The background features several large, overlapping brushstrokes in various shades of orange and yellow, creating a textured, artistic effect. The colors range from light peach to deep, vibrant orange.

AFRICAN CENTRE FOR BIODIVERSITY

ANNUAL
REPORT
2020



Scope of our work

The African Centre for Biodiversity (previously 'Biosafety') was established in 2003 and registered in 2004. The ACB carries out research and analysis, learning and exchange, capacity and movement building, and advocacy to widen awareness, catalyse collective action and influence decision-making on issues of biosafety, genetic modification (GM) and new technologies, seed laws, farmer seed systems, agricultural biodiversity, agroecology, corporate expansion in African agriculture, and food sovereignty in Africa.

The ACB is a small, agile and highly effective organisation that delivers on its commitments, producing high quality work that has wide reach and impact due to a complex network of relationships with community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, social movements and an array of like-minded technical experts. It is a learning organisation, meticulously documenting its activities and reflecting on past work and lessons and paying attention to trends on the horizon, acting as an early warning system for partners and social movements on issues of biosafety, biodiversity and corporate expansion in the agricultural sector. Its learning orientation and approach to planning enables the ACB to do both long-term work as well as ad-hoc work and the ACB is adept at reviewing plans and strategies to effectively meet new challenges and emergent opportunities. The small team is supported by rigorous management by the leadership team and oversight of all content, administrative, policy and financial governance matters by the Board.

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic left an indelible mark in 2020, with most of the world going into stringent and lengthy lockdowns both locally and globally, and borders being closed. For our organisation and network partners, many planned face-to-face meetings and activities, and events we were engaged in preparing for, including international negotiations, were either cancelled or postponed. Even after borders opened, uncertainty remained on how to proceed, with the threat of further intermittent pandemic waves looming large.

We had to adapt quickly and shift most of our engagement to the virtual space and diversify our methods of working and collaborating. We used this time wisely, to deepen our work substantially and build on existing capacities of our partners in various African countries, to ensure the continuity of our work trajectory, albeit substantially adapted.

The pandemic has exposed fragilities in the corporate-industrial food system that the majority of the world depend on for their daily food, and brought to the fore how this dominant global food system is implicated in the pandemic, through decades of encroachment of large-scale monocultures into diverse ecosystems, with novel viruses and pathogens being released from their destruction. The COVID-19 crisis has also exposed the stark inequalities that persist in terms of access to healthcare, food, shelter, personal safety, water, transport and communications.

As part of the immediate response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ACB joined with other civil society organisations, grassroots food movements and smallholder farmers in South Africa, to form the C-19 People's Coalition.¹ Through this alliance, we participated in and orientated local response and advocacy efforts, involving the production and distribution of food, including fresh produce, despite the many challenges such as soaring prices, and limited access to seed and inputs, and transportation. We also supported the building of local seed, agricultural and food resilience, via small grants to partner organisations in Limpopo and the Eastern Cape, through the generous support of our donors, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and 11th Hour Project.

The ACB co-hosted webinars that delved into the South African seed and food systems, including: Democratising South Africa's food systems in and beyond the crisis.² ACB research coordinator Dr Stephen Greenberg, also participated in a webinar hosted by the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS): Towards building consensus to democratise Africa's food systems during COVID-19 and beyond. A related commentary was published as an op-ed: Towards a democratised and recalibrated food system in South Africa³ by Dr Greenberg.



1. <https://c19peoplescoalition.org.za/>

2. <https://www.acbio.org.za/towards-building-consensus-democratise-africas-food-systems-during-covid-19-and-beyond-webinar>

3. <https://www.acbio.org.za/towards-democratised-and-recalibrated-food-system-south-africa>

SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

During 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic brought about significant shifts in our work, in regard especially to the nexus between the ecological health of the planet, human health and systemic issues exacerbated due to the bundle of false solutions imposed in Africa, within which the GM push is situated. The outcomes of this is much deeper work undertaken on the emerging concept of nature based solutions, systemic shocks hitting the continent, and the issues pertaining to trade, including the bilateral negotiations between Kenya and the US, and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). We initiated the production of path-breaking studies to provide new political framing for our seed and GM work, in a way that will bring in more partners, for greater resistance against false solutions and more support for a shift towards agroecology.

The pandemic deepened our analyses of the underlying systemic causes and drivers of multiple shocks in Africa, which has led to a series of deep exposés of the ecological and economic exploitation of our continent, and their impact particularly on smallholder farmers and rural dwellers, in the context of the biodiversity crisis. We trace the linkages between resource extractivism, ecological collapse, precarious livelihoods, and crippling indebtedness, and the way false solutions are embedded within a destructive and exclusionary logics of commodification, dispossession and financialisation.



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Ever more urgently, a transformation agenda is required, of recognising and supporting the role of smallholder farmers and indigenous and local communities, in protecting nature, grounded in stewarding the commons and taking account of the need to protect human rights, within the global inequalities that shape the experiences of multiple shocks emanating from the climate and biodiversity crises.

We have continued to play an essential role in speaking out against the promotion of false solutions and the use of these seismic shock waves to embed and embolden the hand of agribusiness in seed and food systems, to ensure that farmers' rights are centralised in policies and programmes. Working from a more integrated understanding, we are meeting with existing partners and forging new partnerships, in order to clarify the political imperatives facing us as movements, civil society organisations and policy makers, as we struggle for transformed food systems.

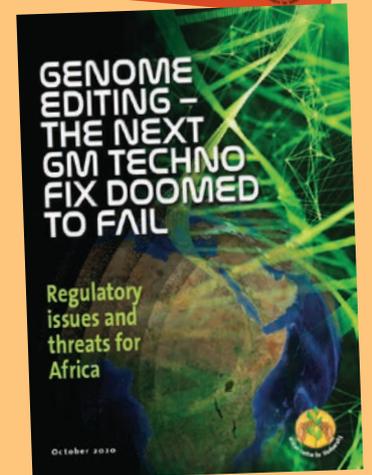
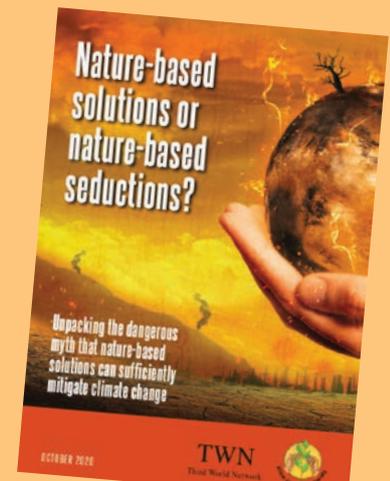
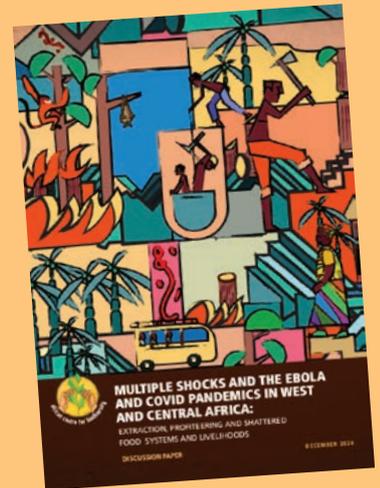
On the genetic modification (GM) front, the plateauing of old technology has not stopped the push of these failed strategies on the continent; rather, the biotechnology machinery has been developing and trying to foist new risky forms of genetic engineering (GE) techniques in Africa. We have highlighted the problems with new technologies, such as genome editing, and have spotlighted specific cases, such as the push for RNAi cassava in Kenya and GM potatoes in Rwanda and Uganda.

The ACB has also continued to play a pivotal role in catalysing the seed sovereignty movement in South Africa and to substantially strengthen regional movements, through our support work in the various international spaces, where we have been involved in shaping interventions in the policy spaces provided by international seed negotiations.

The ACB has been extraordinarily active in the political space of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), particularly in terms of its Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on farmers' rights.

The registration of farmer varieties has remained a controversial issue; and our work of contesting draconian corporate seed policies and laws has continued, through convening online webinars, meetings and teach-ins, where we provide national-level support to civil society organisation (CSO) responses to the seed laws in South Africa, and various countries in Africa.

A more detailed description of work done can be found below, within our three programmatic areas.



