



# FORMAL REBUTTAL TO FAO'S “NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE IN LEBANON”

To the Lebanese Minister of Agriculture, Members of Lebanese Parliament, Parliamentary Committees, and Relevant Public Authorities

Subject: Systematic Critique of the FAO/MoA “National Strategy for Conservation and Management of PGRFA in Lebanon (2015–2035)” and Policy Recommendations for Protecting Lebanese Seed Sovereignty

## I INTRODUCTION

In this document we try to provide a point-by-point rebuttal of the FAO/MoA “National Strategy for Conservation and Management of PGRFA in Lebanon (2015–2035)” and demonstrates why it **cannot be used** as the foundation or justification for any new seed legislation in Lebanon.

The Strategy is **not a scientific study and is full of inconsistencies and assumptions based on fluid data sets**.

It is a **policy template**, heavily influenced by international harmonization agendas. It contains **assumptions, omissions, contradictions, and structural biases** that directly threaten Lebanese food sovereignty, biodiversity, human health, consumers rights and national agricultural heritage.

Lebanon does **not** need a new seed law.

Lebanon needs **enforcement, implementation, and expansion** of already-existing national protections — particularly the **2008 Phytosanitary Law**, which provides all necessary legal tools and a solid framework to regulate seed imports and safeguard biodiversity, while banning dangerous hybridizations and Gene-edited Seeds.

## II. POINT-BY-POINT REBUTTAL

### 1. The Strategy Is Not a Scientific Study

The document is a **policy directive**, not a neutral assessment:

- Produced under FAO technical cooperation (TCP/SNO/3401)
- Validated internally, not peer reviewed
- Designed to justify predetermined legal outcomes
- Positioned to support seed laws and PVP reforms written *before* “analysis” was conducted

#### **Conclusion:**

The Strategy cannot serve as the evidentiary basis for new legislation.

### 2. Predetermined Legal Outcomes Replace Evidence

The Strategy assumes — without demonstrating — that Lebanon must:

- Adopt a seed law
- Adopt PVP frameworks
- Harmonize with UPOV
- Expand international access to Lebanese germplasm

No comparative legal analysis, impact assessment, or alternatives are ever considered.

### 3. Import Dependency Is Used as a Misleading Justification

Lebanon imports >80% of its food.

The Strategy uses this fact to argue for stricter formal seed systems.

However:

- No evidence shows PVP or seed certification reduces import dependency.
- Formal seed systems **increase dependence on foreign companies**, not reduce it.

### 4. The Strategy Contradicts Itself on Genetic Erosion

The document warns of genetic erosion yet endorses:

- Uniformity standards
- Commercial registration systems
- PVP rights
- UPOV membership

These mechanisms are globally recognized as **drivers of genetic erosion**, not solutions.

### 5. Seed Committee + Registration = Centralized Control Over Farmers

A seed committee empowered to authorize, register, or “release” varieties would:

- Criminalize heirloom seed movement
- Restrict farmer autonomy
- Create a bureaucratic monopoly over seed diversity

This is incompatible with Lebanese agricultural reality.

## 6. UPOV and PVP Recommendations Are Unsupported and Dangerous

The Strategy promotes UPOV without:

- Assessing its relevance to Lebanon
- Analyzing its socioeconomic impacts
- Evaluating alternatives

UPOV is structurally designed to:

- Criminalize seed saving
- Restrict farmer rights
- Reward commercial breeders
- Reduce biodiversity

This is unacceptable for Lebanon.

## 7. “Farmers’ Rights” Are Symbolic, Not Binding

The Strategy uses rhetorical language about farmer rights but provides:

- No enforceable legal protections
- No supremacy clauses
- No explicit seed-saving rights
- No clear exemptions for local seed exchange

This is misleading, toothless and insufficient.

## 8. Biocultural Territories Are Mentioned but Not Protected

The Strategy praises biocultural territories but provides:

- No legal recognition
- No sovereignty protection

- No immunity from PVP
- No community consent requirements

Thus, the Strategy contradicts itself.

## 9. Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) Is Weakly Defined

Lebanese germplasm is placed at risk because:

- The MLS access system is encouraged without benefit safeguards
- Community-level consent is absent
- Biopiracy risks are ignored

## 10. Lebanon's Institutional Realities Are Ignored

The Strategy assumes:

- High institutional capacity
- Stable political context
- Strong regulatory enforcement

None of these conditions currently exist.

