

## CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS:

### SYMPOSIUM ON SEED COMMONS IN 'AGRICULTURE AND HUMAN VALUES'

The *RightSeeds* research group, in collaboration with the *Agriculture and Human Values* journal, invites contributions to a Symposium Issue on Seed Commons. Details of the application process are given below.

#### WHAT ARE SEED COMMONS?

Intellectual property rights on 'new' plant varieties or specific traits, including control over farmers' use of seed, are at the core of ongoing debates on food sovereignty, sustainable farming and food systems as well as strategies for hunger and poverty reduction in rural areas.

Many citizens, not only farmers, are concerned about the ways in which plant varieties and seed will be managed in the future, and how freedom of choice and adaptation to future challenges and needs can be secured in a situation where just a few 'global players' hold rights and patents on an increasing number of plant varieties and traits.

The conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity is expected to play a key role for future farming and food system responses to changing conditions and needs; however, existing concepts and governance approaches appear insufficient to halt dramatic losses of this diversity.

Commons approaches present an alternative path to the dominant mindset of privatization and restriction to use. They play an increasing role in the global governance of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture as well as in the context of organic plant breeding in Europe; they also underlie traditional seed systems of the Global South (Dedeurwaerdere 2012; Frison 2018; Girard 2018; Halewood 2013; Kotschi & Horneburg 2018; Osman & Chable 2009; Pautasso et al. 2013; Vernooy et al. 2014). These alternative approaches build upon common ownership and collective management of seed and genetic resources, often involving participation of smallholder farmers and integration of knowledge held by various actors.

Conceptually, such commons structures in the breeding and seed sector can be viewed from a 'New Commons' perspective. New Commons – including Knowledge Commons, Cultural Commons and Global Commons – have become an increasingly important research subject in Commons Studies (Hess 2008). As they reach beyond the sector of natural common-pool resources, theoretical and conceptual advancements are required (cf. Frischmann, Madison & Strandburg 2014; Stern 2011). This widened scope also calls for a deeper assessment of current and emerging forms of collaboration, governance and institutions.

From a normative perspective, the New Commons features a quite diverse set of values; e.g. re-democratization, reconnecting the economy to social-ecological systems, social equality and individual freedom. Sound analytical investigation of arrangements in the field of Seed Commons promises to strengthen the systematic understandings of the New Commons and the challenges of implementing it in practice. Such research can also contribute to re-evaluation of values and norms that underlie prevalent approaches to the protection of intellectual property regarding plant varieties and governance of seed.

#### ABOUT RIGHTSEEDS

*RightSeeds* is a research project with international focus, implemented by three German research organizations – the Universities of Oldenburg and Göttingen and the Institute for Ecological Economy Research (IÖW) in Berlin. *RightSeeds* explores commons-based approaches to plant breeding, seed production and seed usage based on inter- and transdisciplinary research approaches, integrating perspectives from the

fields of economics, ecology, political science and philosophy and collaborating with seed initiatives, companies and NGOs in Germany and the Philippines.

As a first step towards exploring and connecting various research initiatives in this specific area of research, the *RightSeeds* project invited researchers who work on New Commons to an international thematic workshop, which was held June 6-8, 2018 in Oldenburg, Germany. The idea for organizing a ‘Symposium’ Issue on Seed Commons in a relevant scientific journal emerged at that meeting. The overall aim is to enhance the visibility of this important field of research and practice and to contribute to the development of its theoretical foundations.

More information: <https://www.rightseeds.de/en/>

#### ABOUT THE JOURNAL

*Agriculture and Human Values* is the journal of the Agriculture, Food, and Human Values Society. The journal, like the society, is dedicated to an open and free discussion of the values that shape food and agricultural systems and the structures that underlie their current and alternative visions. It publishes interdisciplinary research that critically examines the values, relationships, conflicts and contradictions within contemporary agricultural and food systems and addresses the impact of agricultural and food related institutions, policies, and practices on human populations, the environment, democratic governance, and social equity. This journal provides an ideal ‘home’ for such a Symposium Issue.

