistency while ensuring its distribution is more efficient and dependable,” said Dr Ugyen Phuntsho of the Bhutan National Plant Genebank.

The Crop Trust supports national and international genebanks in establishing and enhancing quality standards. A QMS enables genebanks to effectively conserve crop diversity and deliver services that consistently meet users’ expectations. The Crop Trust Endowment Fund and project funding support these activities.



Scientist processing accessions at Alliance Bioversity in Cali, Colombia, during a QMS workshop.

Digitizing Genebanks: Genesys and GGCE

Genesys now hosts information on over 4,460,000 samples, representing 75 percent of the 5.9 million accessions held globally, according to *The Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*. Managing and making this information openly available is a fundamental component of an effective global genebank system.

In 2025, genebanks added information on 160,000 new accessions, 31 subsets and 39 datasets with trait information. Around 1,000 new users registered with Genesys during the year – about 25 percent more than in the previous year. We transmitted 550 requests for diversity from users to genebanks, a 20 percent increase from last year. The increase in requests is primarily due to genebanks such as WorldVeg, IRRI and CIMMYT using Embedded Genesys on their institutional websites.

We introduced 17 new genebanks to GGCE and throughout the year, assisted 40 genebanks with their adoption and use of this essential software for genebanks. A highlight is a successful evaluation of GGCE in four genebanks in Southern Africa, supported by the Federal Government of Germany. Their evaluation resulted in a proposal of the SADC Plant Genetic Resources Center (SPGRC) to "implement a modernized SDIS platform powered by GGCE technology" across all member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the coming years.

Feedback and input from GGCE users have been crucial in the development of new features, such as rapid inventory registration, improved barcode labeling, managing seed multiplication, and integration with Genesys. Strategic direction is provided by the newly formed GGCE Advisory Group.

In 2025, the Crop Trust organized a regional workshop for Southern African genebanks in Johannesburg in June, and another for genebanks in the MENA region in Morocco in October. We also hosted monthly teleconferences of the Community of Practice on Data Management in English, Spanish and French.

The Crop Trust develops and maintains Genesys, the world's largest global platform for sharing information and samples of crop diversity held in genebanks. We also provide GRIN-Global Community Edition (GGCE) to genebanks. GGCE is an information system for genebank collection management. Genesys and GGCE are supported by the Crop Trust Endowment Fund, complemented with project funding and partner contributions.

Participants at the regional workshop for Southern African genebanks in Johannesburg. Photo: Natalia Rodriguez / Crop Trust

Knowledge for the Next Generation

In 2025, the Crop Trust launched the Genebank Academy, an online platform designed to strengthen global capacity in genebank operations and the conservation of plant genetic resources. It provides accessible, high-quality training for professionals, researchers and students working to conserve and use crop diversity.

By the end of 2025, the platform hosted 38 online courses covering the full cycle of conserving and making crop diversity available through genebanks. Course providers include the Crop Trust, Botanic Gardens Conservation International, the CABI Academy, the Center for Plant Conservation, CGIAR genebanks, Colorado State University, the FAO eLearning Academy, InforMEA, the LiveSeeding project and the Millennium Seed Bank at Kew Gardens.

With support from the BOLD project, the Crop Trust is also developing new technical courses on genebank management and operations, alongside modules on reporting, financial management, risk and compliance. In collaboration with the International Plant Treaty Secretariat and the FAO eLearning Academy, a new e-learning series on data management for plant genetic resources for food and agriculture is scheduled for launch in early 2026. Two related introductory courses – on the Global Information System (GLIS) and the Global Crop Conservation Strategies – were released in November.

The Genebank Academy provides accessible, high-quality training for professionals, researchers and students working to conserve and use crop diversity. Visit the Academy at: www.croptrust.org/knowledge-hub/genebank-academy/

GCCS: A Mandate Moving Forward

The 'Mainstreaming the Global Crop Conservation Strategies (GCCS) in International Plant Treaty Processes' project wrapped up in 2025.

