

SAVE OUR SEEDS PROGRAMME

2022

What can molecular biology contribute to our understanding of life?

What does it mean to privatise life?

What is it that we miss in our knowledge?

Can someone claim the right to privatise it?

How transparent is our food system now and what are the threats for keeping its transparency?

Do we know how ecosystems self-organize and interconnect?

What is CRISPR-Cas9 and how powerful is it?

Do we understand this degree of complexity?

When one genetically modifies an organism, whose interest is taken into consideration?

What are the problems of the current agricultural systems? What solutions are possible? What definitions of the problems can we offer?

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS:

**JOIN A VIBRANT COLLECTIVE
OF ACTIVISTS!**

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IN A NUTSHELL

Save Our Seeds Programme is a series of training meetings for young activists, educators, artists, local and national leaders of formal organizations and informal movements, experienced campaigners, agroecological farmers, breeders, scientists, philosophers and seed savers.

The programme will be divided into two parts - the public-open part, streamed online for a wider public and a closed part - an online workshop programme for our **collective of activists**.

The young activists interested in joining the collective will undergo an application process. All EU nationals between 16 and 30 years can apply by filling out [THIS FORM](#) till 30.03.2022.

The programme consists of 10 meetings, 3 hours twice a week, in April and May 2022. Each meeting includes the presentation and lecture given by mentors and the workshop part. The members of the collective have an active role in co-creating the content and the form of the programme.

The methodology of the process will include, but will not be limited to:

- Discussions, brainstorming.
- Lectures. Presentations.
- Readings and discussing the readings.
- Investigation and presentation tasks for participants.
- Dialogo de Saberes Methodology (used by La Via Campesina).
- Mentoring.
- Case studies.
- Exchanging experience and knowledge.
- Focusing on knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- Designing a plan for campaigns.

Hopefully, the programme will result in a series of local and national campaigns aiming at reclaiming our power over how our food systems work.

COLLECTIVE OF ACTIVISTS

The collective will consist of:

- a) a group of around 20 **MENTORS** (experienced activists, lecturers, scientists, agroecology and organic farming practitioners, seed savers, educators, philosophers and campaigners) from different EU countries,
- b) a group of 20-30 young (16-30 years old) activists, community leaders, artists and campaigners, interested in agroecological issues and taking action.

The young activists will be selected by a selection committee on the basis of the following criteria:

- the level of interests in the topics of organic farming, seed sovereignty, agroecology, GMOs, Gene Drive Organisms,
- the leadership potential (if they are already the multipliers in their communities, organizations, informal movements),
- willingness and ideas to campaign against a deregulation of the GMOs at the EU and the regional level.



The call for the young participants is open from 5.03.2022 till 30.03.2022.

Since the programme is based on knowledge- and experience sharing, the participants will be active co-creators of the programme!

We are still in the process of confirming the participation of all of the mentors we selected for the programme. For now we are happy to announce the names of the mentors who confirmed their participation so far:

1) **Benedikt Haerlin** heads the Berlin office of the Foundation on Future Farming (Zukunftsstiftung Landwirtschaft). He co-ordinates the European initiative "Save our Seeds", runs a "global field" of 2000 m² and co-chairs the thinktank ARC2020 on European agricultural policies. He represented northern NGOs in the board of the IAASTD. Before, he was an author and journalist, a Member of the European Parliament and worked for Greenpeace International.

2) **María Carrascosa García** - Agronomic Engineer with Masters Degree in Organic Agriculture. For more than 15 years, she has focused her professional activity on the development of initiatives and actions in the framework of food sovereignty, agroecology, agricultural biodiversity, family farming and short supply channels, in Spain but also in other countries as Brazil.

3) **Annika Michelson** is a board member of NGO Maadjas - Estonian seed saver organisation and a senior lecturer at Häme University of Applied Sciences in Finland, where she coordinates the Finnish Heritage Cereals Propagation Network.

Meet some of our mentors in the collective!



4) **Carsten Tiede** - Senior Expert in Senior Experten Service, Plant Breeding Assistant in Keyserlingk-Institute, Biodynamic Adviser in Section for Agriculture, Mentor in European Consortium for Organic Plant Breeding (ECO-PB), Board Secretary in Paul Schatz Gesellschaft e.V. Member of IFOAM Organics International, Hortus officinarum e.V., Netzwerk Kräuter BW, Kultursaat e.V. and Bellis, Working_group for Goetheanistic knowledge of plants.

