



The Right Livelihood Award

for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people

Cary Fowler (Norway)

Joint Award with Pat Mooney (1985)



"...for working to save the world's genetic plant heritage."

Cary Fowler

Cary Fowler was born in 1949 and earned his Ph.D. at the University of Uppsala (Sweden). In 2008, he received an honorary doctorate from Simon Fraser University (Canada), where he undertook his undergraduate studies.

Fowler has been profiled by CBS 60 Minutes and the New Yorker, is the author of several books on the subject of plant genetic resources and more than 75 articles on the topic in agriculture, law, and development journals.

Fowler and Mooney began to work together in 1975. As international advocates for genetic conservation they have initiated worldwide educational campaigns and proposed far-reaching conservation programmes. One of their proposals was for the establishment of international seed banks, a plan that was adopted by the UN in 1983.

From 1978, Fowler and Mooney joined forces with the Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI), a small, non-profit organisation that focuses on the socio-economic impact of new technologies on rural societies. Mooney later became the Foundation's executive director. Through RAFI they played a major role in the formulation of the Commission and Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

In the 1990s, Fowler headed the International Conference and Programme on Plant Genetic Resources at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), which produced the UN's first ever global assessment of the state of the world's plant genetic resources. He drafted and supervised negotiations of FAO's Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources, adopted by 150 countries in 1996. That same year he served as Special Assistant to the Secretary General of the World Food Summit. During the negotiation process of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources, Cary chaired a series of off-the-record retreats with key delegates, sponsored by the Nordic countries.

At the same time, RAFI has organised numerous workshops in Africa, Asia and Latin America to address both global issues and the need for local farmers to secure their own crop genetic diversity. In 1988, Mooney led a research team with Fowler and others to produce *The Laws of Life: Another Development and the New Biotechnologies*, published as a special issue of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation's Development Dialogue. This work led RAFI to research into international agricultural research institutions and, more recently, into the attempts by private corporations to patent life forms including human cell lines. In one important victory for the campaign to prevent commercialisation of life forms, the European Parliament in 1995 rejected a proposed law that would have permitted the patenting of human genes.

Fowler currently serves as Executive Director of the Global Crop Diversity Trust. Prior to joining the Trust, he was Professor and Director of Research in the Department for International Environment & Development Studies at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences. He was also a Senior Advisor to the Director General of Bioversity International. In this latter role, he represented the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) in negotiations on the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. He is a past-member of the National Plant Genetic Resources Board of the U.S. and the Board of Trustees of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center in Mexico, and is currently Chair of the International Advisory Council of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. He holds a position as Associate Curator at the Memphis City Family of Museums.

In 2010, he received the Heinz Award.

Quotation

"To preserve genetic diversity we must engage in both conservation and politics. As the only species powerful to affect all evolution on the planet, humanity has this responsibility. If we fail, the genetic heritage of 12,000 years will disappear."

Cary Fowler

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