

# Seeds of the Future:

## Knowledge Exchange on Agrobiodiversity Brought Together Over 70 Leaders and Youth in Cusco

From May 27 to 29, 2025, Cusco became the epicenter of an international gathering aimed at rethinking the present and future of agrobiodiversity in the context of climate change and rural transformation. More than 70 participants, including farmers, youth, researchers, and representatives from national and international organizations, took part in the Knowledge Exchange Workshop on Agrobiodiversity, an event that reaffirmed the value of native seeds as a living heritage and a cornerstone of food sustainability.

Co-organized by the *National Institute of Agrarian Innovation (INIA)*, the *International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, the *International Potato Center (CIP)*, and *Oxfam*. The workshop promoted dialogue across generations, cultures, and forms of knowledge. The agenda focused on the need to strengthen institutional cooperation, empower rural youth, and build more inclusive public policies.



### Four Action Labs

During two days of collaborative work, four thematic action labs were held to address the most urgent challenges facing agrobiodiversity from different perspectives:

- **Monitoring and Documenting Agrobiodiversity:** Community-based monitoring models and tools were presented, highlighting the importance of in situ seed conservation, biodiversity tracking, and preventing genetic erosion. Oxfam in Peru and FOVIDA introduced the Farmer Field School Methodology for Participatory Plant Breeding, which enables Andean families to co-develop resilient potato varieties and strengthen local seed banks.
  - **Financial Tools for Farmers:** Discussions covered incentives and compensation schemes for those who conserve ecosystems and traditional crop varieties, especially in areas vulnerable to climate change.
  - **Youth Participation in Agriculture:** Youth leadership was at the heart of the workshop. Participants shared experiences combining traditional knowledge, agroecology, technological innovation, and rural entrepreneurship.
  - **Policies and Governance for Agrobiodiversity:** Participants discussed legislative proposals and local governance strategies to ensure the participation of rural communities, with a special focus on women. The Native Seeds Systems Bill, presented by the Native Seeds Advocacy Group (GRISEN), aims to protect peasant seed management and exchange systems, prevent genetic contamination, and recognize communities as guardians of agrobiodiversity.
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## Voices That Inspire

The event also provided space for powerful testimonies. Rosalía Clemente, an Indigenous leader and president of the National Agrarian Confederation, emphasized:

“When you speak of seeds, you speak of a people urgently demanding recognition of their ancestral knowledge.”

Mariana Escobar, FAO representative in Peru, added:

“Seeds must be understood in a broader context, because they connect the countryside with the city.”

These voices encapsulate the message that echoed throughout the workshop: seeds are not just agricultural inputs, they carry identity, culture, sovereignty, and resilience.

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## Key Takeaways and Next Steps

The main conclusions from the gathering are included:

- Strengthening **inter-institutional collaboration**, connecting efforts among communities, grassroots organizations, government bodies, and academia.

- Promoting **inclusive public policies** that recognize the rights of Indigenous peoples and ensure their representation in decision-making spaces.
  - **Empowering rural youth** by creating conditions that enable them to thrive in their territories with access to technology, land, financing, and markets.
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### **Toward Lima 2025**

The Cusco event was more than a technical space; it was a symbolic and political act in defense of the country's biological and cultural heritage. As part of the lead-up to the next meeting of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources, to be held in Lima in November 2025, this exchange laid the foundation for positioning Peru as a global leader in agrobiodiversity conservation.

Through gatherings like this, strategic alliances are strengthened, and collective pathways are built toward a more just, diverse, and resilient agriculture. **The seeds of the future are already sprouting in the hands of those who nurture and protect them.**