Biosafety, genetic modification and new technologies

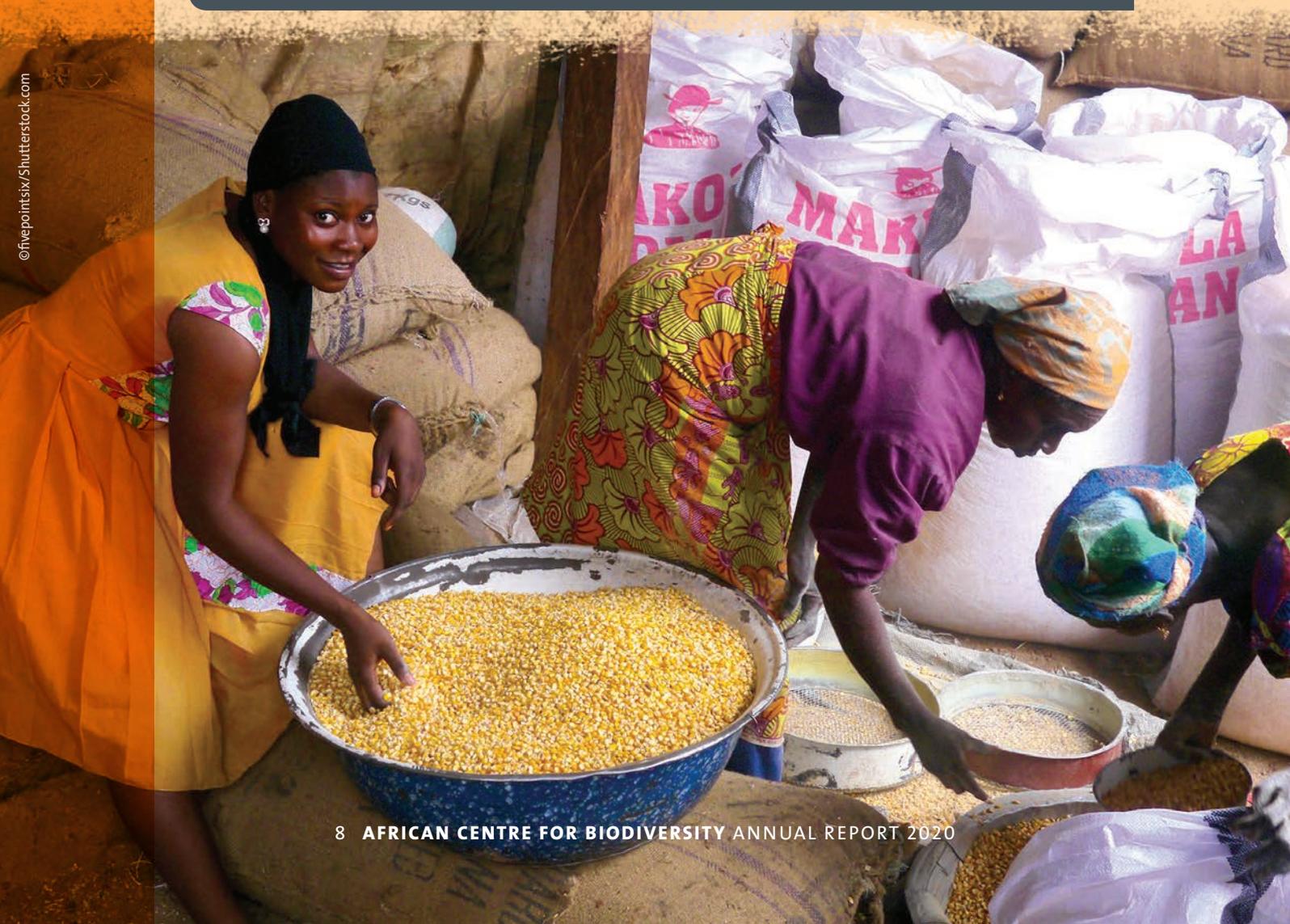
On the continent and globally, the ACB provides legal, scientific and policy support to partners for the building of public awareness and capacity to respond to, and resist, the uptake and/ or further expansion of first and second GM technologies in Africa.

Seed sovereignty

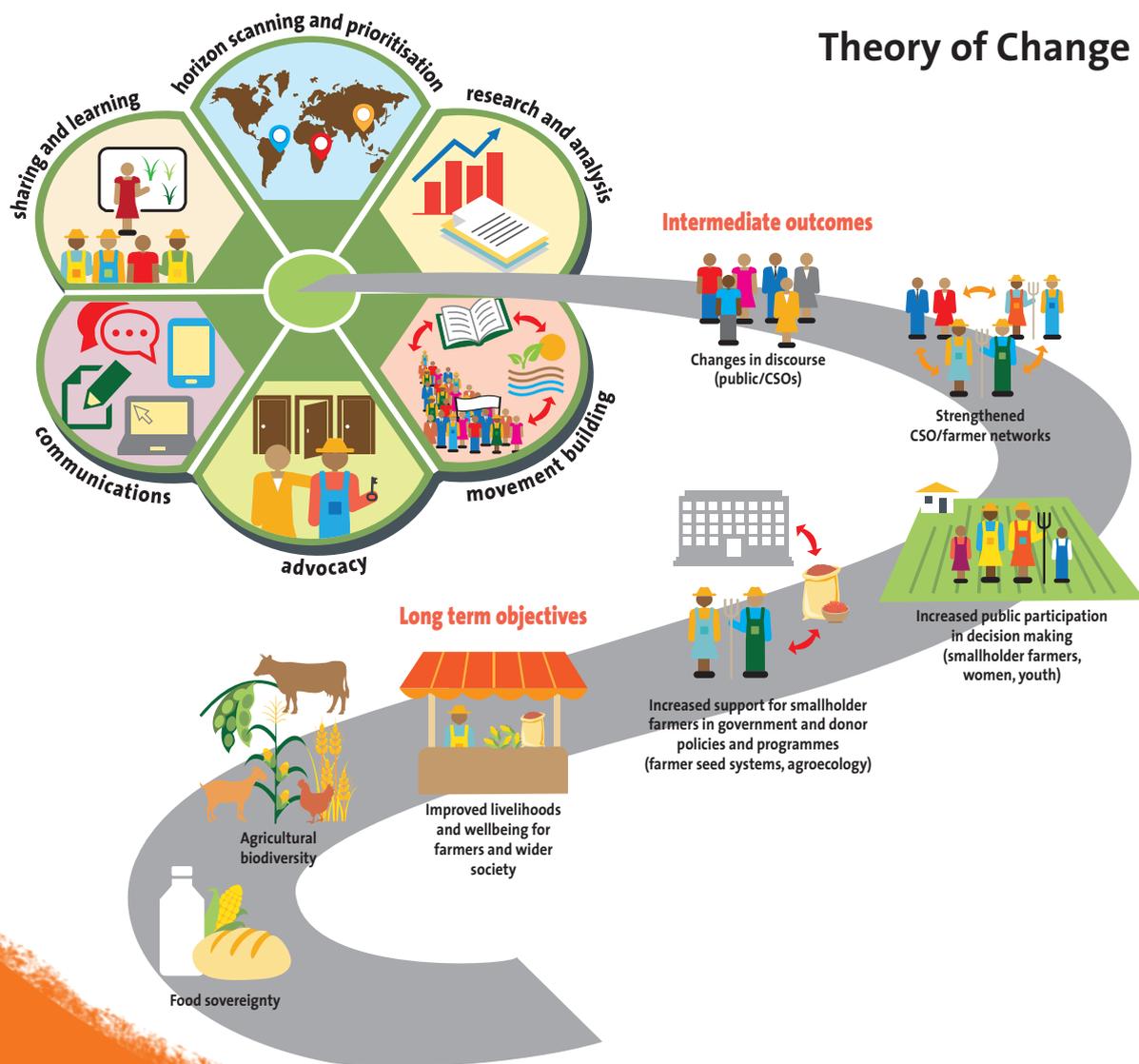
Through partnerships, we work for the transformation of seed policies, to recognise, support and strengthen farmer managed seed systems. We mobilise resistance to harmonised seed and PVP laws and work to deepen our understanding of, and realise transitions to, agroecological farming practices.

Opposing corporate expansion in african agriculture

Public resources subsidise Green Revolution inputs, through packages such as farm input subsidy programmes (FISPs) and the ACB builds coalitions to advocate for more diversified, contextually appropriate farmer support. The ACB monitors and contests corporate expansion by conducting research and analysis, sharing information and working with networks, to build popular resistance. We make submissions and engage with competition authorities on mergers and acquisitions in agricultural input supply and conduct studies on concentration in corporate value chains.



