



What policy for agrobiodiversity?

Insights from China and Germany

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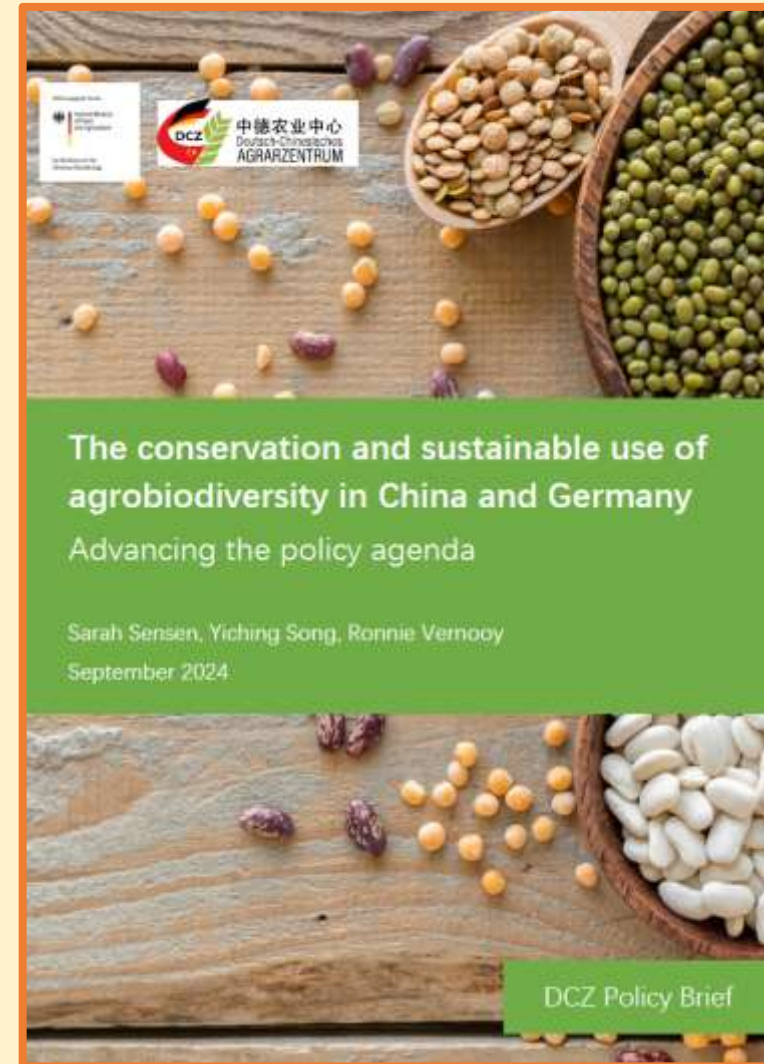
Advancing the conservation and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity

