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## Building a Global System for *ex situ* Conservation of Crop Diversity

ELENA POPOVA, CHARLOTTE E. LUSTY, LUIGI GUARINO

*Global Crop Diversity Trust, Germany*

### Abstract

The Global Crop Diversity Trust (the Crop Trust) is an independent international organisation established in 2004 by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the international agricultural research centres (IARCs) of the CGIAR (formerly the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research) as a worldwide response to the problems of food insecurity, poverty and environmental degradation. Specifically, the Crop Trust is raising an endowment to provide long-term funding for the conservation of priority collections of crop diversity around the world. At a time when environmental and human demands are placing an unprecedented strain on agriculture the world over, it is critical to conserve plant genetic resources for food and agriculture to guarantee that farmers and plant breeders continue to have access to the raw materials they need to improve and adapt their crops – to provide food and income for us all in the future, while preserving the environment. The Crop Trust endowment provides that guarantee. The Crop Trust and the endowment it manages constitute an integral part of the financial strategy of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. The strategic *ex situ* conservation activities supported by the Crop Trust from its endowment (and from additional project funding) on the basis of its Fund Disbursement Strategy on the one hand, and the priority *in situ* activities supported by the Treaty’s Benefit Sharing Fund on the other, are equally important, complementary efforts to conserve and sustainably use plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. The urgency of such efforts is increasing, not least because of pressure on food production systems from climate change.

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