The project made significant progress toward embedding evidence-based information on the status of crop conservation from the strategies in the decision-making processes of the International Plant Treaty. An important step was taken at GB-11 where the Governing Body of the International Plant Treaty agreed to set up an international technical advisory committee on the GCCS as proposed in a concept note prepared by the Crop Trust. The Committee will provide guidance on scope, format, timing, priority crops, and other issues related to the strategies.

"This was a key step forward for the Global Crop Conservation Strategies," said project coordinator Dr Peter Giovannini. "It strengthened multistakeholder governance and helped integrate the strategies into International Plant Treaty processes."

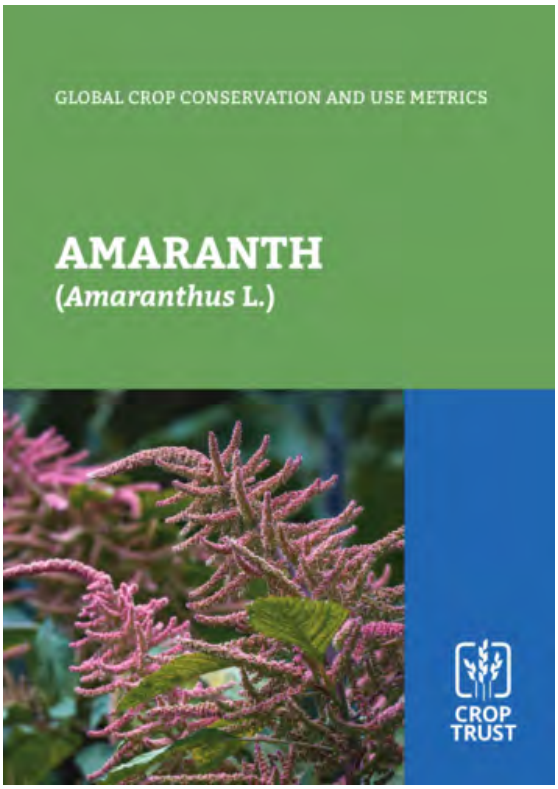
As the project came to a close, the project team took steps to raise awareness by disseminating information about the GCCS in International Plant Treaty meetings and discussions.

- Published Global Crop Conservation and Use Metrics to provide insights into conservation of 30 crops.
- Prepared summaries of the GCCS tailored to different International Plant Treaty stakeholders.
- Held a dedicated side event at GB-11 to engage Contracting Parties and other relevant stakeholders.

The Crop Trust also prepared a technical paper consolidating information from the GCCS on technology transfer and capacity building that benefit Contracting Parties and support implementation of the International Plant Treaty. The paper was published as an information document for the 10th meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Committee on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture held in Qatar in September.

The project also advanced efforts to identify key GCCS-relevant collections and notify the Treaty about them for inclusion in the Multilateral System. In 2025, the Crop Trust supported several of the Treaty's Contracting Parties working to notify their Annex 1 collections as available in the Multilateral System.

The Mainstreaming the GCCS in International Plant Treaty Processes project was made possible by funding from the German Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Regional Identity (BMLEH). It was part of an ongoing effort to develop GCCS as a system-wide service that strengthens conservation priorities and practices in the global genebank system.



Responding to Risk: Emergency Reserve for Genebanks

The Emergency Reserve for Genebanks continues to prove its value as a rapid-response mechanism to protect targeted crop diversity under threat. As risks to genebanks intensify – from power disruptions and funding gaps to broader environmental and political instability – the need for flexible support delivered quickly has increased. In 2025, work through the Emergency Reserve highlighted how timely action can prevent long-term loss.

In Ecuador, recurring nationwide electricity outages posed a serious threat to cold storage systems at the genebank of the *Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Agropecuarias*. Emergency funding was used to buy a power generator, helping stabilize conditions and secure the country's crop collections.

In Costa Rica, the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) genebank faced financial constraints following the loss of funding from major donors. Emergency support covered essential labor costs, allowing field operations for internationally important cacao collection to continue uninterrupted.