5) **Angelika Hilbeck** is a German/ Swiss agroecologist. She researches and teaches at the Institute for Integrative Biology in the Department of Environmental Systems Science at ETH Zurich. Her work focuses on the environmental biosafety of genetically modified plants in ecosystems. Angelika Hilbeck focuses on environmental risk assessment, ecological biosafety of genetically modified plants and farmer-participatory agroecology research in Eastern and Southern Africa.

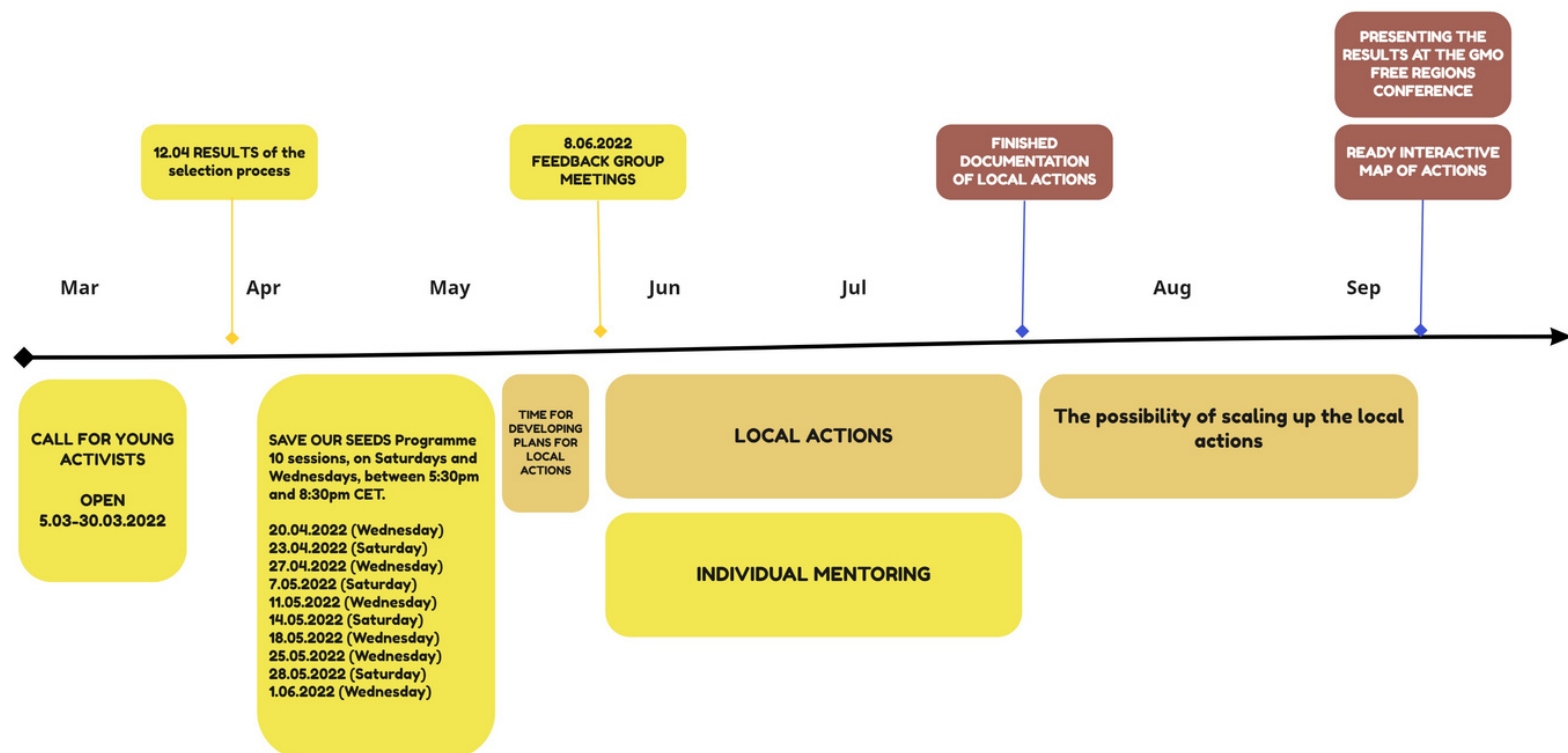
“In an ecosystem, it is context – the relationships shaping participants – that is all important. How does the context – our local and global culture’s rules and norms, which we are creating – either block or facilitate the flourishing of life? Shifting from a fixation on quantities to a focus on relationships, we can envision and create a food and farming system that sustains healthy relationships among flora and fauna, while enhancing the power of its human members to create healthy and fulfilling lives”

(Frances Moore Lappe, Anna Lappe “Fields of Hope and Power”)



FORMAT AND TIMELINE

The programme will take place online. Each of the 10 sessions will be divided into two parts - the first part, around 1h 15 minutes will consist of lectures and presentations given by the mentors. This part will be publicly available and streamed. Then, after a short 15 minutes break, the collective of activists will gather together, in order to participate in the interactive workshops open only for the members of the collective.

