SeedChange
Formerly USC Canada

Jottings

2022

Your generosity is growing solutions



"Jottings" is the name our founder, Dr. Lotta Hitschmanova, gave to the stories she captured in her leather-bound notebook while visiting programs around the world. Sharing these jottings with supporters has been a tradition since 1945.

Thanks to you, farmers like Rosa María Rodríguez are now hard at work building thriving local seed businesses to help address Cuba's seed shortages.

From seed shortages to a thriving local seed system

You helped change the seed system in Cuba

Sixteen years ago, Cuba's *National Institute for Agricultural Sciences* asked SeedChange for help with a thorny issue.

Ever since the economic crisis of the 1990s forced Cuban farmers to transition to organic farming overnight, farmers had been struggling to grow enough food for Cubans. The missing piece: seeds.

Thanks to you, we were able to help

We started our work with Cuban farmers by conducting seed security assessments in various communities, to better understand their seed supply challenges.

A mixed picture emerged. In some regions, farmers could get all the seeds they needed from Cuba's national seed production system, because the government deemed their area to be ideal for growing those crops on a larger scale. But in regions not prioritized by the national system, farmers were struggling.

With this knowledge in hand, we started working on local solutions.

Through our partners, we delivered seed saving training to farmers, organized learning exchanges between seed savers, and supported community seed fairs to help farmers discover new seed varieties. We also supported farmers like María Luisa García Suárez (pictured) to start community seed banks, as a place where neighbors come together to store and share seeds.

Things improved, but one major barrier remained: farmers couldn't sell their seeds.

All around the world, governments use national seed certification systems to ensure that only high quality seeds make it on the market. While important, these systems are rarely designed with small-scale seed producers in mind.

Cuba's national certification system was no exception. So even if Cuban farmers could save their seeds, they couldn't get them certified, so they weren't allowed to sell them. And without sales, they couldn't justify the investments needed to grow more seeds. This kept local seed supplies low.



Maria Regla Llanes, working in the diverse fields at the National Institute for Agricultural Sciences in Cuba



Farmer María Luisa García Suárez stands in the community seed bank you helped her launch. She now stores 46 varieties of locally adapted beans, maize and vegetables to share with other farmers around her.

Once more, your solidarity made all the difference

Over the years that followed, you allowed us to connect Cuban farmers and officials with counterparts from Costa Rica and Honduras, to look for solutions. Together, they identified a winning policy proposal: local seed certification systems.

Local seed certification systems might not seem that exciting...but to farmers, they are.

By providing farmers with detailed seed production protocols adapted to small farms, and setting up local seed certification committees to assess and certify their seeds, local seed certification opens the door to thriving local seed businesses.

Today, nearly 30 pilot projects for local seed certification are underway in Cuba.

Thanks to you, Cuban farmers can now sell high quality seeds to end local shortages, increase their income, and take better care of their families!

Common problems, common solutions

Our work in Cuba is now coming to an end, but many farmers around the world still face the same barriers that Cuban farmers were facing. That's why it's crucial to keep sharing these innovative solutions with farmers and policy-makers globally.

By helping us spread these solutions, you'll help more communities rebuild thriving local seed systems. Thank you!

10 years of work to strengthen and diversify Canada's seed supply

THANKS TO YOU, CANADA IS ON A BETTER TRACK

For nearly 10 years, our domestic program, The Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security, has been building a movement for resilient seed systems here at home.

The challenges are complex. In recent decades, public seed breeding programs have all but disappeared. Yet farmers need locally adapted seeds more urgently than ever to cope with climate change. They also need a supportive regulatory environment.

Thankfully, you're giving Canadian farmers new ways to take action.

In these 10 years, you supported over 1,000 seed trials and research projects across the country to expand farmers' repertoire of climate resilient crops. You brought farmers together to break their isolation and share their knowledge through online farm clubs, seed training webinars, and podcasts. And last but not least, you helped farmers engage in policy discussions with far-ranging consequences for Canadian seed security.

Just last month, you helped farmers gain significant ground!

Corporations have been lobbying the federal government to let them introduce new genetically modified seeds on the Canadian market without regulatory approval, and without the obligation of letting farmers know that they are genetically modified.

With your support, farmers have mobilized to defend their right to safe and transparent seeds. And in September, the federal Minister indicated her intent to maintain regulatory oversight of genetically modified seeds!

The work isn't over, but thanks to you, there's progress. Thank you for protecting Canada's seed supply!



UNITING FARMERS AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

Donor Profile: Bruce Lourie



SeedChange Foundation Board member Bruce Lourie's passion for environmentalism was sparked in an unlikely setting: summers spent working at a mining company in Northern Ontario. "I was astounded at the toxic materials they were allowed to dump into lakes," he remembers.

The experience led him to pursue a Master of Environmental Studies degree at York University, and then launch an environmental consulting business.

From there on, Bruce's exceptional career blossomed. Today, he is the President of the Ivey Foundation, focusing on Canada's transition to a sustainable economy. He co-authored two books on environmentalism, serves as an Adjunct Professor at Queen's University and visiting lecturer at Oxford University, and has been named a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society of Canada, amongst many other accolades.

He's also an active advisor to SeedChange, and chairs the SeedChange Foundation's Board of Directors.

Before encountering SeedChange, Bruce was already convinced that farmers could do so much to reduce climate change and make agriculture more climate resilient. But not on their own.

"In climate change work, agriculture is always seen as one of the most difficult sectors to create change, because of the heavily concentrated power of industry", he explains. "It's the same multinational companies all over the world that are making it difficult for farmers to make their own choices. And unfortunately, they have unusually powerful connections to governments."

To counter this, he knows what's needed: mobilizing wide coalitions of partners to craft solid policy proposals. He often sees organizations focus on either coalition-building, or policy. But in SeedChange, he found an organization that does both.

"When I first met people from SeedChange", he recalls, "I said: I love everything you do, and you're going about it strategically. Wow."

In the months that followed, Bruce helped us reach out to new Canadian partners and find funds to launch Farmers for Climate Solutions, a coalition that puts forward policies for climate resilient agriculture. Already, the coalition has had a major influence on agricultural policy since its launch in 2020 – a remarkable feat.

Bruce is also a donor to our international programs – because global solidarity matters to him, too.

"Farmers around the world face the same threats everywhere – climate change, bad policies, and excessive corporate influence. **I like how SeedChange connects science, farming and policy together, both nationally and internationally. That's how real change happens."**

More than **75 years** of global impact

Thank you for making this life-changing work happen.

Donate online. It's easy, fast, safe and secure.
weseedchange.org/donate

Call our toll-free number:
1-800-565-6872 and **press 1**

Please mail your cheque to SeedChange
56 Sparks Street, Suite 600, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5B1

SeedChange

We are a registered Canadian charity: 11927-6129-RR-0001

SeedChange was founded by Dr. Lotta Hitschmanova in 1945 as the Unitarian Service Committee of Canada (USC Canada).

info@weseedchange.org

@weseedchangeorg

weseedchange.org