

## Journey of Seed: An Art Based Immersion

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## Introduction

Seeds are the very foundation of our food system, and their meaning and value are understood in as many diverse ways as the seeds themselves. Today, more than 75% of crop varieties have vanished, an alarming result of industrial agriculture and the concentration of the global seed market in the hands of a few powerful agribusinesses. In some parts of the world, such as Palestine, seeds have even become tools of oppression, ancient varieties are being stolen, and fields deliberately destroyed, turning seed into a weapon of war. Despite this, powerful movements exist to protect, conserve, and celebrate seeds as carriers of life, culture, and resilience. Heirloom and local seed varieties, vital for sustaining diverse and adaptive food systems, are under threat, but they continue to survive through the hands and hearts of stewards committed to seed sovereignty.

**“The Journey of Seed”** is an open, art-based workshop hosted during the Agroecology Europe Forum 2025 in Malmö, Sweden designed and facilitated by Kushal Poudel. It attracted 12 participants, the maximum capacity, to explore and express their understanding of seed through creative engagement. It included seed activists, seed savers, researchers, and people eager to reconnect seed.

Through a guided visualization, participants were invited to imagine the journey of a seed, from its ancient origins to its uncertain future and to express their reflections using simple, accessible art materials such as seeds, crayons, pens, and paper.

The atmosphere was intentionally quiet and contemplative, supported by a library-like setting, soft background music, and gentle story telling based facilitation. Participants held seeds in their hands, connecting physically and emotionally before creating art that represented their understanding of the seed’s journey. Later participants shared the story behind their art with peers. Afterwards, participants engaged in plenary discussion on their reflection of the overall session and concluded with the feedback.

## Aim of the participatory workshop

The workshop aimed to reconnect people with seeds through reflection, imagination, and creative expression. Unlike traditional sessions, it used an embodied, reflective and whole person approach to explore the meaning and value of seeds in our lives and food systems using art based creative reflection to express understanding of relationship to seeds through individual artwork and collaborative discussions. Further, the session envisioned deepen awareness of loss of agrobiodiversity and role of seeds for building resilient food system and role of humans for seed conservation.



## Outcome

### What does seed embody?

When participants were asked, "What comes to your mind when you think about seed?", their responses reflected the diversity and depth of meaning seeds hold. Its word cloud is presented in Figure 1. Words like **life**, **potential**, and **growth** showed how seeds symbolize renewal and continuity, while others such as **heritage**, **culture**, and **history** revealed their connection to identity and tradition. Terms like **power**, **DUS**, and **codified** highlighted the political and regulatory dimensions of seed systems, whereas **magic**, **surprise**, and **future** captured their mystery and possibility. Altogether, these reflections illustrate how seeds are not just biological entities but living symbols of resilience, memory, and hope.



Figure 1 Word Cloud of one world that comes to mind of participants when they are asked about seed.

### Meditative and Art Based Space for Reflection and Connection with Seed

The session created a reflective, creative, and emotionally grounded space where participants engaged with seeds not only as biological entities but as symbols of life, connection, and resilience.

- **Reflective and Emotional Depth**

Guided meditation, quiet reflection, and soft background music allowed participants to slow down and connect with their inner selves. One participant described it as the "**Seed Meditation**" while other shared it was an experiential space to "*feel all emotions, not just the analytical mind.*" Through this process, participants reflected deeply on issues related to seed ownership, patents, farmers' rights, conservation, and care, linking personal feelings with broader systemic questions.

- **Empowering Seed Steward**

*When I held the seed during the seed meditation, I felt connected to it, to its story and life. That moment made me realize that if each of us became the guardian of just one seed variety, none would ever be lost.*

*Dylan Wallman, Participant of the Workshop*

This reflection illustrates how personal connection can inspire stewardship. When participants took time to truly see and feel the seed, it shifted their understanding from an abstract concept to a living responsibility. Such embodied experiences nurture empathy, care, and accountability — qualities essential for **future food system leaders**. By recognizing themselves as potential guardians of seed diversity, participants began to see leadership not only as advocacy or policy work, but as a commitment to protect life at its source.



*Picture 1 Participants sharing stories behind their art*

- **Bridging Art and Policy**

Artistic expression became a natural entry point for conversations about seed laws and policies. Discussions emerged around farmers' rights and EU seed regulations, such as the DUS (Distinctness, Uniformity, Stability) criteria, and how these frameworks often restrict traditional practices of seed exchange and diversity conservation.

- **Calm and Supportive Environment**

The session's design with a meditative tone, gentle facilitation, and an open invitation to create without fear of judgment encouraged participants to express themselves freely. Many appreciated *"the relaxed ambiance in the middle of the conference"* and *"the care and gentleness of the*

*facilitation*,” which helped foster trust and openness.