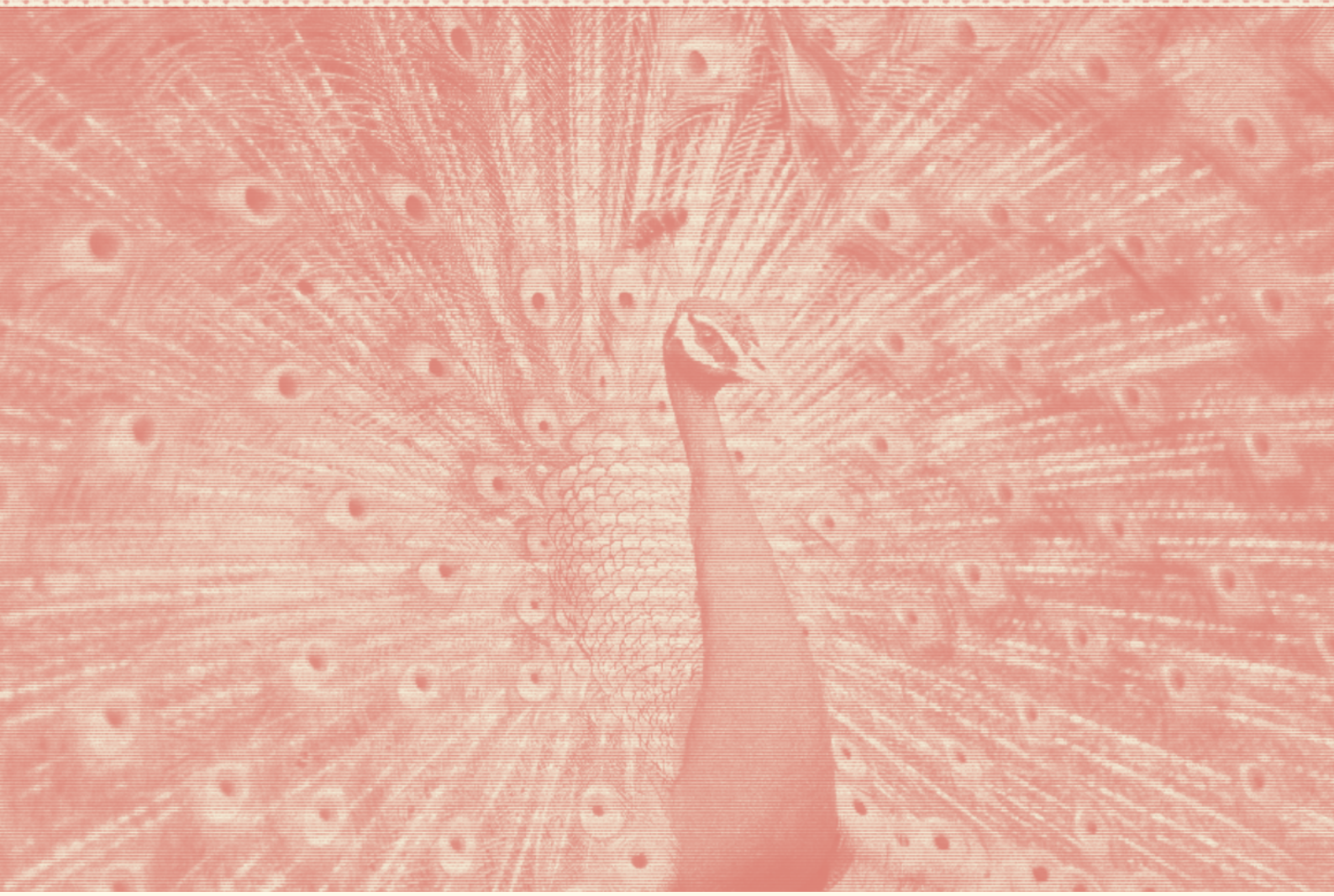


The methodology of the programme is based on interdisciplinary, intergenerational exchange of knowledges and perspectives. We hope to catalyse the emergence of a vibrant collective of activists who will share, create and mutually support each other in their actions. You can find the examples of specific methods below.

