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# BEEJ UTSAV



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# Introduction

Seeds are more than the basis of agriculture—they are carriers of heritage, health, and sustainability. In India’s rural and tribal communities, traditional seeds are considered sacred and are passed down through generations, forming the backbone of sustainable farming, local diets, and cultural practices. These seeds are naturally suited to local climates and soils, requiring minimal inputs while preserving biodiversity and ecosystem balance.

Today, the spread of hybrid seeds and chemical-based farming threatens traditional seed systems. Market-driven agriculture has reduced biodiversity, increased dependency on corporations, and impacted food security, environment, and health. In this context, Krishi evam Adivasi Swaraj Sangathan, guided by Vaagdhara, launched Beej Utsav—a grassroots initiative to conserve indigenous seeds and promote the vision of Beej Swaraj (seed sovereignty)

Beej Utsav 2025, themed “Save Seeds, Save Environment,” brought together 9,454 participants, facilitated the exchange of 122 seed varieties, and helped recover 8 previously extinct seeds. The event serves as a platform for seed conservation, knowledge sharing, and revival of traditional farming systems.

Traditional seeds are nutritionally superior, rich in proteins, vitamins, and minerals, and are key to addressing malnutrition and anemia in tribal regions—as highlighted in NFHS-5 data. Crops like bajra, jowar, ragi, and moong are vital to tribal diets and health.

Culturally, seeds are embedded in rituals, festivals, and community identity—especially in tribal areas like Banswara and Dungarpur in Rajasthan. Here, farmers continue to use indigenous seeds, preserving not just crops but a way of life.

Beej Swaraj empowers farmers with control over their seeds, reducing dependence on markets and corporations. It promotes environmental sustainability, economic self-reliance, and cultural preservation. Through Beej Utsav, this vision is being realized—reviving traditional knowledge, strengthening community ties, and protecting the future of farming and food.



# Impact Snapshot

“Save Seeds, Save Environment”



**9454**

Total Participants



**122**

native seed varieties exhibited



**08**

Revival of Nearly Extinct Seeds



**2,812**

seed balls Made & distributed



**20–30** seeds

Participants pledged to preserve  
20-30 traditional seed varieties.

## Extinct seeds revived

Rala Batti
Cashew
Arbi (Taro)
White Sandalwood
Akola
Hajwara
Amal Kanda
Power/Pawari

## Participants

Saksham Samuh Members	2316
Krishi evam Adivasi Swaraj Sangathan	223
Gram Swaraj Samuh Members	1439
Bal Swaraj Samuh Members	1029
Seed Mothers	1843
participants other than CBOs	2602

## Categories of Food Seed Exchange

Grains	19
Vegetable	26
Fruit	24
Milletts	12
Pulses	12
Beans	04
Spices	06
Oil seed	10
Medicinal	07
Dry Fruit	01
Fiber	01

# Beej Utsav

Beej Utsav 2025 was a powerful demonstration of community-led seed conservation, organized under the guidance of Vaagdhara in collaboration with community-based organizations (CBOs). The success of the festival resulted from careful planning, active grassroots participation, and a collective commitment to the theme: “Save Seeds, Save Environment.” Preparations included facilitator orientations, community meetings, and distribution of awareness materials like posters and pamphlets to mobilize participation across villages

The event took the form of a vibrant, traditional fair where elders, youth, women, and children gathered to celebrate the connection between agriculture and culture. Women dressed in traditional attire carried pouches of indigenous seeds while singing folk songs, symbolizing the deep bond with the land. Over 122 varieties of native seeds—including bajra, maize, kulthi, moong, and chana—were showcased in eco-friendly donas (leaf bowls) made on-site from khakhra leaves, highlighting self-sufficiency and traditional knowledge systems.



*Figure 1: Women Farmer Members of the Community Preparing for the Seed Festival*



*Figure 2: Showcasing Seed Exhibition and Food Dive*

A landmark achievement of Beej Utsav was the identification and revival of 8 nearly extinct seeds—Rala Batti, Cashew, Arbi (Taro), White Sandalwood, Akola, Hajwara, Amal Kanda, and Power/Pawari. Once common in local fields, these seeds had nearly vanished; their rediscovery and exchange during the festival marked a major step in restoring agricultural biodiversity. Elders shared traditional seed preservation techniques such as using ash, neem leaves, earthen pots, and cow dung-coated walls, while discussions raised critical concerns about the growing dependency on chemical farming and the erosion of seed rights.



The festival's success was deeply rooted in the inspiring efforts of Bal Swaraj Samuh and Gram Swaraj Samuh (GSS). Children from Bal Swaraj actively created and distributed 2,812 seed balls, spreading awareness through play and creativity, and forging a strong bond with nature. Their involvement conveyed the message of seed saving in simple yet powerful ways. GSS members played a key role in organizing the event—mobilizing villagers, decorating venues, coordinating registration and exhibitions, and facilitating the smooth conduct of all activities. Their leadership ensured broad community participation and cultural resonance.

Local governance also played a significant role. Gram Panchayats, Sarpanchs, ward members, and government functionaries participated in planning, logistics, and awareness generation. Some Panchayats even expressed the intention to include the Seed Festival in their annual plans to make it a recurring tradition. The social media provided further momentum to the movement.

The festival concluded with a collective pledge ceremony, where farmers and women committed to preserving 20–30 traditional seed varieties in their homes and promoting the idea of Beej Swaraj (seed self-rule). Through community spirit, cultural pride, and shared responsibility, Beej Utsav 2025 emerged as a powerful movement to revive biodiversity, traditional knowledge, and rural self-reliance

# Achievements

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The festival sparked strong interest in seed conservation among farmers, women, and youth, turning it into a people's movement.