The Guatemala national genebank – working in partnership with FAO Guatemala and the International Plant Treaty – received funding to renovate cold storage facilities and support safety duplication efforts. As a result, more than 900 samples of maize, beans, amaranth, squash and teosinte were deposited into the Svalbard Global Seed Vault in February 2026, a first for Guatemala.

In Ukraine, a broad coalition of partners – including the Crop Trust – supported the National Academy of Agrarian Sciences in establishing and opening a new Duplicate Centre to safeguard the country's plant genetic resources.

These interventions underscore the strategic importance of having a dedicated emergency funding facility in place. Genebanks are the backbone of global food security, yet many operate under constrained and unpredictable conditions. When disruptions occur, even short-term gaps in power, staffing or infrastructure can have irreversible consequences. The Emergency Reserve helps bridge these gaps, ensuring that critical collections remain safe and available for future use.

Since its establishment, the Emergency Reserve has received more than 30 requests from genebanks across 27 countries, totalling over USD 2.3 million. To date, support has been deployed in Sudan, Laos, the Philippines, Ecuador, Ukraine, Guatemala and at CATIE.

Dr Kent Nnadozie, Secretary of the International Plant Treaty, noted: "We live in an interconnected world. Losing a unique collection of crop diversity in one country today means losing opportunities of breeding a plant variety tomorrow that will be adapted to changing environments and needs elsewhere."

For the Crop Trust, the Emergency Reserve is a key component of a more resilient global system. "The Emergency Reserve opens a path to deal with imminent threats, both big and small," said Executive Director Dr Stefan Schmitz.

Managed by the Crop Trust in partnership with the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and supported through the BOLD project, the Emergency Reserve provides critical funding when genebanks face sudden risks that could compromise irreplaceable collections.

Legume diversity conserved by the International Livestock Research Institute in Ethiopia. Photo: Shawn Landersz / CGIAR

Global Flagship Initiative: A Strong Start

- First funded projects launched in Ethiopia and Niger
- Establishment of the Flagship Secretariat at the Crop Trust in February
- Adoption of the initiative's strategy at the first Members' Meeting in Bonn in May

This section provides an overview of the first year of the Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security, a multi-partner platform with its own governance and Secretariat hosted by the Crop Trust. The Flagship Initiative brings together governments, development finance institutions, and international organizations and partners from the private sector, civil society and academia to scale solutions for food security. In 2025, the Crop Trust supported the establishment and early operations of the Initiative.

The Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security was established at the 16th session of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (COP 16) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Hosted by the Crop Trust with support of partners in the Arab Coordination Group, the Initiative will identify and support the scaling of cost-effective, evidence-based innovations for diverse and sustainable agrifood systems.

In 2025, the Flagship Initiative made solid progress during its first full year, engaging more than 100 development partners globally and implementing the platform's first funded projects in Africa. These early interventions support weather forecasting services for farmers in Ethiopia and strengthen local capacities for rainwater harvesting in Niger. They also demonstrate the Initiative's ability to translate global commitments into action.

Dr Conrad Rein, Director of the Global Flagship Initiative, and stakeholders at the Second World Summit for Social Development in Doha

During this crucial first year, key milestones paved the way to agree on an ambitious agenda.

- In February, the Crop Trust established the Initiative's secretariat in Bonn, Germany.
- In May, its strategy was adopted at the inaugural Members' Meeting in Bonn.
- In July, a ministerial communiqué was endorsed by member states of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Africa, boosting the initiative's international visibility and high-level political backing.