Discussions, facilitated brainstorming	Lectures, presentations (also given by the young activists)	Readings and discussing the readings
Investigation tasks and presentations of the results given by the participants	<u>Dialogo de Saberes Methodology</u> . (used by La Via Campesina)	Case studies analysis
Exchanging experience and knowledge	Focusing on knowledge, skills and attitudes	Designing plans for campaigns
Discussing possibilities of different forms of actions and activism	Focusing on networking	Searching for new campaigning methods

“A society that permits biology to become an engineering discipline, that allows that science to slip into the role of changing the living world without trying to understand it, is a danger to itself. Modern society knows that it desperately needs to learn how to live in harmony with the biosphere. Today more than ever we are in need of a science of biology that helps us to do this, shows the way. An engineering biology might still show us how to get there; it just doesn't know where “there” is.”

(Carl R. Woese, “A New Biology for a New Century”. Carl R. Woese was an American biophysicist and microbiologist. He is well-known for defining the Archaea (a new domain of life). He achieved it in 1977 by phylogenetic taxonomy of 16S ribosomal RNA).



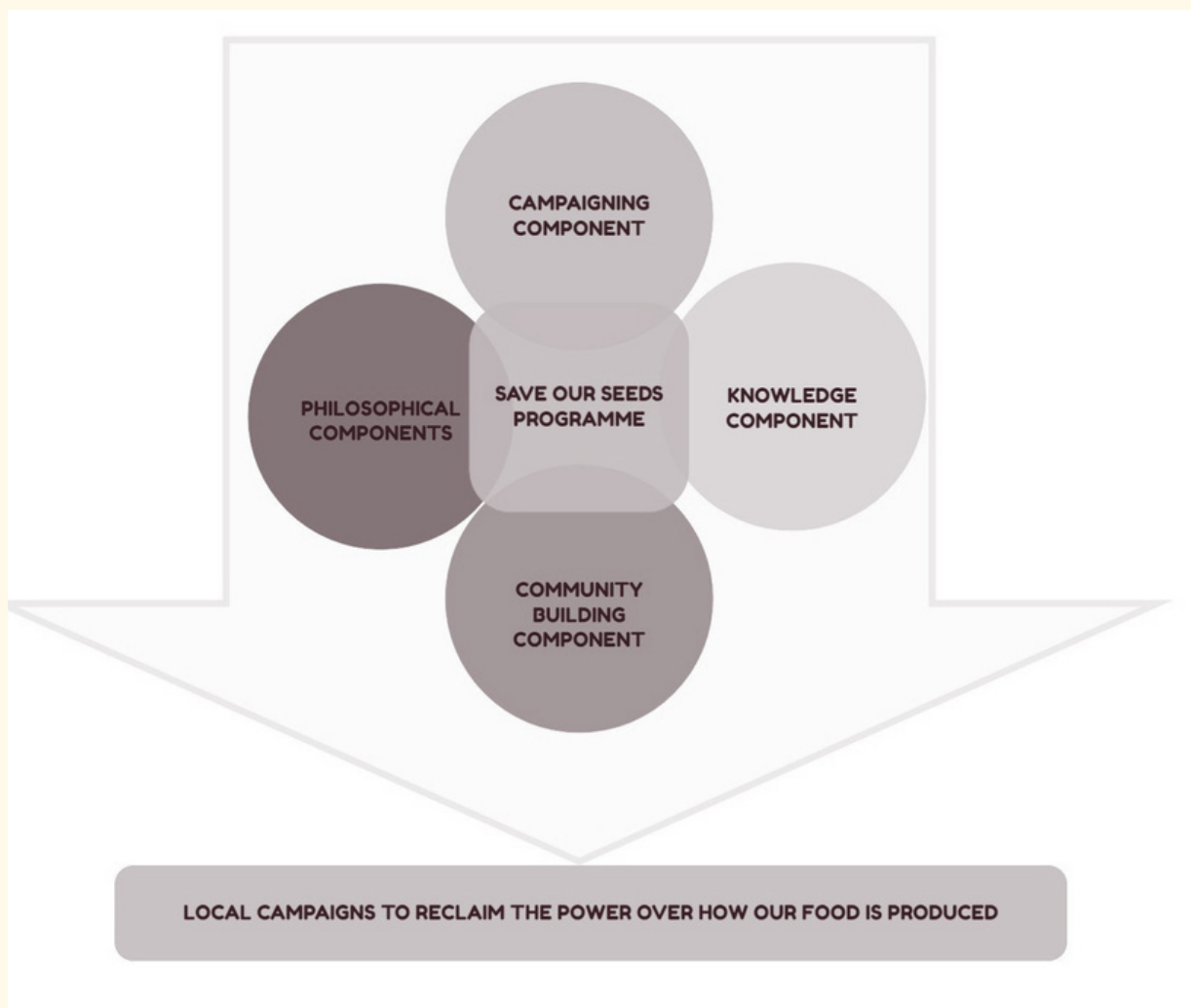
