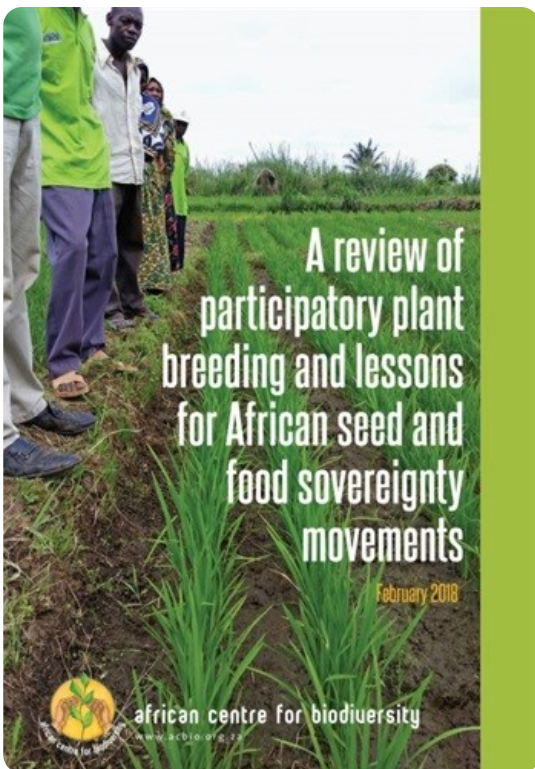


Plant breeding lessons for Africa

Awareness of the unique and important role smallholder farmers play in conserving, using and enhancing biodiversity is growing. Conventional breeding has created a separation between farmers and specialised breeders. Participatory plant breeding (PPB) is a field of action developed over the past 25-30 years to overcome this separation and reunite farmers with breeding activities.



African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) has shared a new report, *A review of participatory plant breeding and lessons for African seed and food sovereignty movements*, which considers the role of smallholder farmers in plant breeding activities in partnership with formal public sector breeders.

This is the core of PPB in practice. The report provides a brief background to plant breeding in general, looking at farmer historical roles; the rise of breeding as a specialised activity; a historical overview of plant breeding in Africa; trade-offs and limitations of formal breeding; and contemporary challenges to farmers' historical roles in biodiversity conservation and adaptation.

The report then provides a background and overview of PPB. It includes an introduction to PPB and comparison with conventional breeding; reflections on participation, including a critique and consideration of types of participation; and a brief historical background to PPB and current projects.

The next part of the report discusses the structure of a plant breeding programme. It provides an overview of a generic plant breeding process; discusses the links between biodiversity conservation, maintenance, use and crop improvement; and the stages in a plant breeding programme, including setting priorities and objectives, generating genetic variability, selection, testing of experimental cultivars and the relationships to formal registration processes; and some comments on multiplication and dissemination of varieties after breeding.

The section after that provides an assessment and lessons of PPB from a literature review of case studies from around the world, especially Latin and Central America, Africa and Asia. This section works through the structure of a breeding programme to see what happened and the lessons from practice, and reflects on key successes and challenges from the literature. The paper concludes with short reflections on key issues for further consideration.

Below are links to the full report, a summary, and different sections of the report in English. The summary will be also available in French, Portuguese and Spanish in the near future.

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