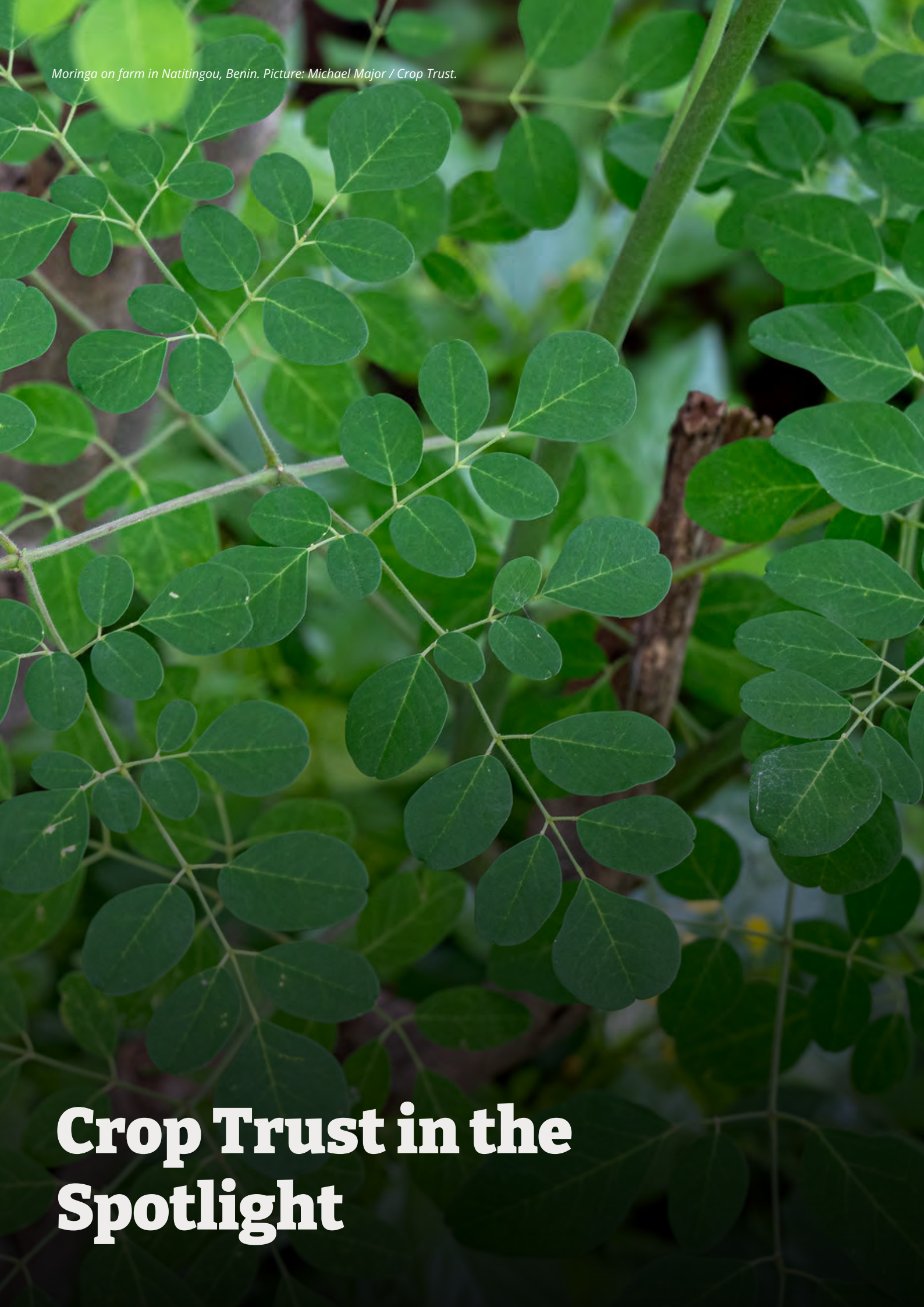
A range of development organizations – including the United Nations and African Development Bank – provided further support for the Initiative. The Flagship was recognized at events such as the UN Food Systems Summit +4 Stocktake (UNFSS+4), the 80th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA80), the Second World Summit for Social Development, and several intergovernmental G20-related fora. Major international institutions publicly aligned with Flagship Initiative objectives, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, the World Food Programme and leading development finance institutions.

New partnerships were also established with the UN Capital Development Fund, CRDB Bank of Tanzania, and the World Agricultural Forum, alongside close collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinator system, the Joint SDG Fund and the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development.

