



COLHER PARA SEMEAR

**REDE PORTUGUESA
DE VARIEDADES TRADICIONAIS**

José Miguel Fonseca – Farmer in the centre of Portugal. For 22 years works mainly with traditional varieties, and always saves it's seeds. President of the Portuguese seed saving network.

Graça Caldeira Ribeiro – Farmer in the centre/south of Portugal for 6 years. Teacher of organic gardening in an international school, near Lisbon, where traditional varieties are used. Secretary of the Portuguese seed saving network.

Who is saving the diversity of cultivated plants and/or fighting for peasant rights of saving seeds in your country? Who is involved in GMO-free seed production? Are there new groups or networks that are setting up?

- 1- There are two official public seed gene banks that keep most of the traditional Portuguese varieties. They are the Banco Português de Germoplasma Vegetal, in Braga (north) that has most of the cultivated species, and the Estação de Melhoramento de Plantas, in Elvas (south), which specializes in keeping grains and leguminosae. To our knowledge that is no G.M.O free seed production in Portugal.

Please give some examples for using cultivated biodiversity. How do you see the importance of peasant, local or traditional varieties for agriculture and vegetable gardening?

Our association, Colher Para Semear – Rede Portuguesa de Variedades Tradicionais, is trying to incentive small farmers to maintain production of local varieties. To archive this we search, each year, a specific area of our country for ancient and lost varieties. With the help of local authorities (councils) all the region is thoroughly mapped.

In the end, the results of this work is shown in a two day event, in the main town of the region. In this annual gathering all the varieties found are exhibited, along with those of foreigner networks that are invited. Also a catalogue with photographs and a small description of each variety, is published .

Which are the main (legal) obstacles that constrain you? How can you avoid them?

- 3- The legal obstacles are same as elsewhere in the European Community.

Which are the public gene banks in your country? What is the cooperation with them like? Do the gene banks have public access? How do they assure GMO-free quality?

4- Cooperation with an official gene bank (B.P.G.V.) has been good, although cuts in their budget will reduce the present staff by half; we think this fact will have consequences in their collaboration.

On the other hand, as our association relies only on membership fees, donations and voluntary work, we can keep our independence and be less vulnerable to political decisions to maintain our work going.