Theory of Change



The ACB's theory of change is rooted in our implementation of six integrated and dynamic strategies:

- Horizon scanning and prioritisation
- Research and analysis
- Sharing and learning
- Movement building
- Communications
- Advocacy

Through these activities, we work in partnership with social movements, farmer associations, non-government organisations and other CSOs, promoting popular participation by opening up policy spaces and facilitating informed entry into policy processes at all levels, from on farm research and discussion all the way through to global policy negotiations. Our main area of focus is Southern Africa but with connections to East and West Africa and beyond the continent.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders include:

- Farmers
- CSOs, especially smallholder farmer associations
- Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
- Social movements working in the fields of smallholder agriculture, agroecology, seed and biodiversity in Africa, in the global south and internationally
- Governments
- Academics/scientists and researchers
- Public sector institutions
- Donors
- Media

Partnerships

We mainly partner with CSOs and farmer organisations, which has grounded the ACB and the issues within a legitimate constituency in the region, providing us with a good platform to reach also into multiple regional processes. We have a large number of partners in the South African Development Community (SADC) region, the rest of the continent, and internationally.

South Africa

Association for Water and Rural Development (AWARD)
Biowatch South Africa
Co-operative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC)
Dzomo la Mupo
Earthlore Foundation
Eastern Cape Agroecology Farmers Association (ECAFA)
Greenhouse Project (The

Gumbu Community Seed Bank
Ilimi Lamafama
Izindaba Zokudla
Rainbow Maize Farmers Seed And Knowledge Initiative (SKI)
South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI)
Southern African Catholic Bishops Association (SACBC) Justice and Peace
Southern African Faith Communities Environment Institute (SAFCEI)
South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC)
Trust for Community Outreach and Education (TCOE)
Ukuvuna

Africa

Burkina Faso

Fédération Nationale des Groupements de Naam (FNGN)
Terre A Vie

Cameroon

Plateforme Sous Régionale des Organisations Paysannes d'Afrique Centrale (PROPAC)

Côte d'Ivoire

Copagen

Democratic Republic of Congo

Common Front for the Protection of the Environment and Protected Spaces of the DRC (FCPEEP)

Ghana

Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development (CIKOD)
Food Sovereignty Ghana (FSG)

Kenya

African Wildlife Foundation (AWF)
Biodiversity and Biosafety Association Kenya (BIBA)
Kenyan Peasants League (KPL)
Kenya Small Scale Farmers Forum

Mali

Coalition des Femmes pour la souveraineté alimentaire (COFERSA)

Malawi

Commons for Ecojustice (CEJ)

Mozambique

Acção Acadêmica para o Desenvolvimento das Comunidades Rurais (ADECRU)
Associação Rural de Ajuda Mútua (ORAM)
Justiça Ambiental (JA)
Kaleidoscopio
Livianingo
Uniao Nacional de Camponeses (UNAC)

Nigeria

Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF)

Rwanda

Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (Pelum)

Tanzania

Mtandao wa Vikundi vya Wakulima (MVIWATA)
Sustainable Agriculture (SAT)
Tanzanian Alliance for Biodiversity (TABIO)
Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM)

Uganda

Advocates Coalition
for Development and
Environment (ACODE)

Caritas

Eastern and Southern Africa
Small Scale Farmers Forum
(ESAFF)

Togo

Action Réelle sur
l'Environnement l'Enfance
et la Jeunesse (AREJ)

Zambia

Kasisi Agricultural Training
Centre

Zambian Alliance for
Agroecology and
Biodiversity (ZAAB)

Zimbabwe

Community Technology
Development Trust (CTDT)

Participatory Ecological
Land Use Management
Zimbabwe (Pelum)

Zimbabwe Seed Sovereignty
Programme (ZSSP)

Zimbabwe Smallholder
Organic Farmers' Forum
(Zimsoff)

Beyond the continent

Belgium

International Panel of Experts
on Sustainable Food
Systems (IPES-Food)

Brazil

Centro de Tecnologias
Alternativas da Zona da
Mata (CTA-ZM)

Canada

Erosion, Technology and
Concentration (ETC) Group

Ecuador

Acción Ecológica

Germany

Testbiotech

Netherlands

Both ENDS

Peru

Asociacion ANDES

Spain

GRAIN

Switzerland

Association for Plant Breeding
for the Benefit of Society
(APBREBES)

United Kingdom

The Gaia Foundation

United States

AgroEcology Fund
Community Alliance for
Global Justice (CAGJ)
US Right to Know

Regional

Alliance for Food Sovereignty
in Africa (AFSA) (Pan-Africa)
Southern and Eastern Africa

Trade Information and
Negotiations Institute
(SEATINI)

Rural Women's Assembly
(RWA) – Southern African

Southeast Asia Regional
Initiatives for Community
Empowerment (SEARICE)

International

Food First Information and
Action (FIAN)

Friends of the Earth (FoE)

International Planning
Committee for Food
Sovereignty (IPC)

Network of Farmers' and
Agricultural Producers'
Organisations of West
Africa (ROPPA)

Nia Terro

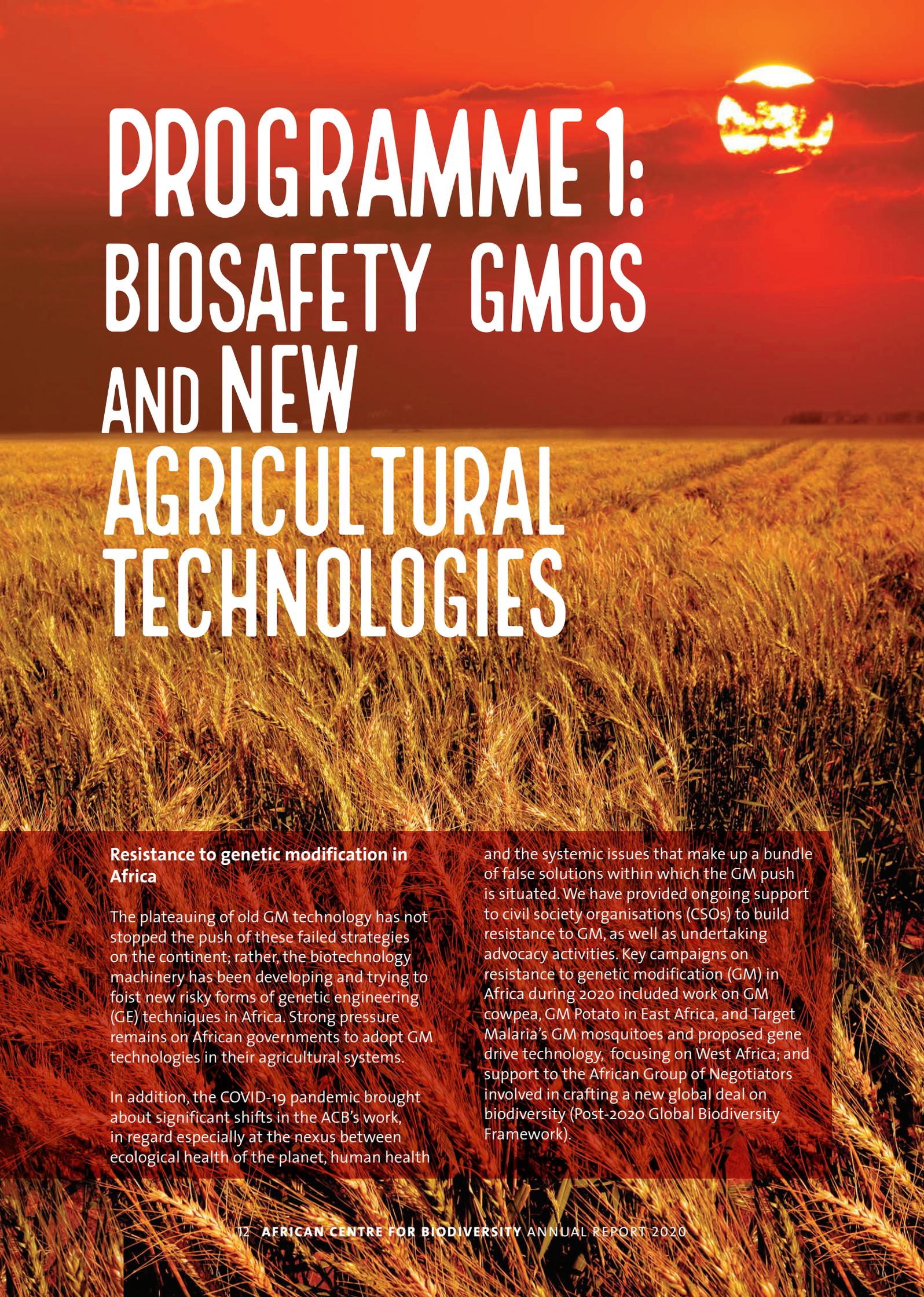
La Via Campesina Africa (LVC)

Pesticide Action Network
(PANInt)

Third World Network (TWN)

World Rainforest Movement
(WRM)





PROGRAMME 1: BIOSAFETY GMOS AND NEW AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGIES

Resistance to genetic modification in Africa

The plateauing of old GM technology has not stopped the push of these failed strategies on the continent; rather, the biotechnology machinery has been developing and trying to foist new risky forms of genetic engineering (GE) techniques in Africa. Strong pressure remains on African governments to adopt GM technologies in their agricultural systems.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic brought about significant shifts in the ACB's work, in regard especially at the nexus between ecological health of the planet, human health

and the systemic issues that make up a bundle of false solutions within which the GM push is situated. We have provided ongoing support to civil society organisations (CSOs) to build resistance to GM, as well as undertaking advocacy activities. Key campaigns on resistance to genetic modification (GM) in Africa during 2020 included work on GM cowpea, GM Potato in East Africa, and Target Malaria's GM mosquitoes and proposed gene drive technology, focusing on West Africa; and support to the African Group of Negotiators involved in crafting a new global deal on biodiversity (Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework).