From its inception, the Flagship Initiative has garnered support from institutions in the Arab Coordination Group, including AGFUND, BADEA, IsDB, and the OPEC Fund. This represents a potential commitment of up to USD 10 billion by 2030. This funding can play a crucial role in mobilizing additional international financial resources to scale innovations, implement nature-based solutions and strengthen resilience.

"The Global Flagship Initiative shows how collective action, political will and practical delivery can come together to accelerate progress toward zero hunger," said Dr Conrad Rein, Secretary of the Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security.

The Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security was established in 2024 at the 16th session of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (COP 16) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Hosted by the Crop Trust with support of partners in the Arab Coordination Group, the Initiative will identify, scale and promote cost-effective, evidence-based innovations for diverse and sustainable agrifood systems.



Moringa on farm in Natitingou, Benin. Picture: Michael Major / Crop Trust.

Crop Trust in the Spotlight

A Year of Communications

Throughout 2025, Crop Trust communications emphasized the value of multilateral cooperation, highlighting collaboration with the International Plant Treaty ahead of GB-11. The communications team amplified shared thought leadership, expanded global outreach on crop diversity conservation and use, and showcased how collaboration drives progress. We focused on the benefits of a strong Multilateral System and elevated the visibility and potential of opportunity crops.

The Crop Diversity Digest featured news, stories and events on the Crop Trust website as the primary communications hub, with social media driving broader awareness of content, activities and events. In 2025, we published 110 stories, press releases, videos and other content with accompanying social media. Each month, social media engagement reached nearly three million people.

Our stories frequently highlighted collaboration with the International Plant Treaty and connections with our partners. The year kicked off with a spotlight on the Food Forever Experience held alongside the World Economic Forum in Davos and an in-depth look at the first Svalbard International Dialogue following the year's first deposit. Then, updates from Emergency Reserve and other activities were featured with extensive content around Crop Diversity Day 2025, the GB-11 exhibition and GB-11-related events to wrap up the year.

In 2025, we launched a new phase of Crop Chronicles focused on opportunity crops, while continuing the popular Seed Heroes campaign. Seed Heroes profiled pioneers advancing crop diversity conservation and use. Crop Chronicles showcased opportunity crops supported through the BOLDER initiative and the Power of Diversity Funding Facility, complementing the Opportunity Crop Knowledge Base. These stories helped inform and engage audiences around the role of pioneering scientists and underutilized crops to strengthen food security and livelihoods.

Learn more about Conserving and Using Crop Diversity, an online experience at seedjourney.croptrust.org

The Crop Trust also engaged key stakeholders and supporters through The Dish monthly newsletter. Each edition highlighted major developments, stories and activities, reaching more than 2,600 subscribers.

In November during GB-11, we partnered with Devex to sponsor a dedicated newsletter for the development community. The special edition generated more than 20,600 global impressions, helping raise awareness of the Crop Trust mission and key issues under discussion at GB-11.

Throughout the year, the communications team also supported high-profile project communication and outreach.

We invite you to explore and learn more about the work of the Crop Trust. Can you save Hassan's farm in our new online game?

- Online Experience and Game: Conserving and Using Crop Diversity
- GCCS: Working Together to Protect Crop Diversity
- Opportunity Crops Knowledge Base

A Year of Publications

As scientists working on crop diversity conservation and use, Crop Trust staff often collaborate to share knowledge that strengthens the global genebank system. In 2025, our staff contributed to a range of peer-reviewed scientific publications with partners across the genebank community.

