



SMALL SCALE FARMERS' STATEMENT FOR THE WORLD PULSES DAY

Participatory Plant Breeding (PPB) Playing a Key Role in Promoting and Preserving Pulses

10th February 2022

Participatory Plant Breeding (PPB) on pulses, especially beans and peas of different varieties, has proven crucially essential to maintain agrobiodiversity and ensure future genetic gains can withstand the intensifying climate change impacts.

This year, the World is celebrating World Pulses Day under the theme "Pulses to empower youth in achieving sustainable agri-food systems" to raise awareness about the nutritional benefits of pulses as food, income, and biodiversity conservation. Pulses are appreciated for providing protein and fibre and significant vitamins and minerals, such as iron, zinc, folate, and magnesium. It has also been stated that consuming half a cup of beans or peas per day can enhance diet quality by increasing intakes of these nutrients. Anchoring on the importance of pulses, small-scale farmers in Uganda, especially women and youth, are tirelessly working towards raising the profile of these delicious and nutritious pulses through Participatory Plant Breeding (PPB) using the Farmer Field School approach. Pulses play a pivotal role in achieving food security goals and targets in these communities.

In the FSS, small-scale farmers are conducting different practices like seed sourcing, multiplication, selection, and enhancement; the primary focus of the FFS is on beans, soya beans, groundnuts, peas and bambara nuts. The FFS approach engages youth as key facilitators, and this has enhanced the role and contribution youth play in the preservation and adoption of pulse-driven production as they act as a bridge between traditional

farming techniques and new technologies. The FFS contributes to the national pulses production in terms of genetic diversity, food security targets, and better diet and provides the alternative approach to the global cereal monocropping trend that is profit-oriented and less concerned about soil conservation diversifying the cropping systems that combine cereals and legumes. This approach demonstrates that small-scale farmers have better dietary options when cereal planting is rotated or diversified with legumes. Pulses are nutrition-packed legumes that are not just a great source of protein, but the legume plants also work in symbiosis with microbes to fix nitrogen in the soil, increasing the yield, quality, and resilience of subsequent crops. As a result, small scale farmers improve their food security and reduce the use of costly fertilizers and unhealthy pesticides.

"If it weren't for beans and peas in our community, our children would be dying from hunger and malnutrition. They have also been a major source of income for our families." **Atim Janet, Otubet FFS, Amuria district.**

"As an organization, we have taken a deliberate effort to work with youth and women to raise awareness about the nutritional benefits of pulses as part of sustainable food production." **Nancy Mugimba, National Coordinator.**

The adoption of Participatory Plant Breeding with its sustainable practices results in an almost 50 per cent higher nutrient uptake. Pulses are a crucial part of our food systems, but, unfortunately, pulses do not get the attention it deserves from the public sector nor the opportunity to attract private sector investment due to myriad policy and institutional constraints, making youth shy away. Small-scale farmers believe that food and nutrition sustainability is enhanced if farmer-managed systems are respected, supported, and integrated into agricultural policies and frameworks.

With an understanding of the role that pulses can play in contributing to the achievement of SDG goal number two of zero hunger, ESAFF Uganda calls on the Government to take the following actions;

1. Fund extensive research on pulses while involving small-scale farmers because pulse crops are nutritious, inexpensive, and gluten-free.
2. Institutionalize the Participatory Plant Breeding approach through the extension system to upscale small-scale farmers' engagement in utilizing, protecting and promoting pulses in communities.
3. Protect and preserve the farmer-managed seed systems given it's undoubted critical role in ending hunger, malnutrition, and pulling youth into agricultural production.
4. Raise awareness about the nutritional benefits of pulses as part of sustainable food production to enhance food security and nutrition.
5. Advance the registration of small-scale farmers' seed varieties to generate benefits, including faster and cheaper variety releases, improved small-scale farmer incomes, and an immense diversity of well-adapted varieties in the market.

About ESAFF Uganda

Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) Uganda is the largest small-scale farmer-led advocacy movement in Uganda with membership in over 54 districts. ESAFF Uganda brings together small-scale farmers, pastoralists and fisher folks into the movement to advance social and economic equality, agroecology and food sovereignty.

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