Seed banks and global food security

Since the 1960s, national governments, international organisations, NGOs, and private philanthropies have invested heavily in the creation of 'seed banks.' These collections serve as permanent repositories for the world's vast genetic diversity in food crops and, increasingly, its diversity in wild plants as well.

Seed banks are seen today as essential to human survival. For example the Millennium Seed Bank Partnership, a UK-centred global seed conservation network, describes its mission "to combat potentially catastrophic threats to human wellbeing by safeguarding wild plant diversity and enabling its sustainable use".

A critical and understudied topic

This will be the first-ever broad, archival-based study of the origin and development of seed banking as an activity intended to conserve endangered crop diversity.

The project will contribute to dialogue about the value of seed banks among scientists and policymakers, as well as to scholarly debates related to the history of agricultural science and biological conservation, the consequences of agricultural modernisation, and the achievement of global food security.