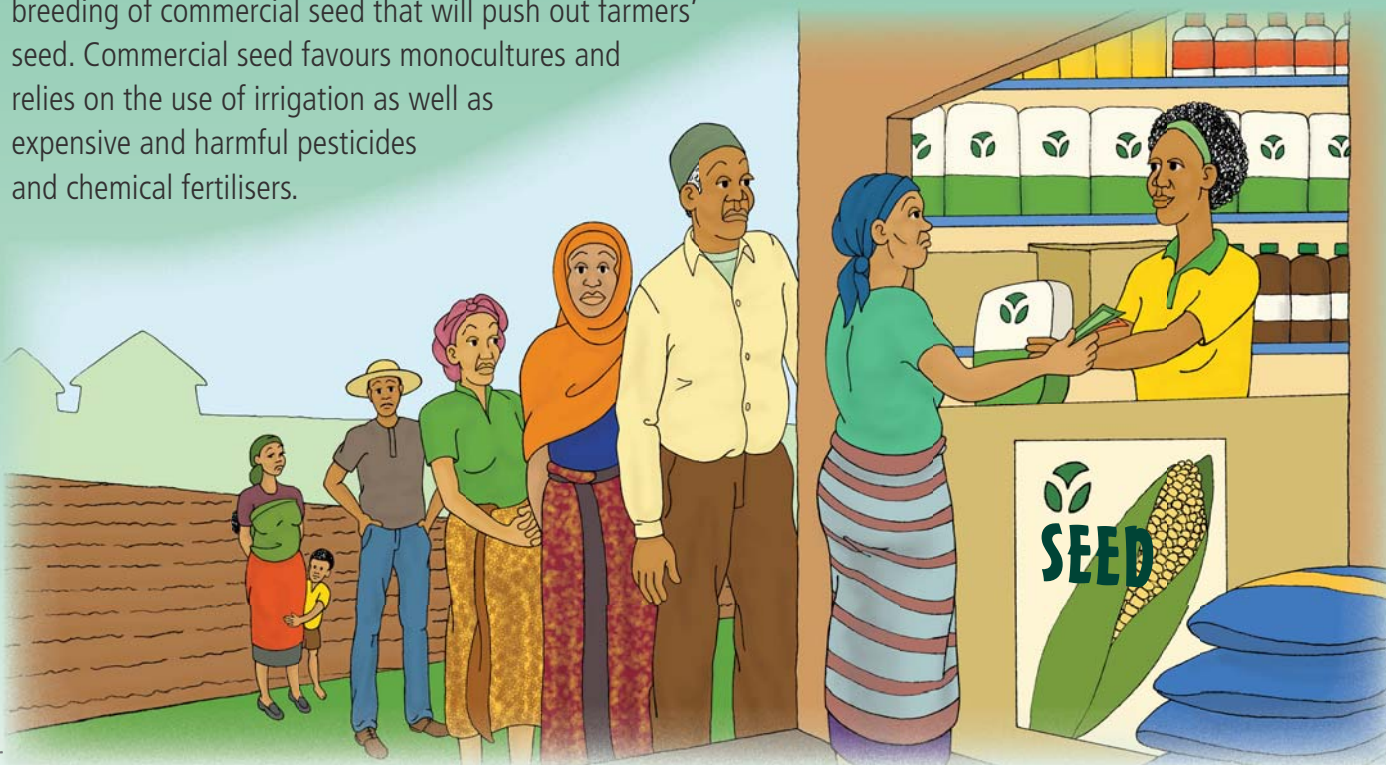


African countries are rushing to give breeders strong ownership rights (plant breeders' rights – PBRs) over seed and other planting material. This will put an end to farmer-managed seed systems. African governments are doing this by adopting the International Convention called UPOV 1991. UPOV has been developed by plant breeders from Europe for highly industrialised agriculture systems.

UPOV 1991 is not suited to African agriculture, where most of the seed used is farm-saved seed. UPOV encourages the breeding of commercial seed that will push out farmers' seed. Commercial seed favours monocultures and relies on the use of irrigation as well as expensive and harmful pesticides and chemical fertilisers.

PLANT BREEDERS' RIGHTS, FARMERS' RIGHTS AND UPOV 1991



When smallholder farmers plant seed that is protected by PBRs, they will be forced to buy seed every season. They will not be able to save seeds from their harvest to share, trade or exchange with their family, friends or local community. Buying seed every year will lead to debt and high dependence on commercial seed. It will also result in the loss of seed diversity and sovereignty by farmers. Many African governments have made it a criminal offence for farmers to replant, exchange or sell saved seed of protected varieties.

The kind of agriculture that best suits smallholder farmers is one that gives farmers control. It is one that uses diverse, locally enhanced seed to produce many different nutritious crops for food and animal feed.