The journal welcomes interdisciplinary research from sociology, anthropology, development, economics, geography, philosophy, environmental studies, health and nutrition science, crop and soil science, and other social and physical sciences; contributions may include empirical studies, qualitative research, theoretical discussions, case studies, literature reviews, policy analyses, in-the-field reports, and humanities-based inquiries.

*Agriculture and Human Values* is a member of the Springer ‘family’ of journals. There are no publication costs to publish in *Agriculture and Human Values*. Several options for open access publishing are available, including arrangements between the corresponding author’s institution and Springer, Springer *OpenChoice* and Springer’s self-archiving policy (‘*Green OA*’).

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More information: <https://link.springer.com/journal/10460>; <https://www.springer.com/philosophy/ethics+and+moral+philosophy/journal/10460>

#### TEAM OF EDITORS

**Stefanie Sievers-Glotzbach** is professor at the University of Oldenburg, Department of Business Administration, Economics and Law, and leads the research group *RightSeeds*, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). She holds a Ph.D. in Sustainability Sciences and a Diploma degree in Environmental Sciences, both from Leuphana University, Lüneburg. She was a researcher in the Ecological Economics group at Oldenburg University from 2012 to 2015, and the coordinator of the master program

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<sup>1</sup> Source Normalized Impact per Paper (SNIP)

<sup>2</sup> SCImago Journal Rank (SJR)

'Sustainability Economics and Management'. Her research interests include ecological, institutional and sustainability economics, sustainable development, environmental justice, and socio-ecological resilience research. Her present research focusses on commons as a governance model and its potential for social-ecological transformation.

**Anja Christinck** (Ph.D.) is an agronomist with specialization in agricultural social sciences and communication. Her scientific work focusses on participatory and transdisciplinary research on agrobiodiversity, plant breeding and seed system development in the context of international development-oriented agricultural research. She contributes to scientific policy advice on issues relating to intellectual property rights for plant varieties and seeds, human rights and rights of farmers through consultancies to the German Federal Parliament, various ministries, international donor organizations and FAO. Besides her thematic expertise, she has lengthy experience as an author, reviewer and editor of publications, conference proceedings and books.

These editors will work in close cooperation with the Journal's Editor-in-Chief, **Prof. Harvey S. James Jr.**, University of Missouri, USA.

#### DETAILS AND TIMELINE FOR APPLICATION

We invite contributions from a wide range of scientific disciplines, including:

- **Conceptual perspective:** Commons in the seed sector as a field of practical application of the New Commons, especially of Knowledge Commons and Global Commons.
- **Philosophical perspective:** Normative reasons and arguments for commons-based plant breeding and seed systems; reflection on the respective roles of research and technology in breeding and seed systems.
- **Agro-ecological perspective:** Impacts of commons-based breeding and seed systems on agrobiodiversity and ecosystem services.
- **Socio-economic perspective:** Organizational challenges in commons-based plant breeding and seed systems: successful knowledge integration, alternative (business) models for financing, protection from privatization, assessing the social-ecological outcome, etc.
- **Policy/governance perspective:** Positioning of commons-based breeding and seed initiatives in view of international and national policies and law, e.g. intellectual property rights; and polycentric governance of plant genetic resources.
- **North-South perspective:** Learning from experiences made with commons-based breeding and seed systems in various countries and contexts; differences and commonalities of global Seed Commons.

Priority will be given to applications of international and interdisciplinary research teams. Authors who wish to contribute are invited to apply by submitting **short papers (6-8 pages) by e-mail** (see address below) **on or before 30 June 2019** and will be informed within four weeks if their contribution is accepted. The deadline for submission of full articles for peer review will be 31 October 2019.

Contributors are kindly asked to follow the journal's instructions for authors while preparing their manuscripts. The maximum amount of words for a manuscript (full paper) submitted to Agriculture and Human Values is 9000, excluding references, tables and/or figures.

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