In South Africa, the ACB has continued holding the government accountable on some GM applications that are overtly detrimental, including an application for COVID-19 vaccine trials. In July 2020, the ACB made a public submission⁴ to decision-makers on the proposed GM vaccine human trials involving a GM ChA-dOx1 nCov-19 vaccine (approved in June 2020), to inform better decision-making and taking of additional precautionary measures by the government and health establishment. The submission was accompanied by a civil society statement in which the ACB raised concerns on GM COVID-19 vaccine trials for SA, and called for transparency and public hearings.⁵ This statement was translated into Portuguese and Spanish for wider dissemination to ACB partners throughout the global South and internationally, demonstrating the relevance of the ACB's work, even during a seismic shock like the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ACB's role in influencing decision-making on GMOs in SA is highly recognised and valued at national level. During the reporting period, the ACB was invited by the South African National Biodiversity Institute to contribute towards an assessment of the impact of GMOS on the environment in South Africa. This contribution formed the basis of a briefing on the history of GMOs in South Africa 23 years on: failures, biodiversity loss, and escalating hunger.⁶

On GM maize, the ACB continued with the appeal against the commercial release of Monsanto's GM drought tolerant maize

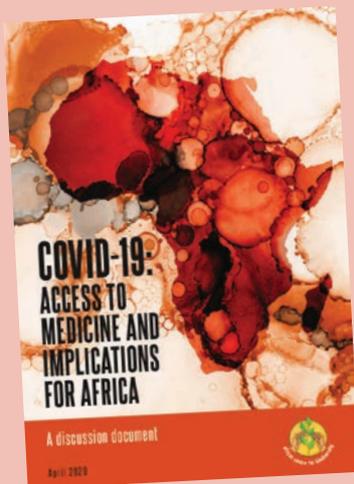
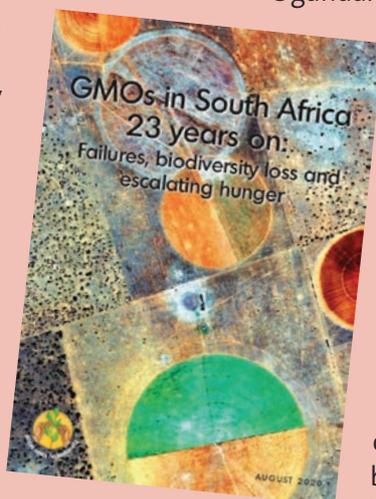
variety MON 87460,⁷ and legal proceedings are ongoing. However, Bayer, eager to revive the Water Efficient Maize for Africa (WEMA) project, now rebranded as TELA, used South Africa as a base to multiply seed and then export the stacked drought tolerant varieties of MON 87460 x MON 810 into Kenya and Uganda. The ACB issued an alert drawing

attention to the production of seed in the continuation of the project. Further investigation into this export of GM seed onto the rest of the continent was undertaken, for reporting in the next alert.

The approval of 2,4-D maize in 2019 set a bad precedent for the industry, with 2,4-D applications for soybean and for field trials and commodity clearance of maize, being made by industry. The ACB thus wrote an objection to the commodity clearance of Corteva's MON 89034 x TC1507 x MIR162 x NK603 x DAS-40278-9⁸ maize in South Africa.

On the continent, the ACB's collaboration with its partners has given impetus to GM resistance in their countries, such as GM potato and cassava in East Africa and GM cowpea and GM Mosquitoes in West Africa. There was continued evidence of CSOs taking independent action to oppose GM expansion, indicating

a strengthening of CSOs in the region on this issue. To date, aside from GM cotton approvals in a handful of African countries, and Nigeria's approval of GM cowpea, which is not yet being grown commercially, the biotech machinery has been severely frustrated in their efforts to capture the maize markets in Africa with GM technology.



4. <https://www.acbio.org.za/gm-vaccines-south-africa-case-precautionary-principle>
 5. <https://www.acbio.org.za/acb-raises-concerns-gm-covid-19-vaccine-trials-sa-calls-transparency-public-hearings>
 6. <https://www.acbio.org.za/gmos-south-africa-23-years-failures-biodiversity-loss-and-escalating-hunger>
 7. <https://www.acbio.org.za/resounding-no-monsantos-bogus-gm-drought-tolerant-maize>
 8. <https://www.acbio.org.za/objection-commodity-clearance-cortevas-mon-89034-x-tc1507-x-mir162-x-nk603-x-das-40278-9-maize>

Due to the strong support of the ACB to CSOs in Burkina Faso, resistance in that country gained impetus and the second spate of GM mosquitoes slated for release in July 2020 did not take place. It appears for the time being, that the Target Malaria project has been thwarted due to this resistance and the difficulties presented by the pandemic.

In addition, the Kenyan partners opposed the commercial release of RNAi GM cassava into their country with the ACB's support and in this effect collaborated with the ACB on a blog.⁹ Learning and exchanges with Ugandan and Rwandan partners was done on GM potato being pushed in their country.

The ACB has successfully formed alliances with movements from other continents on GM resistance; for example, the Andean-African alliance on GM potato resistance, and joint activities including a press briefing and the publishing of a report.¹⁰ Some of this work was used by the Peruvian groups to secure a moratorium on GM crop cultivation in Peru for another 15 years.

The ACB, in collaboration with the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) and Francophone African CSOs helped develop easy-to-read materials on cowpea in Benin, while in Mali, the ACB supported CSOs supported resistance to GM/gene drive mosquitoes.

The ACB has also solidified its relationship with the African Group of Negotiators involved in crafting a new global deal on biodiversity (Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework), including on nature-based solutions, agriculture, genome editing, gene drives, synthetic biology, and digital sequence information.

African Independent Scientist Network

The process of convening an African group of independent scientists that can potentially counter pro-GM African scientists and also assist with scientific analysis and opinion, initiated by the ACB in 2019, was regrettably stalled by the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020 but remains an important new endeavour for ACB. We have been consulting with a number of allies to bring African expertise and thinkers together in support of local solutions by and for smallholder farmers, especially in regard to agricultural biodiversity as well as pushing back against industrial agriculture, including GMOs. The idea is to build alliances towards a progressive African coalition of thinkers, scientists and activists to build new narratives and approaches aimed at securing the future of Africa, including but not limited to work against the dangerous 30x30 target, – with the aim of creating conservancies to protect 30% of land and 30% of sea – which perpetuates an outdated, colonial and failed conservation approach, and to push forward on new thinking, solutions, and resourcing.

9. <https://www.acbio.org.za/push-back-against-risky-and-unsafe-rnai-gm-cassava-cultivation-kenya>

10. <https://www.acbio.org.za/gm-potato-push-east-africa>



PROGRAMME 2: SEED SOVEREIGNTY SEED LAWS AND POLICIES FARMER SEED SYSTEMS AND AGROECOLOGY

While farmers rights – the core of which is their right to seed – is recognised in international treaties, this does not always translate into seed laws at national and regional level having provisions that protect these rights. Over many years, the ACB has been involved at the various levels, from the international negotiations that shape the global legal frameworks to regional policy setting and at national level of individual countries.

International agreements: a space of contestation for farmers' rights to seed

The ITPGRFA or “the treaty”

In 2020, we continued to situate our work within the emerging discourse on farmers rights, specifically through involvement in the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on farmers' rights, which was created by the governing body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and



Agriculture (ITPGRFA). Through coordination and convening, we brought together various pressure groups to shape and inform a strategy/campaign for the full recognition and implementation of farmers' rights. In this way, we have been instrumental in working with other CSOs to shift the political dynamics of the AHTEG from within. This work bore fruit at the third online meeting of the AHTEG, from 25 to 28 August, 2020, where Options for the implementation of farmers' rights were discussed.

Since farmer's rights, embedded as they are within human rights, are enshrined in many national, regional and international human rights instruments, we recognise the need to assert the primacy of these rights within a bundle of human rights, which have primacy over private, commercial rights, and to insist on law and policy reflecting and accommodating diverse systems of rights that embed the principles of social justice, equity, ecological sustainability and the all-important linkages with agroecology, and the roles of smallholder farmers in food systems.

