



The core of the paper is focused on the pressures being exerted on African governments to adopt the 1991 Act of the International Union for the Protection of Plant Varieties (UPOV), particularly through regional harmonisation of plant variety protection (PVP) policies and laws. We also discuss the adverse impacts PVP laws will have on the exercise of farmers' rights in Africa, and concomitantly, on agricultural biodiversity, food security, livelihoods, knowledge systems and culture.

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*"Seeds are the very basis of human society and have been for all of human history. Until very recently, farming and seed breeding were undertaken by farmers on their own land, season after season. However, we are now witnessing the separation of these two interdependent activities, with seed breeding increasingly being privatised and farmers becoming increasingly dependent on seed varieties made available to them at the discretion of seed companies. This process of separation began in Europe and North America at the turn of the nineteenth century, and continues today in developing countries and developed countries alike."*