PROGRAMME

The programme will be a process of a joint journey to answer many crucial questions regarding the future of our food systems. The questions we want to raise are listed below. However, the final shape of the programme can be slightly modified, because we will carefully read your application forms and we will adjust the content to your interests and suggestions.

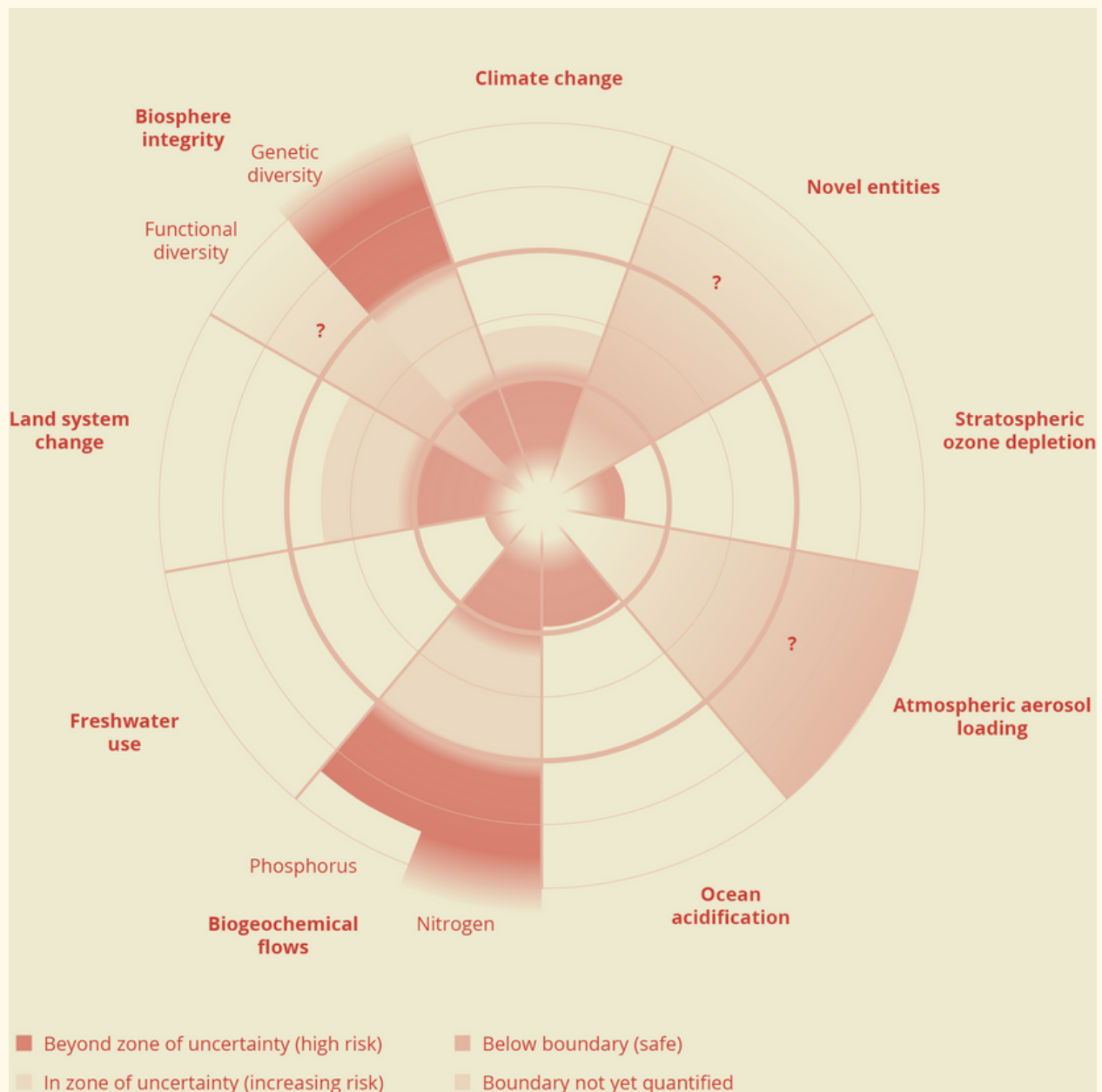
What is CRISPR-Cas9 and how powerful is it?	What can agroecology teach us about biodiversity and food systems?	What are the problems of the current agricultural systems? What definitions of the problems can we offer?
Do scientists agree on how genetics works? What do we know? What don't we know?	Do we know how ecosystems self-organize and interconnect? Do we understand this degree of complexity?	What is 'technological solutionism'? What is reductionism in science?
What can the history of molecular phylogenetics teach us?	How do plants adapt to environmental challenges?	How transparent is our food system now and what are the threats for keeping its transparency?
What can molecular biology contribute to our understanding of life? What is it that we miss in our knowledge?	What does it mean to privatise life? Can someone claim the right to privatise it?	How can we mobilise to reclaim the power over our food systems?

