

The Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security

2020 FARMER SURVEY RESULTS



 SeedChange



About the Survey

In November 2020, The Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security worked with Good Roots Consulting to conduct a survey with farmers and seed growers who have taken part in our research and training programs. The purpose of this survey was to learn about the experience of participants, the difference that participating has made for them, and to gather their suggestions for how the program can be improved.

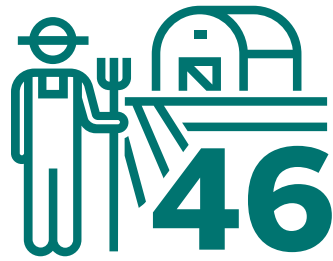
In total, 116 people responded to the survey. The survey revealed the following themes:

- Respondents had been engaged in programs led by the Bauta Initiative for an average of almost 5 years, including seed grow-outs, training and networking events, on-farm variety trials, and participatory plant breeding (PPB).
- The majority of participants surveyed found programming by the Bauta Initiative relevant, high quality, supportive and engaging.
- The strongest outcomes resulting from participating in the Bauta Initiative included improved abilities related to variety trials, plant selection, variety improvement and on-farm plant breeding; connections and knowledge sharing with other farmers and experts related to seed production and plant breeding; and higher quality and more diverse seed being saved.
- Participants want more programming in remote areas and diverse learning opportunities, direct funding where possible, continued connections with others in the seed movement, increased marketing and awareness for the seed sector and regular check-ins with Bauta team members.

More detailed results are shared below. Results are presented according to the number of people who responded to each particular question. Some respondents chose not to answer every question or indicated “not applicable” for questions that did not relate to the particular way that they had engaged in the program.

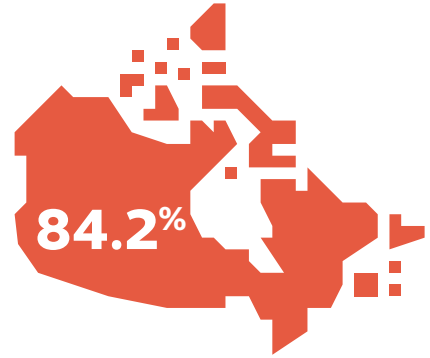
Demographics

Participants provided background information on their age, gender, place of birth, racial identity, and disability. In some cases, people selected more than one category (e.g. racial identity, type of disability).



AGE

The average age of respondents was **46**, with **24** being the youngest and **87** the oldest.



BIRTHPLACE

84.2% of respondents were born in Canada and 14.9% were born in other countries.

GENDER IDENTITY

65.3% of respondents identified as women, **31.7%** as men, and **1%** as non-binary/non-conforming.

RACIAL IDENTITY

86.3% of respondents identified as white, **1%** as First Nations, **1%** as Latin American or Hispanic, and **1%** as South Asian.

DISABILITY

4.9% identified as having an invisible disability and **2%** as having a visible disability.

Seed and Growing Operations

Participants described their seed production practices and growing activities:

GROWING ACTIVITIES

I grow seed for my own use:

57.8%

I grow seed for commercial sale:

40.5%

I grow/raise other agricultural products:

32.8%

I grow vegetables for commercial sale:

45.7%

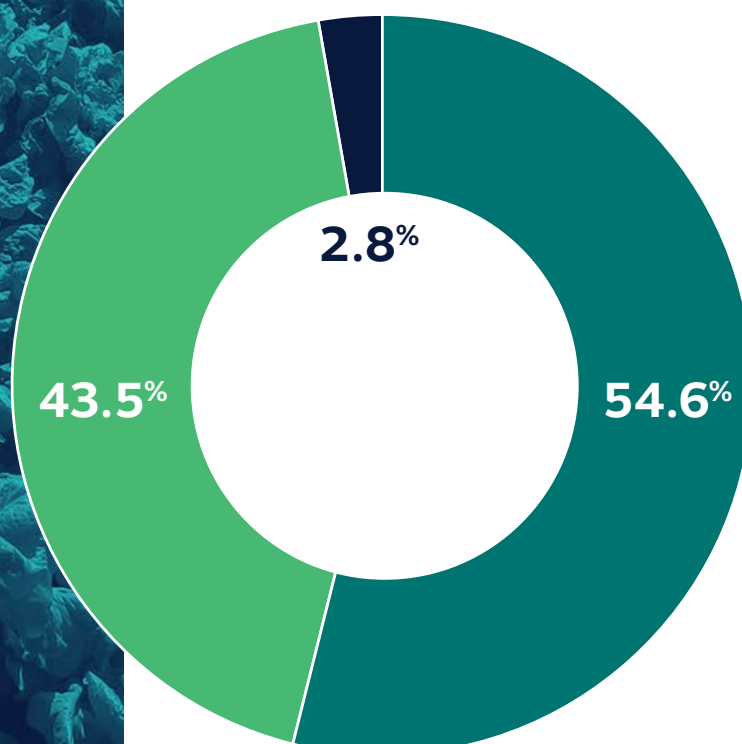
I grow seed for my community:

39.7%

I grow field crops for commercial sale:

17.2%

PRODUCTION PRACTICES



- Organic/ecological, but not certified
- Certified organic
- Conventional

Reasons Customers Purchase Seed

Participants who grow vegetable or field crop seed for commercial sale shared what they think are the main reasons why people choose to purchase seed from them:

Supporting local/
regional seed producers:

76.7%

Specific/exclusive
varieties available:

61.7%

Seed quality:

55.0%

Organic or ecological
farming practices:

55.0%

Diversity of
seed available:

33.3%

Bauta Initiative Program Participation

Respondents had participated in a variety of programs and activities offered through the Bauta Initiative and our regional partners:



On average, respondents reported participating in Bauta activities for 4.8 years.



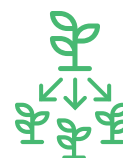
Seed grow-outs: **42.0%**



Received a grant from the Bauta Initiative: **29.0%**



Regionally-hosted training or farmer networking events: **37.9%**



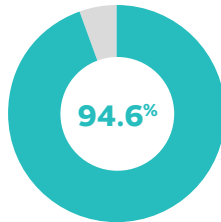
Participatory plant breeding: **28.4%**



On-farm variety trials: **32.8%**

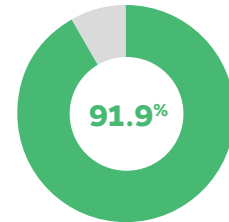
Program Experience

Respondents provided feedback on their experience participating in the Bauta Initiative in various areas:



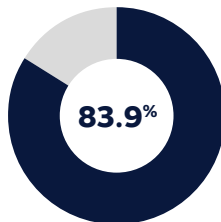
RELEVANCE

94.6% of respondents felt that the activities they participated in had been relevant to their needs and interests.



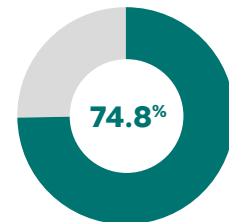
QUALITY

91.9% of respondents reported that the activities they participated in had been high quality.



SUPPORT

83.9% of respondents felt well supported by their Regional Coordinator and/or their team during their participation in the Bauta Initiative.



INPUT

74.8% of respondents shared that they had been provided with adequate opportunities to share their ideas about the Bauta Initiative.



Program Suggestions

Participants provided suggestions for how the program can better support them in their efforts to use, save, exchange, and breed seed. The suggestions were very diverse and related to training, funding, building connection, sector support/advocacy, on-farm research, and individual farmer support. Here are a few common suggestions made by participants across Canada:

OFFER more programming in remote areas and continue to offer diverse training and learning opportunities (e.g., webinars, hands-on conferences, the podcast, field visits from experts).

SEEK more direct funding for farmers to learn about and engage in seed work and to support community seed projects.

CONTINUE TO facilitate connections between seed breeders, growers, and savers, including through more regional seed events and bringing back seed mentorship opportunities.

INCREASE marketing and awareness for the seed sector, such as promoting local seed producers.

SHARE RESOURCES such as access to seed cleaning equipment and regional tool libraries for borrowing small scale implements.

MAKE AVAILABLE a greater selection of vegetables and varieties for on-farm research. Send information and seeds earlier in time for the growing season.

REGULARLY CHECK in with individual farmers to stay up to date on the needs and goals of participants (e.g., seed crops that farmers are looking for).

Program Outcomes

Respondents reported the degree to which they have experienced changes in their seed saving skills, access to seed, and participation in the seed movement.

