



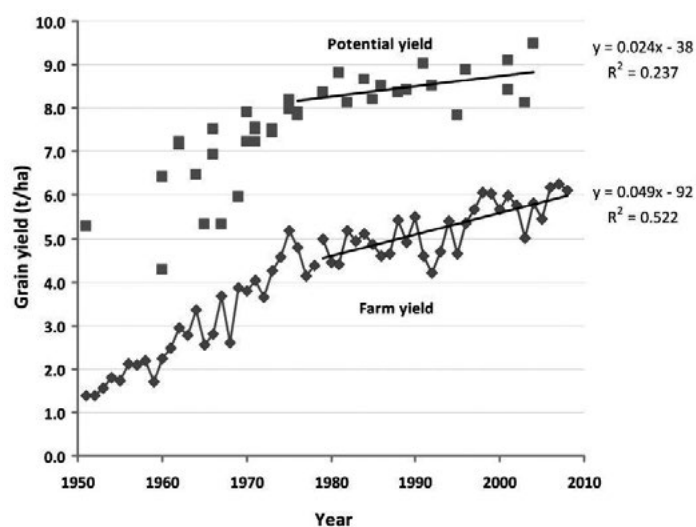
Paying for Farm Saved Seed: Paying for Innovation



Modern plant breeding is a time-consuming and costly endeavour: Plant breeders invest up to 20% of their annual turnover into the development of new varieties, which is higher than other industry sectors.

Investing today for tomorrow's innovation

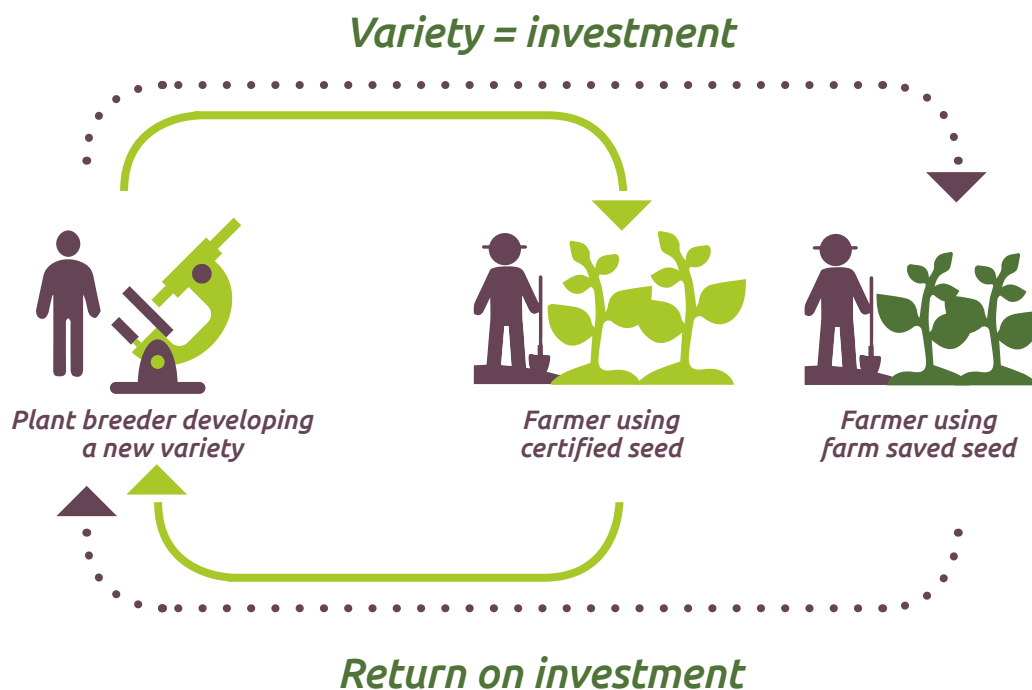
Depending on the crops, it can take a plant breeder 6 to 20 years to bring a new variety to market, delivering benefits to farmers and society of higher yield, pest and disease resistance, end use quality, better nutrition and environmental resilience. The breeder must look into the future to predict what farmers and society will need in 10 years' time and beyond and target his investment to give farmers the innovation they need.



(source: https://dl.sciencesocieties.org/publications/cs/articles/50/Supplement_1/S-85)



The results of breeding a new variety are of course the seeds, which are self-reproducing and thereby, very easy to reproduce. In order to safeguard future innovation in plant breeding, plant breeders require an effective way to protect their innovations and regain their long-term investments in breeding. This is why under the plant breeder's right system in the EU the saving and using of farm saved seed by commercial farmers is only allowed in a limited number of crops and only against the payment of an equitable remuneration.



Why plant breeding is crucial: benefitting EU farmers and society at large

The challenge for modern agriculture is to produce more with less: more food, more nutrients, more diversity with less land, less water, less pesticides and fertilizers. Better crop varieties are a key component of the response to this. Modern plant breeding plays a critical role in helping our farmers to produce enough food that is tasty, healthy, affordable and longer-lasting produced in an efficient and environment-friendly way.

What's inside a wheat seed?



Why is intellectual property protection in plant breeding so important?

Because the composition of improved characteristics in each plant variety is unique and requires years of research and development.

What is Plant Variety Protection and Farm Saved Seed?

Farm saved seed (FSS): the product of the harvest (seed) that a farmer has saved for his own re-planting on his own land.

Plant variety protection in the form of plant breeder's rights enables all breeders from small family breeders to large breeding companies to keep control over their own developments and to re-invest their profits in future breeding. Through plant breeder's rights, breeders are entitled to sell or license out their varieties in return for royalties on an exclusive basis during a limited period of time. However, for certain crops, the use of farm saved seed of protected varieties is allowed in return for payment to be paid to the breeder.





Farm Saved Seed & Certified Seed: the same genetics

Continuous innovation in plant breeding is crucial to help farmers respond to ever emerging new challenges and continue to provide us all with affordable, healthy and plentiful food. For plant breeders, it is crucial to receive a fair return on their investment to be able to re-invest in innovation at a rate of up to 20% of their annual turnover. Remuneration paid on the use of FSS is part of this fair return on investment and if not respected by farmers, genetic progress in food and feed crops will be put at risk.

Although more and more farmers in the EU understand the importance of a fair remuneration on FSS to maintain the innovation process running, there is still a major part benefiting from the genetic progress without paying for it. Such a financial gap could have a serious impact on the capacity of the breeding sector to help us address the many agricultural and climatic challenges that we already have today and that will come tomorrow.

We encourage the EU policy makers to acknowledge the importance of maintaining a strong plant breeder's rights system. However, if – for political reasons – a derogation for the use of FSS is deemed to be necessary to implement, we encourage policy makers to create an enabling environment for breeders to be able to get a fair remuneration on Farm Saved Seed use. Without this being in place for the crops where the law allows the use of FSS, investment in the development of improved varieties for the benefit of our farmers and our society will decline!