The programme consists of the following components:

1. Knowledge components - we will explore the questions enumerated on the previous page,
2. Community-building component - we will aim at building a collective of activists which will be an energetic source of networking and joint action,
3. Philosophical components - we are eager to engage in deeper issues than only technicalities. We not only want to reflect on the possible solutions, but also on the way how one perceives the ecosystems and how one defines the problems we face nowadays,
4. Campaigning component - we will analyse case studies of successful campaigns, as well as design our own campaigns.



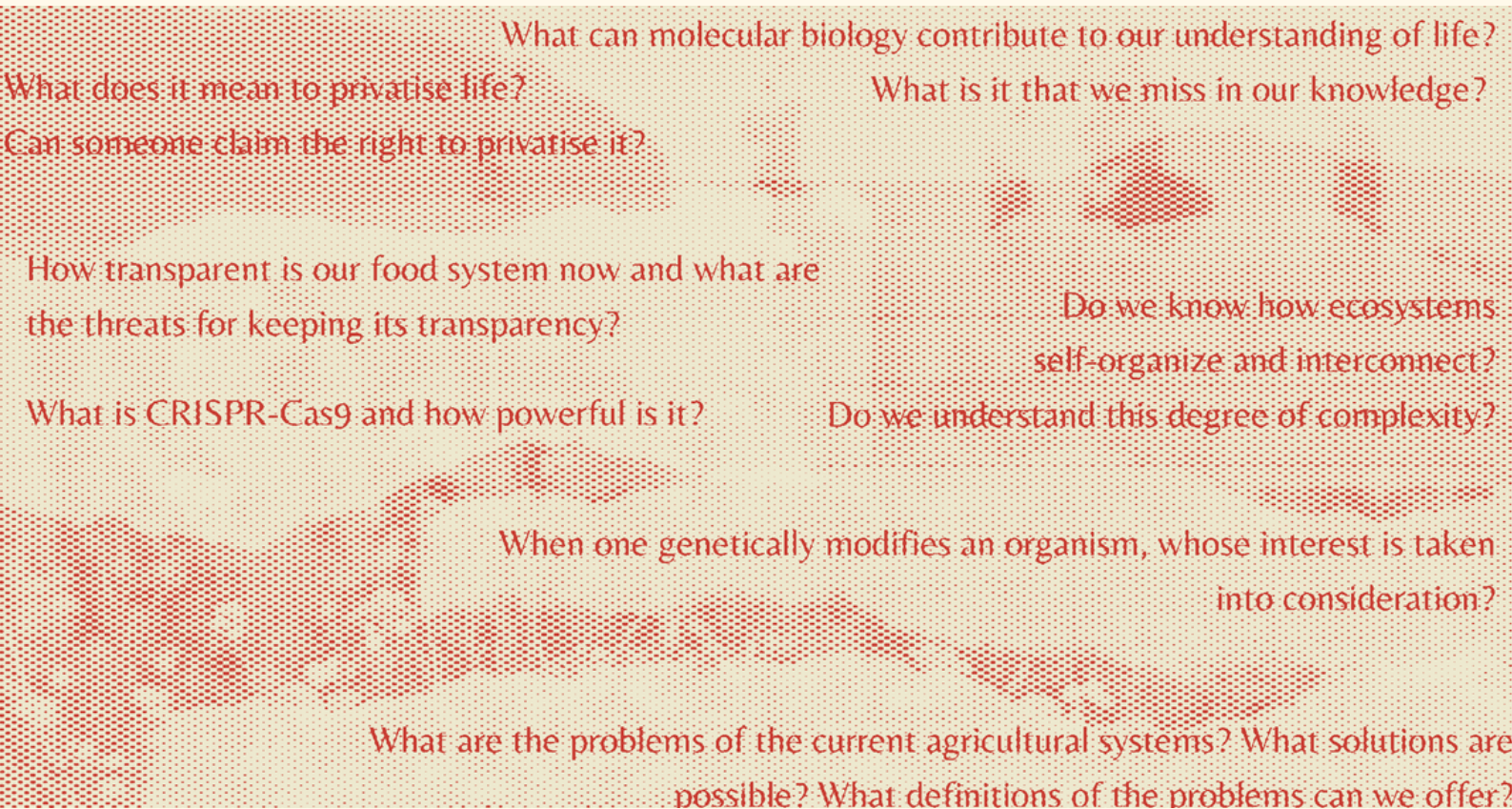
Our intention is to engage in an interdisciplinary context, one that sees our ecosystem and its complexity in a comprehensive way, taking into consideration the situation of our planet, as for now. You can see the chart describing the status of the nine planetary boundaries below.



