



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

# Interaction between ITPGRFA and UPOV Convention - United Kingdom experience

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# Interaction between ITPGRFA and UPOV Convention - United Kingdom experience

- Background
- UK plant genetic resources
- Farmers' rights and use of plant varieties
- Seeds marketing legislation

# Background

## **UPOV Convention**

Contracting party since 1968

1991 UPOV Convention since 1999

## **ITPGRFA**

Contracting party since 2004

Implemented directly, without national legislation

Policy for Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in 2004, updated in 2007 and maintained by subsequent governments

# Overview of UK agriculture

- 244,000 km<sup>2</sup> total land area
- 64 m population
- Agriculture meets 60% of food requirements
- Agriculture about 1% of GDP
- 70% of land area is farmed
- Of which:
  - 25% crops
  - 40% managed grassland
  - 25% rough grazing
- Large holdings, highly mechanised and productive
- Diverse farming types adapted to climate and geography



# Plant genetic resources

- Significant PGR in landraces, heritage varieties and crop wild relatives
- Especially in PGR collections, resulting from long history of plant collecting and breeding
- High level of interest from small farmers and gardeners, including for niche food uses
- Concept of ownership by society

# PGR collections

Designated to ITPGRFA Multilateral System:

- *Malus*, National Fruit Collection, Brogdale
- Wild species, Millennium Seed Bank, Kew Royal Botanic Gardens
- Vegetables, Genetic Resources Unit, University of Warwick
- *Pisum* and cereals, John Innes Centre
- Potato, flax and apple, Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
- Cereals and vegetables, Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture
- Potatoes, James Hutton Institute

# Farmers' rights and use of plant varieties

- Most farmers use modern, improved varieties developed for UK conditions
- Good understanding of the importance of breeding and plant variety rights
- Broad acceptance of UPOV 1991 and the balance between breeder and farmer
- Effective system for collection of royalties on farm saved seed, introduced in 2007 through cooperation between farmers and breeders



# PGR and seeds marketing legislation

- EU legislation for conservation varieties and amateur vegetables used to some extent, helping with in situ conservation of PGR
- eg conservation varieties of barley for niche beers and whisky  
heritage varieties of potatoes and vegetables for local use
- Many gardeners want to grow and conserve a wide range of heritage varieties

Thank you