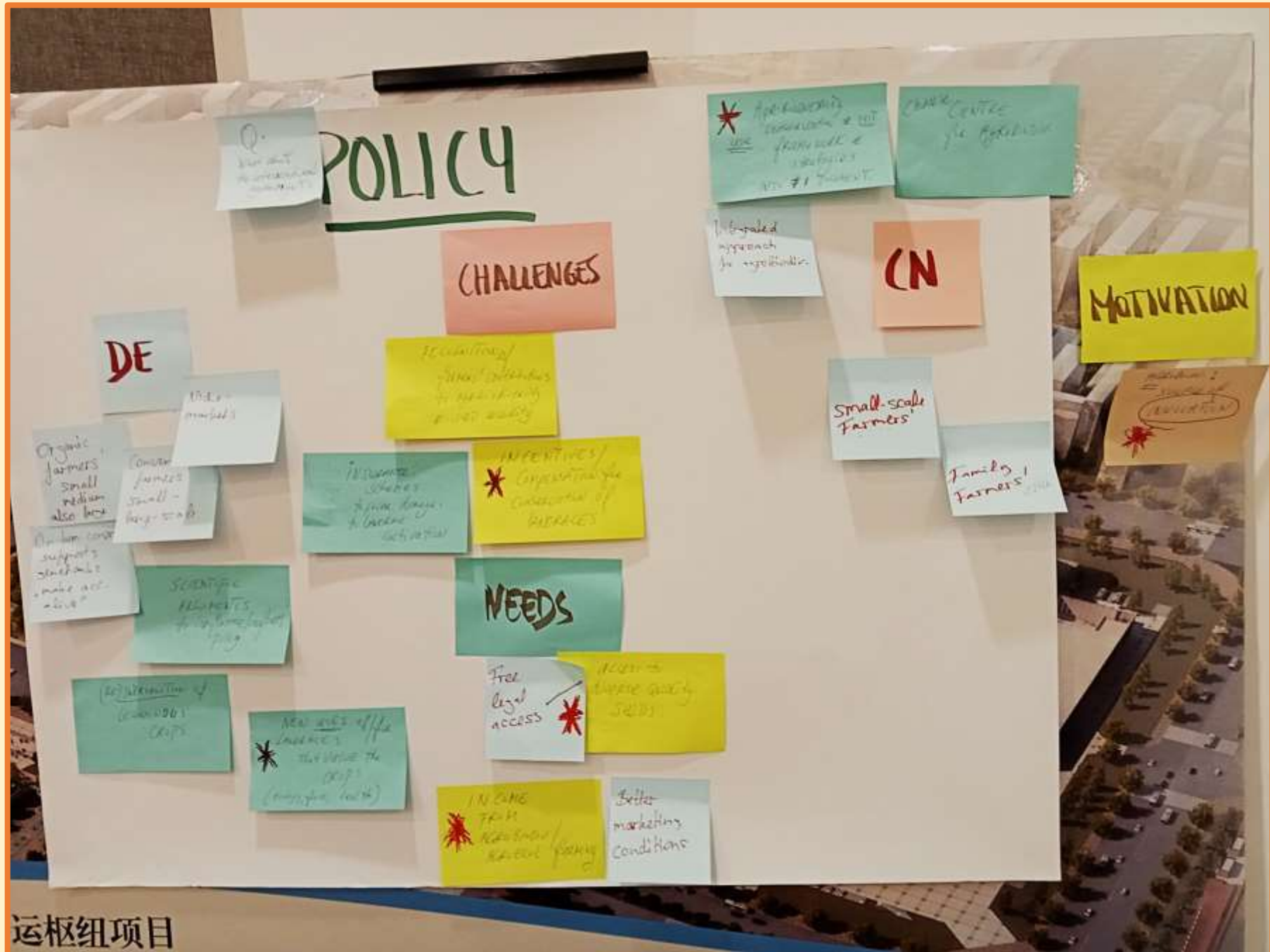
- Improving knowledge and practice
- Capacity development
- Exchange and sharing of experiences
- Technology transfer
- Value chain development
- Policy and legal support



Agrobiodiversity Network: What can China and German learn from each other to advance the policy agenda for agrobiodiversity?

1. The German situation
2. The Chinese situation
3. Core policy components and recommendations





运枢纽项目

Developing an Agricultural Biodiversity Policy for China

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China

- **Highly diverse agroecological areas and long farming history, richly endowed**
- **In recent decades: local agrobiodiversity conservation under pressure due to industrialization, modernization of agriculture, out-migration**
- **No agrobiodiversity policy**
- **New initiatives: agricultural and bio-cultural heritage sites, community-supported agriculture, community seed banks, conservation areas and farms, farmers' markets**



China: policy landscape (1)

- Recent policy developments pay attention to some key elements of an imagined national agrobiodiversity policy: agroecology, ecological civilization, genetic resources conservation (through seed banks), “green” (energy) development, healthy diets, rural revitalization
- China’s very extensive provisions on conservation and sustainable utilization of genetic resources are reflected in *many* laws and regulations at *four* levels

China policy landscape (2)