How to define the problems we face and what solutions are possible?

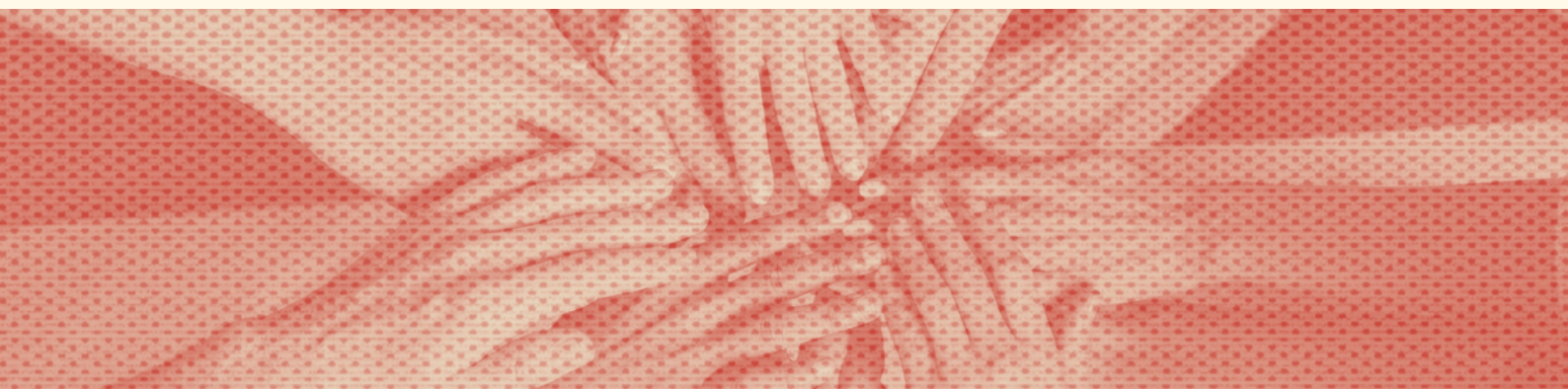
Political context - deregulation of EU's GMO legislation?

On 24 September 2021, the European Commission officially proposed to fundamentally change the EU's genetic engineering law: As a result, certain genetically modified organisms (GM) could be exempted from the current risk assessment and labelling requirements. To this end, they are given new names such as "new genomic techniques", "targeted mutagenesis" and "cisgenesis" and would no longer require genetic engineering approval. Three years ago, the European Court of Justice clearly classified these products of new genetic engineering techniques such as CRISPR/Cas as GMOs. As a result, the EU Commission now proposes to change the law under which the court ruled.



HOW TO APPLY

Where do you go from here? You can find the possible steps below.



1

Submit the application form

Submit your application form till 30.03.2022. You can find the application form [HERE](#).

2

Wait for the result

The selection committee will take time to assess your application thoroughly. You will receive the selection results on 12th of April.

3

Take part!

If you are chosen to be part of the Collective of Activists, you will take part in both the public and the inner part of the programme. If you are not selected, you can still join [the public part of the streamed lectures](#) provided by mentors.



*“Can life be optimized? And if it can,
what would you even optimize for?”*

*(Xiaowei Wang “Blockchain chicken Farm, And other stories in tech in
China’s Countryside”)*

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Before you contact us with your questions (koralewska@saveourseeds.org), please check if you can find the answer below.

Is the programme free of charge?

Yes, both the public part and the inner collective part are free of charge.

Why is the “leadership potential” one of the criteria of selection for the programme?
What do you mean by the “leadership potential”?

