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**SVALBARD GLOBAL SEED VAULT CELEBRATES 10 YEARS**

*Over 1 million unique crop varieties now held in Seed Vault*

(SVALBARD, NORWAY – 26 February 2018) - The [Svalbard Global Seed Vault](#) will mark its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary today by receiving shipments of over 70,000 crop varieties at the storage facility in Norway.

The deposits will take the total number of unique crop varieties received by the Seed Vault in the last decade to over 1 million.

Depositors from seed banks around the world will brave sub-zero temperatures to deliver duplicate seeds of vital staples like rice, wheat and maize, to the Vault—housed deep inside a frozen mountain on the Svalbard archipelago. Other important crops like black-eyed pea (cowpea), a major protein source in Africa and South Asia, will be deposited, along with samples of sorghum, pearl millet and pigeon pea.

Several lesser-known crops will also make the journey to the Vault. These include Bambara groundnut, which is being developed as a drought tolerant crop in parts of Africa, and the unusually named Estonian onion potato, which will be deposited together with varieties of beans unique to the eastern European country.

Today's event marks the largest number of institutions (23) depositing seeds at one time.



“The Svalbard Global Seed Vault is an iconic reminder of the remarkable conservation effort that is taking place every day, around the world and around the clock—an effort to conserve the seeds of our food crops,” said Marie Haga, Executive Director of the Crop Trust. “Safeguarding such a huge range of seeds means scientists will have the best chance of developing nutritious and climate-resilient crops that can ensure future generations don’t just survive, but thrive”.

The Svalbard Global Seed Vault first opened its doors in February 2008, as a backup facility for the world’s seed banks. It received deposits of over 300,000 different kinds of seeds in its first year and deliveries have continued several times a year ever since, from countries far and wide, including Australia, Burundi, Colombia, Germany, India, Japan, North Korea, Russia, USA and many others.

“The 10th anniversary is a major milestone for the Svalbard Global Seed Vault,” said Jon Georg Dale Minister of Agriculture for the Norwegian government, which jointly runs the facility with the Crop Trust and the Nordic Genetic Resource Center (NordGen). “It comes at a time when agriculture is facing multiple challenges from extreme weather and the demands of a world population expected to reach 10 billion people by 2050. This means it is more important than ever to ensure that seeds—the foundation of our food supply and the future of our agriculture—are safely conserved.”

Over the decade-long history of the Vault, only one institution has withdrawn seeds—the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), whose own seed bank in Syria became unable to operate due to civil conflict. In 2015 and 2017, ICARDA requested some of its deposits of wheat, lentil, chickpea, and other crops, to reestablish its research and conservation work at sites in Lebanon and Morocco. It has since managed to duplicate and return thousands of these varieties to Svalbard. For that reason, as of today, the total number of unique crop varieties in the Seed Vault stands at 967,216. The total ever received by the Seed Vault—excluding withdrawals is 1,059,646.

In 2017, work began on the outer part of the Seed Vault’s access tunnel to make it watertight, and prepare it for the likelihood of a warmer, wetter future. The seeds continue to be secure, and the Seed Vault remains the safest seed storage facility in the world.

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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Facts at a Glance

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- **The Svalbard Global Seed Vault is a secure backup facility** for the seed banks of the world. Many seed banks—while engaged in the vitally important work of seed conservation and use—suffer from inadequate funding, political instability or the risk of catastrophic natural disasters. The Vault provides secure storage for their seeds.
- **The Svalbard Global Seed Vault is the largest collection** of crop biodiversity in the world. Located in Longyearbyen, Svalbard, the Seed Vault is owned by the Norwegian Government and operated under a three-party agreement between the Norwegian Government, NordGen, and the Crop Trust. Depositors to the Seed Vault still own the samples that they deposit and only they can retrieve the material if required.



**Total number of unique crop varieties deposited today:** 76,330 varieties in 179 boxes, from 23 depositing institutions.

- **Total number of unique crop varieties now in the Vault:** 967,216
- **Total number of unique crop varieties deposited in the 10 years since 26 February 2008:** 1,059,646 by 73 institutions
- **Institutions depositing for the first time:** Estonian Crop Research Institute (ECRI), Estonia
- Use the hashtag **#seedvault10** to follow the story this week

*The Crop Trust* an international organisation that is working to support crop conservation in genebanks, forever. It supports international genebanks, national genebanks and the world's backup facility, the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. The Crop Trust allocates funds to support genebanks through the Crop Diversity Endowment Fund—a self-sustaining fund that generates investment income to support crop conservation. The Crop Trust is recognised as an essential element of the funding strategy of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. [www.croptrust.org](http://www.croptrust.org). Like our [Facebook page](#) or follow us on [Twitter](#).

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