Women led seed processions and exhibitions, showing their key role in seed saving.

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122 local seed varieties were exchanged, including 8 rare ones, helping restore biodiversity.

The event helped connect young people with traditional knowledge and farming practices

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Local seed types and their uses were recorded for future generations.

Farmers shared how traditional seeds are more affordable, nutritious, and suited to local conditions.

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Villages pledged to set up seed banks and protect community seed rights.

Songs, stories, and folk traditions brought seeds alive as symbols of heritage, not just crops



# Activities Conducted During the Event



Village Rallies Led by CBOs



Awareness Through Slogans and Messages



Exhibition of Climate-Resilient Indigenous Seed



Community Expressing their views on seed preservation



Conducted Beej Swaraj Samvad Sabha



Honored leading farmers



Created and Distributed Seed Balls



Traditional Seed Exchange



Pledge for Seed and Environmental Conservation

# Key Challenges Discussed by the Community

- 01 Market Control Over Seeds**

Increasing dominance of hybrid seeds has stripped farmers of their traditional rights and increased farming costs.
- 02 Disappearance of Local Seeds**

Native varieties adapted to local ecosystems are being lost, threatening biodiversity and food security.
- 03 Loss of Traditional Knowledge**

Younger generations are disconnected from seed preservation due to urban migration and modern education.
- 04 Impact of Chemical Farming**

Excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides is degrading soil, polluting water, and harming health, especially among women and children.
- 05 Erosion of Collective Rights**

Market forces are replacing the cultural practice of shared seed ownership and exchange.
- 06 Climate Change Pressure**

Irregular rainfall and rising temperatures are making traditional seeds more vulnerable, pushing farmers toward hybrids.
- 07 Neglect in Government Schemes**

Policies and subsidies favor hybrid seeds, with minimal support for conserving traditional varieties.
- 08 Decline of Seed Exchange Practices**

Once a community norm, seed sharing is now commercialized, reducing trust and biodiversity.

# Way Forward

01

Institutionalize Beej Utsav as an Annual Panchayat Tradition

02

Strengthen and Expand Community Seed Banks

03

Leverage Technology for disseminating knowledge to next generation

04

Advocate for Policy Inclusion of Traditional Seeds

05

Expand Inter-Village and Inter-District Exchanges





# Conclusion

Beej Utsav 2025 highlighted that traditional seeds are not just about farming—they represent life, culture, and self-reliance. The festival showed how market-based seed systems have weakened seed-saving traditions, making farmers dependent and increasing costs. It clearly emphasized the central role of women in preserving and passing down seed knowledge, and the urgent need to reconnect youth with these practices. The event also underlined that the active involvement of Panchayats and government systems is key to making seed conservation a lasting and impactful movement.

# Annexure

## Categories of Food Seed Exchange

Vegetables	Fruits	Grains	Millets	Pulses	Oil Seeds	Medicinal Plants	Spices	Beans	Fiber Plants	Dry Fruits
Sesbania grandiflora ( Agati)	Guava	Ajudi Rice	Foxtail Millet	Black Gram	Castor	milkweed or Aak	Ginger	Black Valore	Jute	Cashew
tuber ball	Mango	Kali Kamod Rice	Kang	Chickpea	Flaxseed	Sal tree	Coriander	Cluster Bean		
Katkand	Amla	Kolbo Rice	Kuri	Cowpea or Lobia	Sesame	Basil	Chilli	Red Valore		
Pumpkin	Tamarind	Wheat	Kodo Millet	Red Rice	Mahua	Neem	Garlic	White Valore		
Bitter Gourd	Cucumber	Small Cumin	Proso Millet	Pigeon Pea	Groundnut	Gum Arabic Tree	Turmeric			
Ivy Gourd	Jackfruit	Big Cumin Rice	Sorghum	White Pigeon Pea	Alkanet Root	Henna				
Sour Greens	Natal Plum	Desi Barley	Little Millet	Green Gram	Red Groundnut	Hajari Gal				
Carrot	Date Palm	Pathariya Traditional Rice	Pearl Millet	Pea	Sunflower					
Sponge Gourd	Glue Berry	Basmati Paddy	Finger Millet	Lentil	White Sesame					
Dimda	Gondi	Basmati Rice	Amaranth	Red Pigeon Pea	Soybean					
Desi Okra	Sapota	Gagdi Maize	Raat Rovana	White Pigeon Pea						
Red Okra	Jungle-Jalebi	Pohta Maize	Kala							
Brinjal	Jamun	White Maize								
Lady Finger or Okra	Tomato	Magiya Traditional Rice								
Reddish	Timru	Sal								
Fenugreek	Dangra	White Corn								
Rajan	Dosra	Hutar Traditional Rice								
White Pumpkin	Watermelon									
White Gourd	Lemon									
Drumstick	Papaya									
Sangri	Ber & Jujube									
Bottle Gourd	Ramphal									
Spinach	Sibda									
Pointed Gourd	Custard Apple									
Yellow Pumpkin										
Ridge Gourd										



Head Office:  
Village and Post Kupra, District Banswara, Rajasthan (India)  
Ph: 9414082643 | Email: vaagdhara@gmail.com | Web:  
www.vaagdhara.org

Coordination Office:  
Plot No. 37, Shiv Shakti Nagar, Gautam Marg, Near Kings Road,  
Nirman Nagar, Jaipur, Rajasthan - 302018  
Ph: +919829823424



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