



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang  
Consumers Association of Penang  
檳城消費人協會 பினாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

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**Speech by Mr. Mohideen Abdul Kader, President of Consumers' Association of Penang at CAP's Seeds Fair held on 23 April 2022 at CAP premises, 10 Jalan Masjid Negeri, Penang**

**Save and share seeds: Conserve our natural heritage**

Greetings and welcome to CAP's seeds fair, held in conjunction with the International Seeds Day observed every year on April 26th. We have gathered here to celebrate seeds and to encourage seed saving and sharing.

Seeds are our first link to the food chain and are essential for life. All along farm communities have been observing, selecting, nurturing, breeding and saving seeds. Traditionally the regular exchange of seeds among communities and farmers had allowed crops to adapt to different conditions, climates, and deal with different challenges of soils, pests and diseases. However, industrial agriculture and its push for commercial seeds have eroded not only seed diversity but also farmers' seed systems.

“Because seeds are so central to people's cultures and food systems, to control seeds is to control life,” said Michael Fakhri, Special Rapporteur on the right to food, in his latest report to the Human Rights Council. The report further states that since humankind relies on plants for food, feed, fibre and a functional ecosystem, nothing less than the right to life is at stake when farmers' seed systems are challenged or poorly supported.

It is thus vital for us to take control of our seeds and keep it away from the clutches of corporations. Seed laws and plant variety rights are being constantly revised to adapt to the demands of the seed and biotechnology industries. The ultimate aim of business interests is to make it impossible for farmers to freely save, replant, exchange, and sell seeds and thus make them dependent on purchased seeds. For example Kenya recently introduced a new law to ensure that all seeds sold or distributed in the country have been certified, therefore criminalising the selling of unindexed plant varieties.

This may very well happen in Malaysia because by signing on to certain free trade agreements Malaysia would be required to join the International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (commonly known as UPOV91). UPOV91 would pose some restrictions to the use of farm-saved seeds, propagating materials of PVP-protected varieties and prohibits their exchange and sale by farmers.

In Honduras, ANAFABE (National Association for the Promotion of Organic Farming), a group which has been advocating for organic farming and food sovereignty has spoken out against a PVP law ever since it was passed in 2012, and in 2016, took legal action to declare it unconstitutional. In 2021 the Honduran Supreme Court of Justice declared the PVP law unconstitutional stating among others that it represents an attack on the country's sovereignty and right to self-determination, besides violating constitutional principles for life, human dignity, and the rights of the Honduran people.

Until now due to actions by civil society organisations we have been able to suspend the progress of Malaysia joining UPOV91 and also the growing of genetically modified crops here. Nevertheless, the pressure is mounting including a Plant Seed Quality Bill being proposed to be tabled in the Parliament. Quality seeds are important to farmers and consumers. However, the Plant Seed Quality Bill may have a far-reaching impact beyond “seed quality” control, by impinging the farmers’ seeds system whilst supporting commercial seed producers.

As farmers and gardeners, we need to be aware of these attempts to take control of our seeds. The report of the Special Rapporteur sums up that the more a seed system recognizes and supports farmers as stewards of a seed system for all of humankind, the more likely this system fulfils people’s human rights. Flourishing and resilient seed systems are key to the full realization of the rights to life and to food.

CAP has been promoting agroecology, urban farming and seed sharing through events such as this and had established our community seed bank which has a collection of local herbs and vegetables which are organically grown. Feel free to propagate and exchange these seeds. Any disruption of the right to exchange seeds, farmers’ seeds system and our seeds sovereignty must be challenged as seeds are crucial for humanity. We must regain control of our seeds, our natural heritage.

**MOHIDEEN ABDUL KADER**  
**President**  
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