

# PLANT BREEDERS RIGHTS: **Proposed changes will hurt farmers**

Seed transnationals such as Syngenta and Monsanto, along with supportive industry groups, are pushing for changes to Canada’s seed and plant breeding systems. One proposed change is to tighten Canada’s rules governing seeds and the protection of “intellectual property rights” over those seeds.

In Canada, the right to sell and profit from a seed variety is governed by our Plant Breeders’ Rights (PBR) regime. Canada’s PBR regime is based on the UPOV (International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants) Convention. Seed companies, industry supporters, and the Seed Sector Review recommend replacing our “UPOV 1978” framework with the much more restrictive (for farmers) UPOV 1991 framework. (*See NFU Fact Sheet # 2 for an overview of the Seed Sector Review process.*) Changing from UPOV ’78 to UPOV ’91 would:

- Extend plant breeders’ protection and royalty periods from 15 years to 20 years. This would be a profit windfall for the dominant seed companies and a costly blow to struggling farm families
- Allow interference with farmers’ rights (protected in UPOV ’78) to save, re-use, and exchange seeds.
- Create “a cascade right to extend PBR to harvested material and end products in crops where breeders did not have the opportunity to exercise his [sic] rights on propagating material.” (Seed companies need this change so they can collect royalties at elevators and seed cleaning facilities from farmers who have saved and re-used their own seed.)
- Open the door for the patenting of seeds protected under Plant Breeders’ Rights—introducing double protection for seed developers.

Proposed changes to Plant Breeders’ Rights—changing from UPOV ’78 to ’91—are a one-way street. Changes would mean more restrictions on farmers and deregulation for seed companies. Farmers would face higher costs and companies would reap higher profits. These proposed

**They want to force you to pay every time you re-use your seed on your farm.**

changes—like the earlier versions of PBR and gene patenting laws—are part of an attempt to construct a financial base under a high-cost, inefficient, unproductive model of corporate plant breeding and seed research.

Canada doesn’t need new PBR legislation, more restrictions on farmers, or more profitable and powerful seed companies: Canada needs a publicly-funded, publicly-controlled plant breeding system to inexpensively and efficiently develop seeds needed by Canadian farmers and the Canadian economy.

**The flip-side of this flyer lists actions to safeguard our public plant breeding system.**

# Work with us to protect YOUR RIGHT to save, re-use, exchange, and sell seeds

The **National Farmers Union (NFU)** is fighting back on behalf of farm families and all Canadians who believe that the seeds of life are too important to be controlled by foreign transnationals. The NFU has launched an aggressive campaign that includes the following actions:

- Ads in major farm newspapers;
- Trade show displays to help inform farmers;
- A rural canvass to inform and organize farmers;
- Meetings with legislators;
- An NFU National Convention focused on seeds and farmers' rights (November 18-20, 2004 in Saskatoon);
- Meetings with urban allies to forge a rural/urban coalition around this issue;
- Press conferences, meetings with editorial boards, and other media work; and
- A petition to the federal parliament demanding that the government enshrine in legislation farmers' rights to save, re-use, select, exchange, and sell their seeds and that the government support farmers and the Canadian economy by expanding Canada's public plant breeding programs.

## You can help in four ways:

1. Join the NFU. Working together, farmers can retain control of their seed supply.
2. Donate to our work. Your donation will help finance our work on this issue.
3. Spread the word. Talk to your neighbors and pass on this information.
4. Help collect signatures on our petition to parliament.

**Petitions, fact sheets and additional information are available by calling, writing, faxing, visiting, or emailing the NFU office.**

*For two decades, the NFU has worked to maximize farmers' access to productive and affordable new seed varieties. Please join us to protect Canadian family farms and to create better food and agricultural policies for Canada.*

**To join, please send a cheque for \$150 to the address below.**



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