



Media Release: Strategic Plan

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DivSeek International Network Launches New Strategy to Improve Generation and Sharing of Information about Global Plant Genetic Resources

A new strategy to improve global access to information about plant genetic resources and the benefits they offer has been issued by DivSeek International Network (DivSeek), a global network committed to unlocking the potential of crop biodiversity so that it can be used to enhance the productivity, sustainability and resilience of crops and agricultural systems.

Established in 2012 DivSeek International has over 70 member organizations from 30 different countries who are working to manage, characterize and share information about plant genetic resources. The **strategy outlined for 2021-2026**¹ will help accelerate access to and benefit sharing from these resources that include seed and other plant collections, along with provenance and characterization data, so they can be used for the sustainable production of food, feed, fiber, medicines, and renewable natural products.

“Plant genetic resources provide the foundation for development of crops resilient to climate change, and can help curb declines in ecosystem biodiversity. With recent advances in DNA and information technologies, there are exciting opportunities to extend the range of crops for food security and drive a revolution in bio-renewables” DivSeek Executive Director Graham King said.

“In developing its new strategy, DivSeek has identified a wide range of existing and potential stakeholders who would benefit from greater access to information about plant genetic resources. This includes value chains where variation about plant raw materials has a large influence on end-use qualities, including dietary nutrition, renewable energy, and advanced materials.”

The three major aims of the new strategy include:

1. **Acceleration:** DivSeek will catalyze the informed conservation, management and traceability of plant genetic resources.
2. **Adding value:** DivSeek seeks to add value to plant genetic resources, facilitating their wider use, and extending the rate and scope of crop improvement.
3. **Education:** DivSeek will increase awareness, training and education about the value of biodiversity and benefit sharing.

The past century has seen the rapid genetic erosion of plant biodiversity, both in natural ecosystems and among cultivated plants. Addressing this challenge, over the past 50 years a global system of over 1,750 national and international gene bank²s has been established to conserve the abundant diversity found in traditional domesticated local crops and their wild relatives.

¹ <https://divseekintl.org/strategic-plan/>

² e.g. www.genebanks.org/genebanks/

The rapid technological developments of the last few years have opened a window of opportunity to mobilise plant genetic variation and accelerate the rate of crop improvement for sustainable production of food, feed, fibre, medicines, and renewable natural products.

Available variation can be harnessed to deliver new cultivars that combine improved taste and nutritional value with climate-resilient qualities and increased carbon sequestration that achieve sustainable yields with fewer agricultural inputs.

The DivSeek approach is to work with a global community of researchers and stakeholders to improve the quality, quantity and accessibility of information about plant genetic resources as the basis for enhancing *responsible* and *sustainable* conservation and use of plant biodiversity.

“Driven by our strategy, the focus over the next five years is to pave the way for wider sharing of information about these resources, using advances in genomics, remote sensing and information technologies, alongside increased training and awareness.”

This effort will be paralleled by a focus on understanding and complying with applicable access and benefit sharing obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity, Nagoya Protocol and International Treaty for Plant Genetic Resources in Food and Agriculture.

DivSeek International Network Inc. is a Not for Profit registered in Canada. The Global Institute for Food Security based in Saskatoon, hosts DivSeek thanks to funding support from Genome Canada and Genome Prairie.

We are also pleased to **announce the new Board of Directors** (BoD) <https://divseekintl.org/board-of-directors/>, recently elected by the DivSeek membership. The BoD includes representatives from seven countries with a broad range of expertise in national and international efforts focused on plant genetic resources.

To learn more about DivSeek, visit its website at divseekintl.org.

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