

A tomato for everyone: 'Sunviva' for the good of all

January 10 2019



Tomatoes of the Sunviva variety at the University of Goettingen. Credit: Culnaris - Saatgut für Lebensmittel

Plant breeders at the University of Göttingen and Agrecol have launched a joint initiative to protect seeds as common property. Agrecol

developed an Open Source Seed Licence, which legally protects seeds as commons (i.e., a natural resource accessible to all members of society) and thus protects them from patenting and similar issues such as plant variety protection. The results were published in the journal *PLOS Biology*.

"It is with great concern that we have watched as worldwide access to breeding material is increasingly restricted by private-sector interests. Among other things, patents prevent important traits from being used more extensively in breeding, " says Dr. Bernd Horneburg from the Department of Crop Sciences at the University of Göttingen. "The movement for seeds to become a commons has become stronger in the last six years—presumably due to growing privatisation and market concentration in the seed sector."

Such movements are most noticeable in Germany, the U.S., India and East Africa. This recent idea means that new varieties are protected by a licence as commons. This means that everyone is allowed to use them, give them away and develop them further—free of charge. Subsequent developments also fall under the licence. The only condition: To ensure that the [seed](#) remains accessible to all, it must not be covered by patents or other exclusive rights. According to the authors, this open source characteristic could even be legally enforced should there be any case of doubt.

Agrecol (Association for AgriCulture and Ecology in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe) promotes site-appropriate land use in developing countries. It is currently testing the Open Source Seed Licence with its Open Source Seeds Programme along with the University of Göttingen and Culinaris—Saatgut für Lebensmittel.

"There is great demand from consumers," says Project Manager Dr. Johannes Kotschi. More traders are offering licensed [tomato varieties](#).

The cherry tomato Sunviva from the Organic Outdoor Tomato Project of the University of Göttingen was the first tomato variety to get an open source licence in 2017. Sunviva is well suited for gardens and balconies at home; the yellow fruits ripen early in the season. The Organic Outdoor Tomato Project is a network in which new, adapted varieties are developed through the free exchange of breeding material and knowledge. Since then, further varieties of tomatoes, maize and wheat have been licensed, and the trend is growing.

More information: Johannes Kotschi et al, The Open Source Seed Licence: A novel approach to safeguarding access to plant germplasm, *PLOS Biology* (2018). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pbio.3000023](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.3000023)

Provided by University of Göttingen

Citation: A tomato for everyone: 'Sunviva' for the good of all (2019, January 10) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-01-tomato-sunviva-good.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.