Engagement at regional and national level

Despite farmers rights being recognised in the ITPGRFA, countries in the global South are being pressured to cede to a regime that favours the rights of private breeders above farmers; namely, the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) Convention, which is being used to shape national plant variety rights (PVR) laws.

We have particularly criticised the most recent and draconian iteration, UPOV 1991, as limiting farmers' rights to their seeds and contravening the provisions for farmers rights in Article 9 of the ITPGRFA. Pressure to restrict the use of intellectual property (IP) protected varieties comes from the commercial seed industry. Yet the unrestricted exchange and use of seed selected by farmers in their fields is at the heart of preserving and developing agricultural biodiversity and ensuring genetic renewal.

In 2020, this work was continued through virtual interaction, where the ACB and partners came together to raise a new discourse emphasising that no seed and plant variety protection (PVP) laws can ever implement farmers' rights, but only allow safeguards. In addition to these online engagements, we have been involved in two regional processes: the SADC registration of farmer varieties and quality controls in farmer seed systems (FSS), and four national processes, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

We forged links with a new partner, the Common Front for the Protection of the Environment and Protected Spaces of the DRC (FCPEEP). In collaboration, we published a briefing¹¹ on how the DRC Seed Bill may impact negatively on FSS, which remain the basis for seed, food and nutrition security. We also looked at the Provincial Decree of South Kivu's Provincial Seed Council, as an example of how national legislation influences the provinces, where the impact of the proposed Seed Bill will be felt by smallholder farmers. Towards the end of the year, we helped support FCPEEP to host a meeting with government officials to discuss the issues and we will continue to support their advocacy efforts.

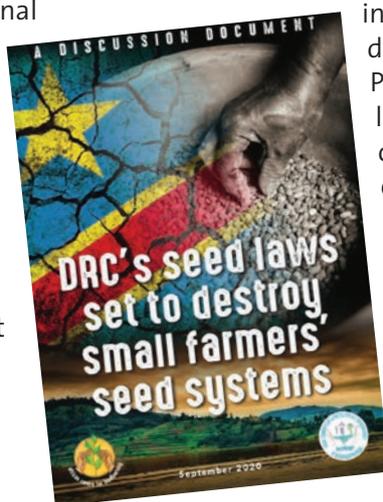
Malawi

Previously, the ACB worked with partner organisations in Malawi and the outcome was the establishment of the Malawi Agrobiodiversity Network (MAGNET), which created a draft model policy and submitted it to various government departments. While the Malawi Seed Bill was to be tabled at the

February 2020 sitting of Parliament, this was postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions. The MagNET aims to pick up this work of engaging with government in 2021, and the ACB will continue to provide support.

Zambia

In the past years, we have worked closely with the **Zambian Alliance on Agroecology and Biodiversity (ZAAB)** and its members in Zambia, to support their development of **Farmer Innovation Platforms (FIPs)** as sites of farmer-led practice and advocacy. The continuation of this work was delayed in 2020, as a result of the pandemic, though we did publish a blog and several videos of farmers speaking about the issues relating to FSS, in English and indigenous **Zambian languages**.¹² We are planning a regional meeting for 2021, co-hosted by the ACB and the ZAAB, in collaboration with a broad range of regional actors and **Zambian partners**, on ways to take the work forward.



Pressure mounts for Zimbabwe to join UPOV 1991

In Zimbabwe, the ACB had brought to the attention of CSOs that the country's **Plant Breeders Right (PBR) Bill** was in the process of being changed in ways detrimental to farmers' rights, based on the country's intention to cede to **UPOV 1991**. A series of engagements has ensued (which will flow into 2021), with **Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Zimbabwe** and a coalition of seven organisations that make up the **Zimbabwe Seed Sovereignty Programme (ZSSP)**, where we have jointly been unpacking the problems with the draft Bill, and comparing it to the current **PBR Law**. This has

11. <https://www.acbio.org.za/drcs-seed-laws-set-destroy-small-farmers-seed-systems>

12. <https://www.acbio.org.za/insights-farmer-dialogues-kalulushi-zambia>

resulted in the development of an advocacy action plan by Zimbabwean CSOs to engage with their government regarding the bill, and raise farmers' concerns on the bill with the relevant authorities. This CSO network has also continued working closely with the Ministry of Agriculture on the draft National Plant Genetic Resources (PGR) Plan.

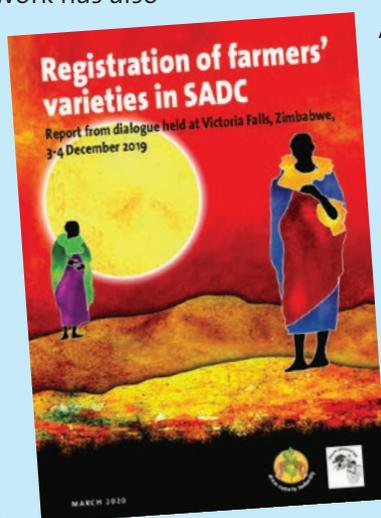
Quality control in FSS and registration of farmer varieties

Following on from a meeting we hosted in Zanzibar, which brought together participants from 10 African countries and five beyond Africa, and the publishing of a briefing that raised key issues relating to the recognition of FSS, in 2020, we published a longer workshop report and a video featuring the Brazilian activists who attended the meeting, where they share some of the history of their activism around seed and seed laws in Portuguese, with English subtitles.¹³ Planned follow up work was to include a multi-stakeholder exchange to Brazil, with a focus on farmer-to-farmer engagement, as well as a possible exchange between Zanzibar and Togo on FSS, which has had to be postponed.

Registration of farmers' varieties in SADC

At regional level, over the past three years, the ACB has engaged with national governments and civil society from Angola, eSwatini,

Namibia, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and the SADC Plant Genetic Resources Centre (SPGRC) on the issue of registration of farmer varieties.



A report was published in August 2020,¹⁴ capturing key issues emerging from a dialogue held in Zimbabwe at the end of 2019. A positive outcome was that the SADC agreed to support extensive consultations between member states and all stakeholders before agreeing on guidelines for the process of registration of farmers' varieties. The results from the workshop will hopefully take the discussions considerably forward in the region in regard to the implementation of farmers'

rights and the issue of registration of both populations and farmers' varieties. There was general agreement that a multi-country pilot could be beneficial.

While this work was disrupted in 2020, the SADC hosted a virtual meeting on the regional seed trade system, to which the ACB was invited to attend as an observer. Other attendees came from South Africa, Tanzania, Angola, Zimbabwe and Eswatini. This meeting resuscitated the discussions on harmonisation of seed frameworks of both seed trade and plant variety protection, to expedite trade in corporate seed. It was apparent, in ACB's view, that FSS and local seed and food economies, which currently feed the region, still remain excluded from the thinking, the paradigm and the process.

"THERE ARE QUESTIONS ON WHO OWNS FARMER SEEDS. WHEN WE TALK OF OWNERSHIP, THERE IS A DIFFERENT UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN WESTERN CAPITALIST AND CUSTOMARY AFRICAN SOCIETY. IT BECOMES DIFFICULT TO DEFINE OWNERSHIP. IT DOESN'T REFLECT THE TRUE CHARACTER OF THE NOTION AS IT FUNCTIONS IN PRACTICE, OR AS IT SHOULD EXIST TO BEST SERVE THE NEEDS OF A SPECIFIC SOCIETY. PROPERTY IS AN ABSOLUTE AND INDIVIDUALIST RIGHT FROM THE WESTERN VIEWPOINT."
 –REGIS MAFURATIDZE, COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT TRUST (CTDT) ZIMBABWE

