

Ethical international collaboration to sustainably exploit genetic resources for climate-resilient agriculture



ACTIVITY LOCATION

European Union, Switzerland, Ethiopia, South Africa, United States



CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

The BOOSTER project faces the challenge of navigating diverse and evolving biodiversity laws while ensuring ethical compliance in the use and exchange of plant and soil samples from Ethiopia, South Africa, the US, and Switzerland. From the project's perspective, a key difficulty lies in aligning scientific ambitions with international legal obligations and ethical principles, particularly around access to genetic resources and fair benefit-sharing with countries of origin.



INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

The project has developed innovative, structured approaches to ethically manage genetic resources across international borders, fully aligned with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Nagoya Protocol, and EU regulations on Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS). Key practical steps implemented include:

- Obtaining Prior Informed Consent (PIC) and Material Transfer Agreements (MTAs), clearly outlining terms for resource use and benefit-sharing.
- Ensuring legal and ethical standards compliance even by partners from non-signatory countries to the Nagoya Protocol, such as the United States.
- Collaborating closely with local authorities, strengthening international transparency and accountability.
- Providing targeted capacity building through guidelines, practical templates, and dedicated support from the Ethics Advisors to help practitioners navigate complex legal frameworks easily.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Farmers, breeders, and other end-users are encouraged to adopt the BOOSTER approach to benefit from research conducted in full compliance with international biodiversity laws and ethical standards. By using genetic resources that have been legally accessed, and ethically shared, legal risks are reduced, and alignment with global sustainability principles is ensured. Access is facilitated to improved seed varieties developed through responsible research practices that offer greater productivity, enhanced drought resilience, and strong support for sustainable agricultural systems. These benefits are delivered through a fair and transparent process of benefit-sharing, ensuring that all actors in the value chain are included and respected.



MULTIMEDIA

<https://boosterproject.eu/news/responsible-research-ethical-use-fair-sharing-genetic-resources/>



FUTURE ACTIONS

Project partners will engage with policymakers to support the simplification of administrative procedures and enhancement of practical guidance, facilitating broader adoption among agricultural stakeholders. They will advocate for clear, accessible guidelines and capacity-building initiatives to support compliance with Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS) rules.