- 2018, the No. 1 Central document: further promote green agriculture and support the adequate (re)orientation of agricultural production
- Constitution of the People's Republic of China
- Seed Law of the People's Republic of China (2021 Revision)
- Regulations
 - China Biodiversity Conservation Action Plan
 - Regulations of the People's Republic of China on the Conservation of New Plant Varieties
- Plans
 - National biodiversity conservation strategy and action plan (2011-2030)
 - Medium and long term development plan for the conservation and utilization of Crop Germplasm Resources in China (2015–2030)

China: policy landscape (3)

- **Very extensive ex situ conservation system: over 500,000 accessions of over 10,000 cultivated and wild plants**
- **Priorities: expand collection and characterization of landraces; establish the registration system for crop landraces by farmers; improve the use efficiency of germplasm by making the information better available on the characteristics of accessions conserved in the national genebanks, and providing elite germplasm for breeding and related research**

Germany

- **Country with large rural areas**
- **Has undergone many changes in its natural resource basis, with a notable reduction in agrobiodiversity**
- **Has put considerable effort in developing a supportive policy environment for the conservation and sustainable use of its remaining agrobiodiversity**
- **Civil society activities: agroecology, organic products/(super)markets, value chain development (“old” varieties/races), seed savers**



Germany: policy landscape (1)

- Overall aim: 1) find ways and measures to contribute with a broad diversity of genetic resources to a resilient, sustainable, and circular production of food and raw materials
- 2) conserve a sufficiently large gene pool of genetic resources as an “option pool” of characteristics that will be essential in the future to adapt to different crises
- Strong alignment with international agreements (CBD, EU Green deal, ITPGRFA)



Germany: policy landscape (2)

- Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL): overall coordination
- National Strategy and national programs for plant, animal, forest, and aquatic genetic resources
- Information and Coordination Centre for Biological Diversity (IBV) at the Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (BLE)
- National information platform/website (<https://genres.de/en/>)
- EU-Regulation on Conservation Varieties adopted in 2009

Germany: policy landscape (3)

- **“National Strategy on Genetic Resources for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries” (BMEL 2024), replacing the agrobiodiversity strategy from 2007**
- **6 National genebanks: 184,000 accessions**
- **Federal central ex situ genebank housed by the Leibniz Institute of Plant Genetics and Crop Plant Research: 151,000 samples of more than 3,000 different species from almost 700 botanical genera**
- **2019, The German Network of Genetic Reserves: in situ conservation of priority crop wild relatives**

Agrobiodiversity policy *core components and recommendations*

1. A complementary strategy: long-term conservation, promotion, and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity through ex situ, in situ, on-farm conservation, and various types of plant breeding

Establish the mechanism of Payments of Agrobiodiversity Conservation Services, through which farmer communities, community seed banks, and seed saver organizations can apply for funding to implement local agrobiodiversity initiatives

Legal recognition of and technical support for community seed banks and organized seed savers groups or associations

Core policy *components and recommendations*(2)

2. Adding value to the sustainable use of agrobiodiversity: effective and responsible value chains for agricultural genetic resources, e.g. through local product development

Support direct marketing of local agrobiodiversity-based products, e.g. through public procurement schemes



Core policy *components and recommendations*(3)

3. Sustaining agrobiodiversity through agroecology: maintaining sustainable ecological balances and ecosystems services over time through agroecological practices and integrated plant protection measures

Develop regulations for the integration of old plant varieties in agroecological practices, such as agroforestry, crop rotation, and intercropping



Core policy *components and recommendations*(4)

4. The indispensable link: connecting the conservation and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity to resilient seed system development

Promote and support regional networks of on-farm experiments for the evaluation, selection, and improvement of important local varieties, implemented by farmer associations, community seed banks, and seed saver groups



Core policy *components and recommendations*(5)

5. Creating synergy: promoting and fostering multi-stakeholders, inter-ministerial, inter-sectoral consultation, knowledge exchange, and collaboration

Establish a national, multi-stakeholder agrobiodiversity committee (China)

Support the establishment of a global information platform about community seed banks and their collections





Xie xie!

Danke!

Photos: Ronnie Vernooy