

Genetic diversity of crops and animals threatened by climate change

Climate change threatens the genetic diversity of the world's food supply, and saving crops and animals at risk will be crucial for preserving yields and adapting to wild weather patterns, a U.N. policy paper said on Monday.

Certain wild crops – varieties not often cultivated by today's farmers – could prove more resilient to a warming planet than some popular crop breeds, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) said.

To improve the resilience of food systems, the paper recommends strengthening gene banks to include crops now considered “minor,” a review of breeding practices, the creation of community seed banks, and improving seed exchanges between farmers in different regions.

Seeds and genetic material from crops under threat should be preserved in labs when they are not safe in the wild, said the paper.

Breeders will need to identify genetic resources with suitable traits for developing varieties that can thrive in extreme climatic conditions, the paper said.

Read full, original article: Food diversity under siege from global warming, U.N. says