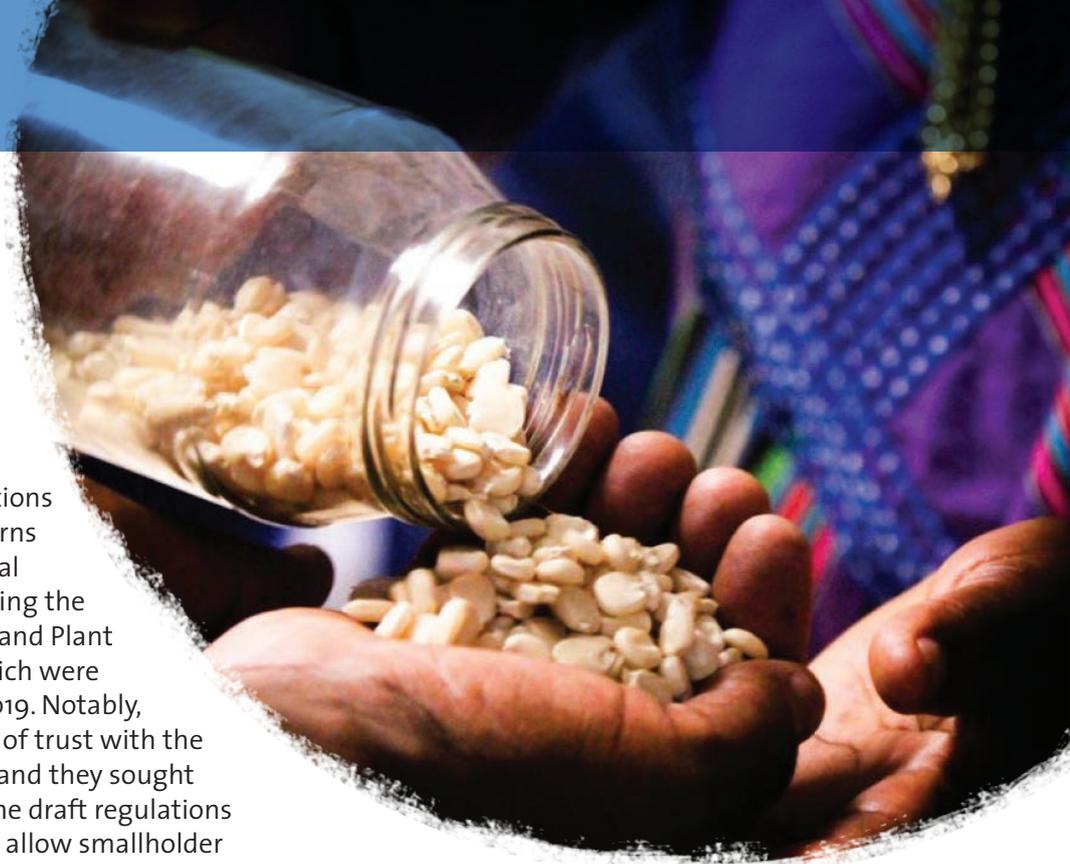
13. <https://www.acbio.org.za/struggle-recognition-traditional-land-territories-and-seed-brazil>
 14. <https://www.acbio.org.za/registration-farmers-varieties-sadc>

South Africa Recognition and safeguarding of farmer seed systems in seed laws and policies

For years, the ACB and networks of farmer associations and CSOs have raised concerns with government, at national and provincial levels, regarding the Plant Breeders Rights (PBR) and Plant Improvement Bills (PIA), which were passed into law in March 2019. Notably, the ACB built a relationship of trust with the South African government, and they sought the ACB's opinion first, on the draft regulations dealing with exemptions to allow smallholder farmers to reuse farm-saved seed of protected varieties.

Our comments are clearly reflected in changes to the draft Regulations, in terms of exemptions for smallholder and household producers, which means they may condition, save, exchange and sell protected varieties for further propagation. This is a significant advance in allowing space for smallholder farmers to produce and sell protected seed without restriction, should they remain in this form, which remains to be seen when the regulations of the PIA and the PBRA are published for comment in 2021.

We also pointed out that the PBR Act is based on UPOV 1991, which sets binding international standards for plant variety protection (PVP), despite South Africa only being a member of the more flexible UPOV 1978 regime. The government has however made public its intention to accede to UPOV 1991, but this means that exemptions will not be permitted beyond narrow interpretations of farmers' privilege. And yet these exemptions are necessary for the state to fulfil its constitutional obligations towards the realisation of social and economic justice. Due to the pandemic, parliamentary processes regarding SA joining UPOV 1991 have been put on hold until September 2021.



“ONE OF THE EASIEST WAYS TO DEFINE A SEED IS BY THE CHARACTERISTICS: HOW DOES IT LOOK, WHAT DOES IT DO, WHAT IS ITS DESCRIPTION AND VALUE – WHETHER VALUE FOR CULTIVATION AND USE OR NOT – BUT THE VALUE OF THE SEED IS GIVEN IN THE ENVIRONMENT. YOU CAN ONLY KNOW THE SEED FROM THE FARMER'S PERSPECTIVE. THAT DESCRIPTION IS WHAT YOU WILL USE TO DEFINE IT. WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO DEFINE FARMER SEED WITHOUT WORKING WITH FARMERS ON HOW TO DESCRIBE THE QUALITY PARAMETERS AROUND IT.” – CLAUD MUJAJU, ZIMBABWE SEED SERVICES INSTITUTE (ZSSI)

Mobilisation for policy and legal measures that realise farmers' rights, farmer seed systems and agroecological practices

The ACB contributed to building provincial and national farmer seed and agroecology networks, through research and analysis, information sharing, participation in and hosting of sharing and learning events, and advocacy.

Following on from previous work, and with the passing of the revised laws, in 2019 the ACB initiated a bottom-up process, by conducting scoping visits in the Eastern Cape and in Limpopo provinces, where we met with a variety of farmer organisations, local NGOs, and local and provincial agriculture officials. Outcomes were shared in the form of two briefing reports.¹⁵ This connected us with an extensive array of smallholder farmers, traditional knowledge and seed systems, and existing provincial or localised networks to build from.

After a scoping dialogue in 2019, the ACB co-hosted a second meeting in Acornhoek, Limpopo Province, with the Association for Water and Rural Development (AWARD), from 20 to 22 January, to bring together farmer networks to discuss what form of government and policy support they would like for agroecology and FSS. From this meeting came a briefing paper in English, Sepedi, Tsonga and Venda.¹⁶ The dialogue allowed for sharing information on the national seed laws, including on the implications of the UPOV and ITPGRFA for FSS, and how to engage representatives of the state on key needs and priorities for support of FSS and agroecology. This culminated in the establishment of the Limpopo Advocacy Network.

THE KEY CONSENSUS FROM THE PARTICIPANTS WAS THAT THE CONVERSATION ITSELF WAS A WATERSHED MOMENT FOR THE PROVINCE, AS THE ORGANISATIONS AND FORMATIONS PRESENT HAD NEVER COME TOGETHER IN SUCH A WAY BEFORE, NOR HAD THEY COLLECTIVELY ENGAGED GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN THIS MANNER.

A proposed meeting in March, in collaboration with Ntinga Ntaba kaNdoda in the Eastern Cape had to be cancelled due to the country going into lockdown. Continuation of building the network was delayed by the COVID-19 outbreak, so to maintain momentum, activities were shifted online.

At the end of April the ACB hosted a webinar: Towards building consensus to democratise Africa's food systems during COVID-19 and beyond,¹⁷ where speakers from around the continent shared perspectives on how African food systems and the small-scale producers involved have been impacted by lockdown.

Research co-ordinator Dr Greenberg wrote a blog from his presentation,¹⁸ which analyses various facets of the South African industrial, largely

corporate-controlled and unequal food system and how this system has been unable to meet the demands of the Covid crisis.

This immediate crisis has put practical issues on the agenda for us: specifically, how to transparently and democratically organise and manage a supply line, food safety and handling procedures, needs assessments, and agricultural input production and distribution.



15. <https://www.acbio.org.za/sites/default/files/documents/202005/farmermanagedseedssystemsinlimpopoprovincesouthafricaweb.pdf>; https://www.acbio.org.za/sites/default/files/documents/Farmer_managed_seed_systems_in_Eastern_Cape_Province_South_Africa_o.pdf
 16. <https://www.acbio.org.za/advancing-agroecology-and-farmer-managed-seed-systems-limpopo>
 17. <https://www.acbio.org.za/towards-building-consensus-democratise-africas-food-systems-during-covid-19-and-beyond-webinar>
 18. <https://www.acbio.org.za/towards-democratised-and-recalibrated-food-system-south-africa>

#INTERNATIONALSEEDDAY

In the lead up to 26 April – designated World Intellectual Property Day – we co-initiated a campaign¹⁹ with 346 civil society organisations from 46 countries, to call for this day to be renamed International Seed Day. We condemned the unashamed greenwashing of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and their expedient promotion of the draconian UPOV plant variety protection (PVP) and patents, as a driver for a green future, when the opposite is the case. We called on global citizens to oppose intellectual property over seed, thereby working to reclaim and restore local food systems and agricultural biodiversity. Twitter, Facebook and Instagram were ablaze – illustrating the collective indignation and resistance against the increasing corporate control of our seed and food systems.

How we respond to these in the here and now will determine the future contours of the food system. Any transcendence of this dysfunctional economic system we are in requires the practical, material reorganisation of society.”

Agroecology increasingly recognised as a viable alternative

In August 2019, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) invited the ACB to participate in a high-level UN and government delegation, including the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) and the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), to visit the Songhai Agroecology Centre in Benin.