- **Personal Storytelling and Shared Reflection**

Partner sharing and group storytelling created a strong sense of connection and empathy among participants. Through these exchanges, participants expressed personal associations with seeds, connecting their art to memories, relationships, and values. This participatory approach allowed them to “*feel the seed*,” not merely discuss it.

- **Tactile and Experiential Learning**

Physically holding seeds throughout the session deepened the sense of engagement. The tangible interaction with seeds grounded abstract ideas in lived experience, participants could see, touch, and relate to the material reality of what sustains life.

## Seed Wish for the Future

At the end of the session, participants were invited to write a “*seed wish*”, a personal message from the seed. These collective reflections revealed reconnection, care, and balance between humans and nature.

Participants envisioned a future where seeds are free, unmodified, and valued for their natural potential where they are allowed to grow, multiply, and nourish life. The wish was for more space, ‘*slowness*’, and ‘*holistic attention*’ to the rhythms of nature, calling for a ‘**reclaimed history**’ and **care** for the land.

Some imagined the seed itself speaking: “*Spread me in fertile soils. Take care of me, and I will nourish you.*” Others expressed hope for abundance, trust in nature’s magic, and the release of control from industrial and patriarchal systems that dominate seed life today.

Together, these wishes reflect a collective understanding that the future of seeds depends not only on protection and policy but also on relationship, trust, and shared stewardship.

## Limitation of the Workshop

**Limited Time:** The workshop was part of a packed conference schedule only for 1 hr and 15 minutes, which constrained deeper reflection and group sharing.

**Perception of Art-Based Methods:** Creative and reflective sessions are still often undervalued in academic and policy spaces that prioritize quantitative or technical approaches.

**Small Group Size and Resource Constraints:** The intimate group size (12 participants) worked well in depth, but scaling such experiential sessions would require additional logistical, facilitators and financial support.

**Material Diversity:** Incorporating more natural and art materials (e.g., soil, straw, clay, watercolor) could enrich future sessions.

**Maintaining a Non-Judgmental, Open Space :** The success of this approach depends on participants being open to creativity and emotional reflection. Creating and holding a space where people feel safe, unjudged, and expressive can be challenging, especially in formal or academic environments.

# Recommendations for EU decision-makers

- **Recognize the Seed as Cultural and Ecological Heritage:** Seeds are not merely inputs, *they are living heritage* that has been passed down by the custodians with care, stories and meaning. Policies should reflect their ecological, cultural, and social significance. They are the foundation to create a resilient food system.
- **De-commodify and Re-commonize Seeds:** Recognize seeds as part of the **commons**, not commodities. Treat plant genetic resources under **commons-based law**, protecting them from privatization, patenting, and excessive intellectual property control.
- **Support Farmers' Seed Systems:** As one participant mentioned the future wish of seed is to recognize and embody it as the gift of nature. *Recognize and protect farmers' rights to save, use, exchange, and sell farm-saved seed* in line with Article 9 of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA).
- **Reform EU Seed Legislation to Enable Diversity:** Simplify registration and marketing of heterogeneous materials and conservation varieties as envisioned under the EU Green Deal and Farm to Fork Strategy. Ensure reforms to promote diversity, local adaptation, and smallholder participation rather than favoring large corporations.
- **Creating Reflective and Creative Spaces for Youth Engagement:** Include art-based reflective methods to cultivate future food system leaders who act with emotional connection and stewardship and provide **micro-grants** and **training** for youth-led projects that link **art, agroecology, and seed conservation**.
- **Promote Holistic Attention to Seeds**  
Move beyond treating seeds as technical objects to understanding them as **political, ecological, and cultural beings**. The true resilience of the food system lies in seed diversity and local adaptation.
- **Encourage a Clear Directive on Mutagens and GMOs**  
Adopt transparent regulations to prevent the uncontrolled spread of genetically modified and mutagenic seed varieties that threaten biodiversity and local seed systems.

## Bottom Line

*The Journey of Seed* offered a new form of participation, one that is creative, grounded, and emotionally connected. It demonstrated that **art-based, reflective approaches** can complement traditional policy discussions by fostering care, curiosity, and collaboration. The workshop revealed that participants want to **think about seeds, not just about seeds**. As Europe continues to reform its seed laws and promote agroecological transitions, creating **spaces of reflection and imagination** will be essential to inspire young leaders, empower communities, and protect the living foundation of our food systems: **the seed**.

## About Agroecology Europe

Agroecology Europe is a non-profit European association intending to place agroecology high on the European agenda of sustainable development of farming and food systems. The association fosters interactions between actors in sciences, practices and social movements, by facilitating knowledge sharing action. It aims at the creation of an inclusive European community of professionals, practitioners, and more generally societal stakeholders in agroecology.



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