- Agricultural landscape genomics to increase crop resilience. *Plant Communications*. Crop Trust co-author: Nora Castañeda-Álvarez
- Back into the wild: harnessing the power of wheat wild relatives for future crop and food security. *Journal of Experimental Botany.* Crop trust co-author: Benjamin Kilian
- Prioritizing parents from global genebanks to breed climate-resilient crops. *Nature Climate Change*. Crop Trust co-author: Nora Castañeda-Álvarez
- A proposal for genebank metrics to enhance collection management. *Plant Genetic Resources Cambridge University Press.* Crop Trust co-author: Matija Obreza
- Unlocking genebanks for farmer resilience: Assessing the impact of 'Germplasm User Groups' in enhancing farmers' access to diversity. *Plant Genetic Resources Cambridge University Press*. Crop Trust co-author: Nelissa Jamora
- Striking convergent selection history of wheat and barley and its potential for breeding. *Nature Plants*. Crop trust co-author: Benjamin Kilian
- M&E framework for sustainable PGRFA conservation in genebanks. *Plant Genetic Resources Cambridge University Press.* Crop Trust co-author: Nelissa Jamora
- The Global Plant Cryopreservation Initiative: building capacity and ensuring long-term conservation of clonal and recalcitrant seed collections. *Acta Horticulturae.* Crop Trust co-author: Sarada Krishnan
- Identifying Gaps and Challenges for Conserving Crop Diversity in Genebanks: Lessons from the Reviews of National Genebanks. *Plant Genetic Resources: Characterization and Utilization.* Crop Trust co-authors: Nelissa Jamora and Paula Bramel
- Composition of *Ex Situ* Collections Conserved by 20 National Genebanks and Implications for Global Conservation Priorities. *Plant Genetic Resources: Characterization and Utilization.* Crop Trust co-authors: Nelissa Jamora and Paula Bramel
- A significantly enhanced role for plant genetic resource centres in linking *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation to aid user germplasm access. *Genetic Resources.* Crop Trust co-author: Catherine Hazel Aguilar
- Domestication, ecology, and utilization of roselle (*Hibiscus sabdariffa* L.): harnessing the potential of an underutilized crop for improvement. *Journal of Crop Improvement.* Crop Trust co-author: Catherine Hazel Aguilar
- Harnessing Legume Productivity in Tropical Farming Systems by Addressing Challenges Posed by Legume Diseases. *Nitrogen.* Crop Trust co-author: Catherine Hazel Aguilar

A Year of Stories

From genebanks and farmers' fields to laboratories and local communities, our stories in 2025 captured the many ways crop diversity supports resilient food systems. Here are five highlights from the year.
Scan the QR code to discover more stories from across our global network.

Backing Up Brazil's Future Food and Nutrition Security

For many, "Brazilian food" brings to mind classic images of churrasco – succulent grass-fed steaks sizzling over an open flame. But in reality, rice and beans are the foundation of most Brazilians' diets, even those who love beef.

Powering Conservation: Genebanks and the Shift to Renewable Energy

Reliable energy is critical to conserving crop diversity. Across the globe, genebanks are exploring renewable energy, resilient infrastructure and low-energy innovations to secure collections for future generations.

The Wow Potatoes of Kenya: Fighting Late Blight with Farmer-Approved, Disease-Resistant Spuds

In Kenya, researchers and farmers are working together to develop disease-resistant potatoes that can withstand late blight, reduce reliance on fungicides and strengthen food security across East Africa.

New Climate-Resilient Alfalfa Gives Hope to Drought-Stricken Farmers in Kazakhstan

A new climate-resilient alfalfa variety developed through international collaboration is helping farmers in Kazakhstan adapt to drought, reduce water dependence and strengthen livestock production in a changing climate.

How Digital Technology is Transforming Genebank Management Across Africa

Across Africa, genebanks are using digital tools to modernize seed conservation, connect collections globally and strengthen the future of food security.

Leaf rust affecting an amaranth plant growing as part of a BOLDER Tricot trial in Kimashuku District, Kilimanjaro Region, Tanzania. Picture: Neil Palmer / Crop Trust.

Administration

Governance and Leadership

External Review: Fit for the Future

In 2025, the Executive Board commissioned an independent external review to assess the Crop Trust's achievements over the past decade and provide guidance for the next five years. The review found the organization to be highly effective and globally respected, with clear impact in strengthening crop diversity conservation and the global genebank system.

The Review also offered forward-looking recommendations to enhance support for national collections, scale system-wide services and guide strategic decisionmaking for future impact. Moving forward, recommendations from the review will inform Crop Trust strategy and activity.