VARIETY TRIAL ABILITIES

88.0% improved their abilities related to organizing and implementing variety trials (e.g. variety observation, comparing varieties, linking the value of variety trials to seed production, etc.). (n=92)

PLANT SELECTION, VARIETY IMPROVEMENT AND PLANT BREEDING ABILITIES

80.6% improved their abilities related to plant selection, variety improvement and/or on-farm plant breeding. (n=98)

CONNECTING WITH EXPERTS

78.0% were able to connect with experts to answer their questions related to seed production and plant breeding. (n=100)

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

76.7% felt more connected with other farmers and seed growers that are part of the seed movement in Canada. (n=103)

SHARING KNOWLEDGE

75.8% shared knowledge and ideas related to seed production and plant breeding with other farmers and 78.6% received knowledge and ideas related from other participants. (n=95; n=98)

SAVING DIVERSE SEED

75.3% were saving a greater diversity of vegetable/field crop seed. (n=97)

SEED QUALITY

70.5% were saving better quality vegetable/field crop seed. (n=98)

ACCESSING DIVERSE SEED

67.0% were able to access a greater diversity of regionally adapted, ecologically-grown seed. (n=94)

SELLING SEED

40.7% of respondents had started to sell vegetable seed commercially. (n=54)

Individual Impacts

Participants shared the most important difference that their engagement with the Bauta Initiative has made for them and their farm.

THE TOP FIVE AREAS OF IMPACT WERE:

1

New knowledge

2

A stronger network of seed growers

3

New experiences (e.g., variety trials, plant breeding)

4

Training and skills development

5

Increased interest in seed-saving and production

“The grant I received allowed me to improve the quality of the seeds I offer as well as make my seed cleaning more efficient and safe for my lung health. I share this equipment with other seed companies.” –BC

“My interest in saving seed has transformed from a side-hobby into an important part of my farm business’ identity.” –BC

“Learning how to conduct variety trials. As well, the variety trials presented a great opportunity to teach the public about the importance of genetic diversity and seed sovereignty during farm tours.” –Prairies

“That I participated in selecting a wheat cross that performed notably better than conventional varieties in organic trials, and that I will hopefully be able to grow this on a field scale for farm direct sales. A wheat that will be more genetically diverse, and feasibly more resilient in the face of climate change.” –Prairies

“It is actually what caused me to start seed saving—fostering an awareness of why this is important.” –Ontario

“Seeds are no longer an afterthought and I am connected with a community of others that feel the same.” –Ontario

“I have felt financially supported and heard. I have access to knowledge that is still fairly marginal here in QC.” –Québec

“Définitivement le renforcement du réseau semenciers québécois (et canadien/américain). Nous nous sentons bien plus connectés avec les autres acteurs du milieu.” –Québec

“It truly enabled us to continue focusing on seed crops as our priority at our farm” –Atlantic Canada

“Helping me connect with other seed growers and enabling me to encourage other vegetable growers to start saving seed.” –Atlantic Canada participant

Next Steps

For 2021, we are continuing to deliver comprehensive training programs, organize on-farm research programs like CANOVI and the PPB field crop program, facilitate networking opportunities among farmers, seed growers, and plant breeders, and maintain connections with farmers and seed growers who are building regional seed systems.

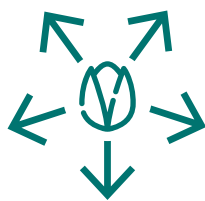
Based on your suggestions from this survey, we will enhance our programming in the following ways in the future:



FUNDRAISE to secure funding for farmers to access training programs, participate in research projects, and engage in consultations with the seed growing and farming community.



IMPROVE our timelines on seed distribution for the field season and communicating research results with farmers and seed producers.



DIVERSIFY the kinds of training opportunities we offer, and the vegetables and field crops we focus on in our research.



ENGAGE the general public on the importance of seed in our food system and how we can better support local seed producers.

Thank you!

Thank you for your feedback on how the Bauta Initiative can better support your efforts in building seed security in Canada. The best versions of our work are when we respond directly to the needs of the farmers and seed producers we work with. We appreciate you taking the time to provide input on how we can improve our work and for all of the work you do to create resilient and just seed systems.

We welcome any questions and ideas you have about how we can better support building regional seed systems in Canada! Please don't hesitate to contact The Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security regional coordinator for your region:

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