

Traditional Seeds Conservation in the villages of Henval Valley

By UJJS (Uttarakhand Jan Jagriti Sansthan), supported by Himalaya Resources, Wild Geese & SWAP

Introduction

The rapid extinction of traditional mountain seeds is having the most adverse effects on agriculture and farmers here. Traditional seeds have been nourishing humanity and protecting farmers' independence for centuries. The current capitalist system, which is completely run by big companies and industrialists, is constantly pressuring farmers to make traditional seeds and agricultural systems dependent on the market. Traditional seeds are completely organic and healthy, and a large segment of society is recognizing their need for health benefits. Consequently, traditional seeds and crops are fetching good prices in the market. At a time when prices for traditional crops have improved, farmers are facing a severe shortage of traditional seeds, and many have disappeared from the region.

Uttarakhand Jan Jagriti Sansthan has been making efforts for the conservation of traditional seeds for a decade in collaboration with Himalaya Resources in the Henwal Valley area of Tehri Garhwal district of Uttarakhand. Local farmers are being encouraged to grow traditional crops despite the challenges they face. Efforts are being made to popularize dishes made from local traditional crops. We are trying to ensure that the farmers get a good price for the crops they have grown with great hard work after facing many challenges like changing weather and attacks by wild animals.



A Dish made from Local Seed



A Dish made from Local Seed



Gabath / Horsegram traditional Seed



Naurangi Dal / Rice Bean traditional Seed

Uttarakhand Jan Jagriti Sansthan is focusing on conservation and revival of traditional seeds in cooperation with local farmers. Meetings are being held at the village level to assess the true status of traditional seeds in the area by engaging with local farmers, children, and youth. Discussions with schoolchildren are being conducted to encourage them to adopt traditional crops and recipes by providing them with information about their uses. These meetings are also being conducted to

encourage the re-enrichment of traditional seed banks, which have been preserved from generation to generation. Documentation of traditional seed preservation methods is also being undertaken.

Prep Meeting with volunteers

A micro-meeting was held on October 3, 2025 at Mountain Food Connect, Khadi, to build a shared understanding with Jagriti Sansthan volunteers about preserving local traditional seeds. All volunteers are well-versed in local agriculture and understand the overall farming landscape. The program's strategy was discussed at the meeting. Village-level meetings will be held in at least 15 villages in the Henwal Valley to identify champion farmers. Locally grown traditional seeds that are no longer available will also be identified at the meetings. Information about traditional seed preservation practices will also be gathered from the public. It was decided in the meeting that efforts will be made to make seeds available by the volunteers of Jagriti Sansthan.

Village level meetings

Khankar

To promote and conserve traditional seeds, a meeting was held with 25 women farmers in *Khankar* village of Henwal Valley at the *Panchayat Ghar* on **October 6, 2025**. During discussions at the meeting, women farmers acknowledged that the seeds of locally grown pulses and millets, which were previously readily available, are no longer readily available. Conflicts with wild animals and the migration of families from the village have led to a decline in farming and crop production. A large number of villagers still have a strong interest in farming.



Village level meeting Khankar

Than

To promote and conserve traditional seeds, a dialogue meeting was held at the *Panchayat Ghar, Than*, on **October 9, 2025**. Thirteen women farmers from *Than* village, along with *Manoj Pandey, Dhum Singh, Phooldas, and Aranya Ranjan* from the *Jagriti Sansthan*, participated. People remembered and identified those traditional seeds. At the meeting, women farmers agreed that these traditional seeds could be produced.

Tipali

A village-level meeting was held at the Panchayat House in *Tipali* village on **October 10, 2025**, where 15 male and female farmers participated. The meeting sought to understand the reasons behind farmers' declining interest in farming. With the challenges of weather instability and conflict with wild animals, the new generation has shifted from farming and animal husbandry to other occupations. Farmers agreed that traditional seeds and farming are beneficial for their current lifestyle. The meeting revealed that farmers want to adopt traditional farming and seeds, but they need strong motivation and accessible systems.



Village level meeting *Tipali*

Nagani Bazaar – with women from 10 villages

On **November 19, 2025**, a dialogue was held at *Nagni Bazaar* in *Henwal Valley* with 25 women farmers from 10 villages, including *Palas, Patudi, Indwalgaon, Bhandargaon, Syuta, and Jaul*, regarding the conservation of traditional seeds. The women farmers present at the meeting reported that some of them were producing traditional crops. The meeting also unanimously agreed that people's interest in agriculture, including traditional crops, is declining. Participants in the dialogue explained that the reasons behind this declining interest in agriculture are weather uncertainty, increasing attacks by wild animals on crops, and a tendency to view farming as a secondary occupation. Mountain agriculture is also suffering significant losses due to the government and policymakers considering mountain agriculture unprofitable and failing to make adequate efforts to improve it.

Despite the challenges, the positive aspect for mountain agriculture and traditional crops is that people are increasingly recognizing their usefulness and adopting them. Women farmers have stated that they are ready to grow lost traditional seeds if they become available. To promote traditional seeds, concrete actions will be implemented at the village level through such dialogues.

Khadi – with women and youth from 8 villages

To promote traditional crops, a meeting was organized on **November 20, 2025**, at the Twin Building, Khadi, with 30 women farmers and youth from *Tipli, Pippleth, Chidiyali, Than, Bidon, Khankar, Sunarkot, and Kumali* villages. During the interaction between women farmers and youth, the young participants were informed about the utility and importance of traditional crops. The young participants expressed their interest in using traditional crops. The women farmers acknowledged that over the past 35-40 years, almost all traditional seeds of rice and wheat, including *Kauni, China, and Toor*, has become unavailable in the region. Along with the disappearance of these seeds, people are also beginning to forget the methods of preserving them. Seeds have been preserved for centuries using traditional seed preservation methods. The easy availability of hybrid and GM seeds in the market, and the encouragement of their use by departments, has led to farmers' dependence on the market, rather than the autonomy of local traditional seeds. With the increasing popularity of traditional crops, some women farmers have appeared eager to return to them.

On 19th and 20th November 2025 meetings were attended by government officials from Agriculture department and Rural Development Department



Students meetings

A dialogue on traditional seeds and nutrition was held with around 100 students and teachers at a local school on November, 14, 2025, the Children Day Occasion. Students were informed about the usefulness and nutritional potential of traditional seeds. Teachers and students expressed the need for continued dialogue on traditional seeds.

Seeds banks

The process of identifying and purchasing seeds for local seed banks is underway. Excessive monsoon rains this year have adversely affected crop production, posing a challenge in seed availability. This challenge has led to extensive travel to secure identified traditional seeds.

New plan: Seed March

There is a plan to organize a Beej Yatra (Seed March) on the occasion of Makar Sankranti. Makrand Sankranti, also known as [Makar Sankranti](#), is a Hindu harvest festival celebrated on or around January 14th each year to mark the Sun's transition into the zodiac sign of Capricorn (Makara). It signifies the end of winter and the beginning of longer, sunnier days, and is celebrated with traditions like flying kites, exchanging sweets made with sesame and jaggery, and special prayers). in collaboration with local farmers, youth and village level organizations for the conservation and promotion of traditional seeds.

Efforts are underway to conserve and revive traditional seeds through ongoing dialogue and activities with local communities. It is hoped that the use of traditional seeds will lead to better, more sustainable livelihood models in the future.