Members of the Executive Board

- Catherine Bertini, Chair of the Executive Board
- Mercedes Aráoz, Vice-Chair of the Executive Board
- Carlos Furche, Executive Board Member
- Jean-Christophe Gouache, Executive Board Member
- Geoffrey Hawtin OBE, Executive Board Member
- Dagfinn Høybråten, Executive Board Member
- Masaru Iwanaga, Executive Board Member
- Josette Lewis, Executive Board Member
- Joachim von Braun, Executive Board Member
- Stefan Schmitz, Executive Board Member, Ex-officio
- Kaveh Zahedi, Executive Board Member (non-voting), FAO Representative
- Juan-Lucas Restrepo, Executive Board Member (non-voting), CGIAR Representative

Members of the Executive Committee

- Stefan Schmitz, Executive Director
- Sarada Krishnan, Director of Programs
- Jaspreet Stamm, Director of External Affairs
- Anne Clyne, Director of Administration
- Luigi Guarino, Chief Scientist
- Christoph Beck, Chief of Human Resources & Corporate Operations

External Members of Executive Board Subsidiary Committees

- Victoria Sant, Chair of the Investment Committee
- Alex Readey, Member of the Investment Committee
- Stephan von Stenglin, Member of the Investment Committee
- Steven Lainoff, Member of the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee

Finance and Investments

- The Crop Trust's Endowment Fund grew to USD 398 million, delivering a strong 14.3% return and generating USD 51 million in investment gains.
- Income from projects and other unrestricted contributions totalled USD 10.5 million.
- Project contributions received totalled USD 7.2 million, with new tech-sector engagement.

Endowment Fund at a Glance

The Endowment Fund remains at the heart of the Crop Trust's financial model, providing long-term, predictable funding to conserve crop diversity and make it available for use.

In 2025, the Endowment Fund delivered a strong return of 14.3%, compared to 7.3% the year before. The Fund's value increased to USD 398 million, driven by market performance and new contributions. Net investment gains reached USD 51 million. Each year, a portion of these returns is used to support genebank operations.

Responsible investment strengthens the alignment of our investment portfolio and mission with broader societal objectives. The Crop Trust is an official signatory to the UN Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI) and undertakes regular PRI reporting. For the most recent submission, we received above-average scores, demonstrating strong ESG performance and leadership of the investment portfolio. We also support the recommendations of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures and the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures.

Concessional Loan

In 2017, the Crop Trust received a EUR 50 million concessional loan from the German Development Bank, KfW. By the end of 2025, EUR 17 million had been repaid, leaving a remaining balance of EUR 33 million. In 2025, the Executive Board approved early repayment of the outstanding balance, with complete repayment scheduled in early 2026.

The loan proceeds were invested in a fund that had a market value of EUR 38.6 million at the end of 2025 and generated a return of 5.3% during the year. Following repayment of the loan, gains from the fund will be transferred into the Endowment Fund, further strengthening the Crop Trust's long-term financing model.

Statement of Financial Position

	2025 (USD'000)	2024 (USD'000)
Current Asset	41,251	41,077
Non-Current Assets	443,513	400,299
Total Assets	**484,764**	**441,376**
Current Liabilities	69,585	29,616
Non-Current Liabilities	271	39,654
Total Liabilities	**69,856**	**69,270**
Unrestricted Net Asset	10,666	11,398
Permanently Restricted Net Asset	404,242	360,708
Total Net Assets	**414,908**	**372,106**
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	**484,764**	**441,376**

Financial Results

The Crop Trust maintained a strong and stable financial position in 2025, continuing to increase support for the long-term conservation of crop diversity. Total 2025 expenditures amounted to USD 21 million, with USD 17 million in program expenditure, including long-term and time-bound support for important collections of crop diversity. USD 1.2 million was used to support communication and partnership-related activities to strengthen engagement with donors, partners and stakeholders. Administrative expenditures totalled USD 2.7 million and covered essential management, governance, information technology and facilities costs.

Revenue from projects and other unrestricted income totalled USD 10.5 million.

Financial Support

In 2025, contributions totalling USD 7.2 million were received from donors. Support came from long-standing partners and new contributors, including the first major tech sector contribution.