Following on from that visit, the FAO asked the ACB to conduct a feasibility study for an Agroecology Centre in the Eastern Cape, working closely with the DALRRD and COGTA. Fieldwork began, with two research and scoping visits to the Port St Johns area in the Eastern Cape in February. A key impetus of the project is to show alternatives to the dominant approach by the government of simply seeking to integrate smallholder farmers into large-scale commercial value chains, by building a pilot support centre that supports local smallholders and the necessary infrastructure for a local food economy. This work, however, was also halted by the hard lockdown, but did still provide for furthering network connections.

Following on from participating in national workshops on agroecology, in mid-2020 the ACB participated in the setting up of Agroecology South Africa (AESA), a flexible platform to enable diverse civil society organisations to engage and share, with an emphasis on grassroots, community and producer organisations, and local activists, to shape the direction for alternative food systems to emerge, based on issues prioritised through dialogues at grassroots’ level.

The platform was launched in June, with an online media briefing that followed on from the submission of a CSO critique of the proposed allocation of a supplementary budget during Covid-19, titled, “Implications for food security and land reform within a context of multiple crises”. This provided a deep analysis of the flawed approach of the government, which was not aimed at addressing redistributive and social measures, with funding earmarked for land reform, food security and rural development being redirected to military and police. This coalition is mapping out localised food system networks and envisioning a new food system that extends these pathways.

Through the awareness raising and advocacy of farmer-led organisations and social movements working towards food sovereignty, there is a growing recognition that we need to shift away from an industrial, chemical-based agriculture system to agroecological ways of cultivating food that are sustainable, and work with nature instead of against nature.

19. acbio.org.za/citizens-world-oppose-intellectual-property-over-seed-reclaim-and-restore-local-food-systems-and

PROGRAMME 3:

CORPORATE EXPANSION IN AFRICAN AGRICULTURE

Research and analysis on multiple shocks in Africa

With the COVID-19 pandemic raging, the ACB undertook research aimed at more sharply exposing the deeper systemic forces entrenching the planet's civilisational crises, by examining, from an African perspective, the multiple shocks striking the continent, and smallholder farmers and rural dwellers in particular.

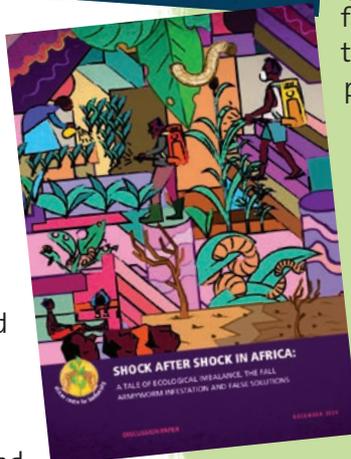
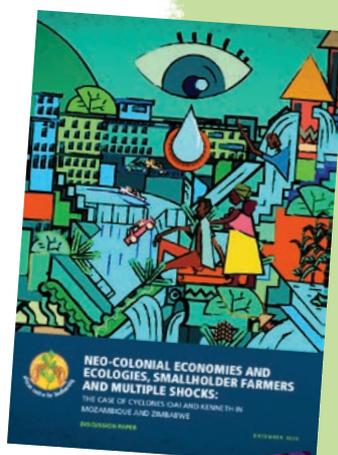
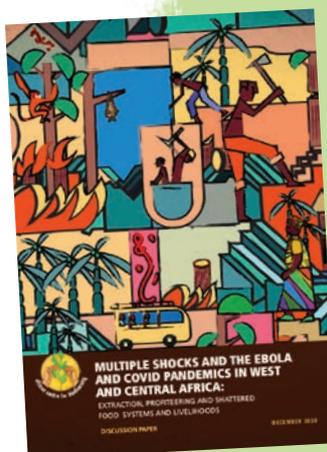
Of this series of six research papers, four were released in 2020:

*Multiple shocks and the Ebola and COVID pandemics in West and Central Africa: extraction, profiteering and shattered food systems and livelihoods*²⁰

Through the lens of the Ebola shocks that have battered West and Central Africa since 2013, and with a specific focus on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the tragic story of the Ebola outbreaks cannot be told outside of the interconnections between wanton resource extraction and exploitation, ecological collapse, precarious livelihoods, financialisation and crippling indebtedness.

We show how the relationship between ecological disturbance and human health has been shaped by distorted logics of austerity, profiteering and financialisation, shaped largely by the pressures of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Collaboration between big Northern-based conservation groups, industry and governments in this context are pushing a battery of dangerous and false solutions, embedded in destructive and exclusionary

logics of commodification, dispossession and financialisation.



*Neo-colonial economies and ecologies, smallholder farmers and multiple shocks: The case of cyclones Idai and Kenneth in Mozambique and Zimbabwe*²¹

This paper critically examines the backdrop to cyclones Idai and Kenneth, namely the political and economic drivers of ecological degradation under the guise of development loans and aid, through rapacious natural resource extraction and social and cultural displacement.

*Shock after Shock in Africa: A tale of ecological imbalance, the fall armyworm infestation and false solutions.*²²

The fall armyworm (FAW), which impacted millions of smallholder farmers across the continent, is a symptom of distorted farming and food systems – pointing to underlying ecological imbalance, gross inequities and a myriad of false solutions that are misdirecting the fate of both the planet and its peoples.

The research papers due to be released in early 2021 are as follows:

Multiple shocks, agribusiness feudalism and the monopolisation of peasant territories: a view from Ecuador on agrobiodiversity and the peasant web of life.

This paper looks at how shocks are used to further industrialise maize production in Ecuador, through the provision of “farming kits”, which is undermining the ecological basis of peasant seed and farming systems.

20. <https://www.acbio.org.za/multiple-shocks-and-ebola-and-covid-pandemics-west-and-central-africa-extraction-profiteering-and>

21. <https://www.acbio.org.za/neo-colonial-economies-and-ecologies-smallholder-farmers-and-multiple-shocks-case-cyclones-idai-and>

22. <https://www.acbio.org.za/shock-after-shock-africa-tale-ecological-imbalance-fall-armyworm-infestation-and-false-solutions>

Locust plagues, smallholders and multiple shocks in Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda: time to confront the imperial agenda in Africa.

The locusts hit a region and its smallholder farmers already battered by climate change – increasing extreme weather events, including cyclones, droughts and floods, rising temperatures and increasingly erratic rainfall. The region is also a hotbed of efforts to intensify the corporatisation and industrialisation of agriculture. The paper dives into the deeper connections between debt, aid, digitalisation and financialisation, which are increasingly determining the terrain in which smallholder farmers must cope; rather than strengthening rights (to land, water, democracy, justice, and the rights of nature) as the foundation for ecologically viable societies.

The final paper of the series will bring together the key lessons from all the papers into an overarching political and conceptual framing that suggests our political imperatives moving forward. The false solutions that seek to supposedly address these shocks through further commodification of nature, land and farming systems must be recognised and resisted to ensure that they do not find a place in the post-2020 Global Diversity Framework agenda of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD).

Call for review of processes of the world food summit

In February, the ACB endorsed the IPC's letter of concern²³ to the UN regarding the proposed 2021 World Food Summit, where it was noted that the summit had shifted direction in a way that puts the participatory mechanisms towards democratic and multilateral food governance in grave jeopardy.

Post-2020 Global Diversity Framework (GBF)

For several years, the ACB has been engaging in discussions at global and national level, on the development of the post-2020 GBF.

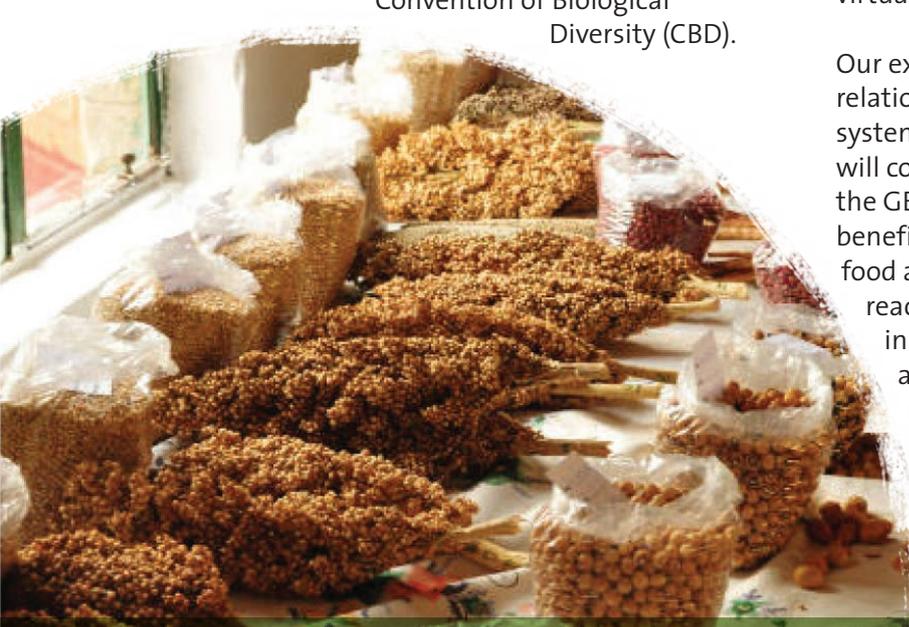
In February 2020, the ACB attended the second meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) for the post-2020 GBF, in Rome, where we made a presentation. Then the post-2020 GBF process was delayed

as a result of the pandemic, but during 2020, the ACB maintained participation in virtual meetings, including that of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Digital Sequence Information (DSI) from 17 to 20 March and the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Risk Assessment from 30 March to 3 April, as well as attending the Liaison Group on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety from 20 to 23 April. During this time, considerable effort has been made by both the African negotiating group and the ACB, to ensure the continuity of that relationship.