The programme is designed for people who will be multipliers in their communities, organizations and non-formal movements. That means that if you are selected, your role will be to motivate the people around you to get involved in the topic, to inspire them for action. In order to achieve that, it would be good if you are already a leader in your community or you have wider networks where you can search for collaborators in your region/country.

Do I need to be a EU national in order to take part in the programme?

The programme is open to young people living and being active in a European Union country, independent of their nationality.

Why are you organizing such a programme now?

SOS has been active in the area of promoting organic farming for many years. We decided to implement such a programme in 2022 due to the plans of the EU to deregulate GMOs. SOS campaigns to make sure that the genetically modified organisms remain regulated, because they , because they threaten the integrity of the ecosystems and the transparency of the food system.

I am an artist, interested in ecological topics, but I am not an activist. How can I contribute to the programme?

If you are motivated to gain new knowledge and to act to reclaim the power over our food systems, feel free to apply. We are striving to create a diverse Collective of creative people who want to embark on the educational and campaigning journey together and the artistic ways are perfect to be used in campaigns and events.

I don't want to be apply for the programme as a participant, but I would be curious to listen to the public lectures, where can I access them?

The public part of the programme - all the lectures - will be streamed online and accessible. If you want to receive updates and links to join each webinar, please [sign up here](#).

What will be my contribution as a participant of the collective?

As a selected participant, you will become a part of activists' collective. Within this collective, we will meet with mentors during lectures, we will exchange our own knowledge and perspectives. Each participant will play an active role in the programme, by preparing summaries of the meetings, being responsible for taking minutes or leading brainstorming sessions. We see the participants more as the co-creators of the programme than the passive receivers of the content.

I got curious, but I don't know anything about the topics you raise in the programme. Where can I get to know more?

We recommend the following books/videos/materials:

1. Gene Editing - Blurring the Lines Between Nature and Technology,
2. Stop Gene Drives Campaign,
3. Gene Editing and Agroecology - Reframing the Debate,
4. "Seed Sovereignty, Food Security", ed. Vandana Shiva,
5. INHABIT movie,
6. The 10 elements of agroecology.

Who are the mentors in the programme?

We are in the process of contacting the mentors (experienced activists, lecturers, scientists, agroecology and organic farming practitioners, seed savers, educators, philosophers and campaigners). They come from various NGOs, institutions and social movements, mostly from Europe. Their role is to guide us on our intellectual journey and to help with designing plans for campaigns.

What are the selection criteria to be chosen for a member of the collective of activists?

The activists will be selected by a selection committee on the basis of the following criteria:

- the level of interests in the topics of organic farming, seed sovereignty, agroecology, GMOs, Gene Drive Organisms,
- the leadership potential (if they are already the multipliers in their communities, organizations, informal movements),
- willingness and ideas to campaign against a deregulation of the GMOs at EU and regional level.

What is "GMO FREE REGIONS CONFERENCE" mentioned in the timeline of the programme?

Organizing the GMO-free Regions Conference is a tradition of our organization. We have already organized 9 conferences, the last one took place in 2018. In September 2022 we are organizing the 10th conference and our intention is inviting the most active young members of the collective from the programme to participate in the conference. We foresee financial support for the travel expenses and accommodation. We will discuss the issue during the meetings of the collective. Taking part in the conference is not obligatory, but it is a great chance to meet outside of the virtual space with activists from whole Europe.

What is "individual mentoring" mentioned in the timeline of the programme?

We hope that the SOS Programme will inspire the young activists to take action. We will provide knowledge, support, advice and mentoring for the participants who decide to set up their own local actions.

“The false argument that genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are needed in order to increase food production to feed growing populations is a desperate attempt to extend the life of a failing paradigm.”

(Vandana Shiva “Food Sovereignty, Food Security”)



ORGANIZERS

'Save Our Seeds' (SOS) started in 2002 as a successful European initiative to keep organic and conventional seeds free from traces of genetically modified organisms (GMO). Since 2005 it also organises European Conferences of GMO Free Regions and since 2018 runs a campaign to prevent the release of Gene Drive Organisms into the environment. It is founded by the Foundation on Future Farming which promotes organic seed breeding and innovation and also educates on agroecology and global as well as European agricultural policy.

With its campaigns and initiatives, SOS networks with different organizations, companies, politicians, scientists, farmers, and interested citizens; and wishes to lead a productive debate towards sustainable change.

Visit: <https://www.saveourseeds.org/en.html>



CONTACT

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PROGRAMME