Financial Audit

Crop Trust financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2025 were prepared in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards and audited by PricewaterhouseCoopers GmbH.

The full Financial Statements and Independent Auditor's Report are available on the Crop Trust's website.

Income and Expenditure

	2025 (USD'000)	2024 (USD'000)
Income from Crop Trust Resources	11,257	10,122
Donor Grants	112	528
Project Income	**9,861**	12,130
Total Income	**21,230**	**22,780**
Genebank Grants	6,283	6,509
Coordination & System-wide Support	1,565	1,306
Total Genebank Support Expenditures	7,848	7,815
Project Expenditures	9,359	11,269
Partnerships & Communications Expenditures	1,234	1,300
Administration Expenditures	2,766	2,396
Total Expenditures	**21,230**	**22,780**

Building the Team Behind the Mission

- Staff came together for training, planning and exchange, strengthening collaboration and leadership across the organization.
- A new Future Leaders in Crop Diversity program launched, bringing a more strategic approach to youth engagement.
- The Crop Trust team remained diverse and international, with 55 staff representing 26 nationalities.

In 2025, the Crop Trust invested in its people as a core part of delivering its mission. Staff participated in a two-day training on intercultural communication and delegation, followed by a planning retreat later in the year. The Gender Diversity and Inclusion Committee also expanded its work, complementing the “Equity First” course with five in-person sessions that created space for practical discussion and shared learning.

The year also deepened the organization’s engagement with the next generation. The launch of the Future Leaders in Crop Diversity program brought youth engagement under a single strategic framework, moving toward a coordinated approach.

By the end of the year, the Crop Trust employed 55 staff representing 26 nationalities. The team was 58% female and 42% male, with the majority of staff between 30 and 50 years old, reflecting a dynamic and diverse organization.

The Crop Trust banner flies outside our headquarters in Bonn.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACSU	Ad Hoc Technical Committee on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
ADRON	Anne van Dijk Rice Research Centre
AGRF	African Food Systems Forum
AUC	African Union Commission
BMEL	German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture
BOLD	Biodiversity for Opportunities, Livelihoods and Development
BOLDER	Building Opportunities for Lesser-known Diversity in Edible Resources
CCOP	Communications Community of Practice
CePaCT	Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CATIE	Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center
CIAT	International Center for Tropical Agriculture
CIFOR-ICRAF	Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry
CIP	International Potato Center
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies
CWR	Crop Wild Relatives
EBI	Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute
EUR	Euros
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FIFAMANOR	Fiompiana Fambolena Malagasy Norvéziana
GAIN	Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition
GB-11	11th session of the Governing Body of the International Plant Treaty
GBP	British pound sterling
GCCS	Global Crop Conservation Strategies
GDI	Gender, Diversity and Inclusion
GeRRI	Genetic Resources Research Institute
GGCE	GRIN-Global Community Edition
GGP	Global Genebank Partnership
GLIS	Global Information System
GOAL	Genebank Operations and Advanced Learning
IAES	Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service
ICRISAT	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics
IITA	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture
ILRI	International Livestock Research Institute
INRA	National Institute for Agricultural Research
IRRI	International Rice Research Institute
KEPHIS	Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service
LPAs	Long-Term Partnership Agreements
LTGs	Long-term Grants
NACGRAB	National Centre for Genetic Resources and Biotechnology
NAFRI	National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NMBU	Norwegian University of Life Sciences
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NordGen	Nordic Genetic Resource Center
NPGRC	National Plant Genetic Resources Centre
NUS	Neglected and Underutilized Species
PDFF	Power of Diversity Funding Facility
PGRFA	Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
PGRRI	Plant Genetic Resources Research Institute
PwC	PriceWaterhouseCoopers
QMS	Quality Management System
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SFR	Seeds for Resilience
SOPs	standard operating procedures
UN	United Nations
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USD	United States dollar(s)
WorldVeg	World Vegetable Center
ZARI	Zambia Agricultural Research Institute

CROP
TRUST

www.croptrust.org