The ACB also contributed to a joint letter to the Secretariat and Executive Secretary of the CBD by international CSOs, raising concern over the biodiversity negotiations, in light of the pandemic, where we raised issues regarding the content up for review and drew attention to insufficiencies and inequalities of virtual processes.

Our experience regarding the negotiations in relation to DSI and the ITPGRFA's multilateral system (MLS) is also relevant to the work we will continue to do under the CBD towards the GBF, and issues related to access and benefit sharing of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. With no agreement reached on DSI and effective benefit sharing in the ITPGRFA negotiations, this has also remained an issue of contention in negotiations.

We aim to continue building on these gains, based on the ACB's expertise on agrobiodiversity, farmers' rights and



agroecology, consolidating an African push-back against the drivers of biodiversity loss and false, neocolonial conservation solutions in the context of the post-2020 GBF, and support the conditions for pushing forward with local solutions grounded in the rights and needs of African smallholder, indigenous and local communities.

Kenya US trade deal

Kenya and the US commenced negotiations for a new trade deal that include, inter alia, a huge component dealing with the uptake by Kenya of GM, including new GM and digital technologies. This deal poses a huge threat to Kenya's food systems, as well as the likelihood of either a dismantling or a fracturing of the East African Community (EAC), which could establish a dangerous precedent for the region. The ACB thus invested considerable resources in bringing the Kenyan groups into broader regional and international networks. Linked to this, is burgeoning work on the Continental Free Trade Areas Agreement, and work towards reinterpretation to support greater African unity, integration, inter-dependence and self-sufficiency, in the realm of its food and agriculture systems.

African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA)

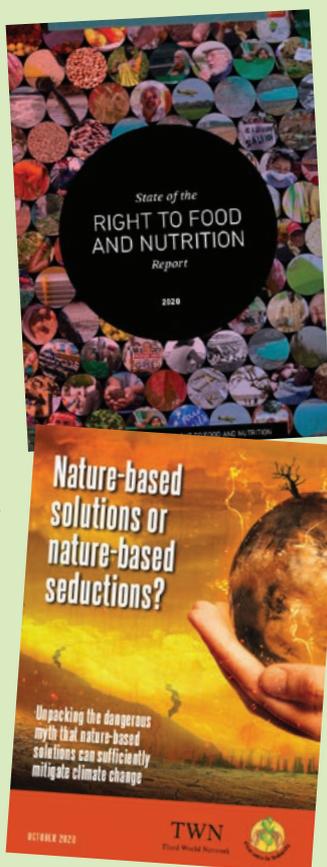
The ACB developed a concept note on the AfCFTA for internal ACB capacity building, to gain an understanding of the agreement and linkages with the interests of smallholder farmers, seed and IP issues. An outcome of the ACB's engagement with the AfCFTA is the formation of a coalition with partners and CSOs on the continent for mutual exchange on this issue, including the Kenya Peasant League (KPL), Biodiversity and Biosafety Association - Kenya (BIBA-K), Third World Network (TWN),

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP), Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information and Negotiations Institute (SEATINI) Uganda and other civil society organisations. The coalition with the continental partners led to the planning and hosting of a teach-in for Kenyan CSOs on the new US-Kenya Free Trade Agreement, for which negotiations were announced in March. The teach-in explored the agreement and its implications for Kenya, as most of these CSOs were not fully informed on the implications of the agreement particularly in terms of GMOs and IPR. Currently, litigation is pending in the Kenyan courts about the validity of these negotiations.

Further, the ACB participated in an online discussion, themed: "The African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement and agricultural development: challenges and prospects", organised with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO's) Regional Office for Africa in Accra, Ghana. The ACB also made a submission to the FAO's online consultation on the AfCFTA.²⁴

Lastly, the ACB was invited to participate and present at five webinars on corporate expansion during this period:

- Agroecology South Africa online media briefing (ACB co-hosted this briefing).
- Rethinking our Food and Farming Systems in the C-19 and post C-19 era: a presentation about seed systems in Africa, by Linzi Lewis.
- A Global regime of Intellectual Property Right and Trade: a presentation by ACB ED Mariam Mayet
- Epidemic Shocks and Food Cultures in the New Millennium: a presentation by ACB ED Mariam Mayet.
- Democratising South Africa's Food Systems in and beyond the Crisis: a presentation by ACB research coordinator Dr Stephen Greenberg.



23. <https://www.acbio.org.za/ipcs-letter-un-food-systems-summit-call-support>

24. <https://www.acbio.org.za/commentary-submitted-fao-discussion-afcfta-it-relates-food-and-agriculture>

STAFF AND BOARD MEMBERS

As of December 2020, the ACB's staff comprised:

Five research and advocacy (4 women, 1 part-time)
Three M&E and communications (3 women)
Four admin and finance (2 women)
Total operational staff: 12 (9 women)

(One research/advocacy and two finance/admin staff members were part-time and the breakdown was: 67% full time, 75% women, 58% black)

Programme team

Mariam Mayet	Executive Director
Sabrina Nafisa Masiinjila	Research and Advocacy Officer (based in Tanzania)
Linzi Lewis	Research and Advocacy Officer
Rutendo Zendah	Research and Advocacy Officer
Andrew Bennie	Research and Advocacy Officer (part-time)

Communications

Deidre May	Communications Coordinator
Tamara Reddy	Communications Officer

Monitoring and Evaluation

Juliet Mwale	M&E Officer
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Admin and Finance Team

Vinern Naidoo	Administration Officer
Rosanne van der Merwe	Administrative Assistant (part-time)
Naeemullah Mohammed	Accounting Officer
Hettie Dreyer	Accounting Officer (contract being phased out)





Staff changes

Four new staff members joined the ACB. Early in the year, we welcomed on board communications officer Tamara Reddy and M&E officer Juliet Mwale. In finance, Carol Diplock left after her probation period and then we were joined by a new accounting officer, Naeemullah Mohammad, who completed his probation period at the end of November in time to join the team as a full-time employee on 1 December.

We are grateful to Accounting Officer Hettie Dreyer, who agreed to extend her contract to assist with bringing new team members on board. She is continuing on a part-time basis to ensure stability and the well-functioning of our financial management systems.

We were sad to say goodbye to ACB senior researcher and research coordinator Stephen Greenberg, who was involved in the ACB for many years. From 2004, he took on ad-hoc research projects, by 2013 he was working part-time and employed full-time by 2017. Stephen made the decision to shift his focus to agroecology and food system transitions in South Africa, and thus left the ACB at the end of June. We are very happy to be welcoming Andrew Bennie as a full-time research and advocacy officer at the ACB in 2021, after some months of being a part-time researcher in 2020.

External consultants

At times, the ACB commissions scientists, experts and researchers, to collaborate through researching and writing reports, mainly to assist us with GMO applications and new GM technologies, including among others, Sasha Mentz-Lagrange and Dr Eva Sirinathsinghi.

ACB Board Members

John Wilson	Chairperson, based in Zimbabwe
Famara Diedhiou	Senegal
Mariann Basse Orovwuje	Nigeria
Ray Patridge	South Africa
Mariam Mayet	Non-executive board member, based in South Africa

Board member changes

In 2020, Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) Coordinator Million Belay stepped down, after five years of being a board member. We thank him for always lending an ear and acting as a sounding board. As a member organisation of AFSA, and being part of the same networks, our collaboration will continue. We were also sad to lose Dorah Marema, who served the board ably for three and a half years but our connection will also continue through being part of the same networks in South Africa.

On a happy note, we welcome Ray Patridge onto the board, a chartered certified accountant and finance professional whose expertise is already benefitting us.



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