Thus, implementing complex PVP and seed-control systems is unrealistic and dangerous.

# III. FINAL

## RECOMMENDATIONS (Reflecting

your final corrected positions)

### 1. No New Seed Law Is Necessary or Justified

Lebanon faces no agricultural, scientific, ecological, or regulatory problem requiring a new

seed law.

A seed law would impose restrictions that currently do not exist and serve agendas unrelated to Lebanese interests.

## 2. Fully Implement and Strengthen the 2008 Phytosanitary Law

This law already prohibits genetically modified and severely hybridized seed imports. It must be fully executed via complete implementing decrees and robust border enforcement.

## 3. Expand the Phytosanitary Law to Classify All Gene-Edited or Lab Manipulated Organisms as GMOs

Lebanon must reject biotech efforts to redefine laboratory genetic manipulation as “natural.”

### **Legal definition to adopt:**

**Any organism altered through laboratory-based biotechnological processes is genetically modified, regardless of species boundary or theoretical natural occurrence.**

This includes CRISPR, TALEN, cisgenesis, mutagenesis, RNAi systems, and all genome/epigenome engineering.

## 4. Strict Prohibition on Importation of Synthetic Non-Carbon-Based Life Forms

Lebanese biosecurity requires that no xenobiological organism or synthetic non-carbon life form be imported, released, used, or tested under any pretext.

This prohibition must be part of the implementing decrees of the 2008 Phytosanitary Law.

## 5. Establish Redundant Seed Banks Across All Districts

Lebanon must secure its agricultural biodiversity by creating a decentralized system of seed banks — one per district — forming a redundant network that preserves all Lebanese heirloom varieties.

## 6. Legally Protect Heirloom Lebanese Varieties as National Genetic Heritage

Traditional Lebanese seeds must be declared **inalienable national biological heritage**:

- Not patentable
- Not registrable by foreign breeders
- Not enterable into international “multilateral access” regimes without national approval

## 7. Guarantee the Free Exchange, Saving, Reuse, and Sale of Traditional Seeds

Farmer-to-farmer seed systems must remain fully lawful.

No restriction, registration, certification, or administrative barrier shall apply to heirloom seeds.

Farmer rights must be explicitly superior to any future intellectual property claims.

## 8. Reject UPOV and Any PVP System That Restricts Farmer Rights

Lebanon must remain outside UPOV and avoid PVP systems that criminalize traditional practices.

Any future conflict between breeder claims and farmer rights must be resolved in favor of farmers.

## 9. No Certification System of Any Kind Shall Apply to Lebanese Heirloom Seeds

Heirloom seeds must **never** be subject to certification, registration, grading, or institutional validation.

Certification systems directly contradict biodiversity preservation and open pathways for foreign control.

## 10. Focus Government Efforts on Biodiversity Preservation — Not Market Restriction

National agricultural policy should enhance:

- Landrace preservation
- Traditional seed propagation
- Farmer-managed seed systems
- Agroecological resilience

Not administrative control or commercialization.

## 11. Treat Any New Seed-Law Initiative as a Threat to National Food Security

Any attempt to pass a seed law introduces unnecessary vulnerabilities into Lebanon's agricultural system.

A 10-year moratorium on seed-law initiatives is recommended.

## 12. Reject the FAO/MoA Strategy as a Legislative Basis

The Strategy is not a scientific study and is unsuitable as a reference for shaping Lebanese law.

It must be formally rejected as a justification for seed legislation.

# IV. CONCLUSION

Lebanon's agricultural sovereignty, biodiversity, and ecological security depend on:



- Strengthening existing national laws
- Protecting heirloom seed heritage
- Rejecting foreign-introduced frameworks such as UPOV
- Blocking biotech-driven redefinitions of genetic engineering
- Creating decentralized, redundant seed infrastructure
- Ensuring farmers' seed rights remain absolute and

unrestricted. Under these principles, **no seed law is needed, justified, or advisable.**

Lebanon's strength lies in its agricultural heritage — and the recommendations herein safeguard that heritage for all future generations.