In pursuit of our genetic heritage

Participatory evaluation of wheat and barley landraces in Iran
Our landraces are trying to tell us a story.... Are we ready to listen to them?
Being involved in a Participatory Plant Breeding programme led the older farmers to ask: where have our landraces gone?

They said that their landraces were more adapted and less dependent on chemical inputs.
SARDARI: a landrace grown on 2,500,000 hectares of rain-fed land in Iran.

No new variety has been able to replace it!
Where can we find old landraces?

- Few landraces left in farmers’ fields so we turned to the gene banks
- 160 landraces of wheat and 160 barley obtained from the ICARDA gene bank and planted in farmers’ fields
- Farmers should have facilitated access to gene bank material!
Older farmers did a participatory evaluation of the landraces.
Farmers were looking for wheat with:

- Good tillering
- No lodging (Garmsar: not too short and not too tall because of wind) and strong stem
- Large spike with many seeds

**Barley:**

- Straight spike
- Good seeds and spikes
- Strong stem
- Early maturity
- Needs less water
Numerous landraces identified, but this has to be verified in subsequent years.

Dozens of varieties performed very well (esp. wheat) and will enter crossing blocks and PPB programmes.

The entire collection were planted again this year under harsher conditions to do a better evaluation.
PPB has led to an increased interest and capacity regarding seed diversity and the important role of biodiversity in the field.

Farmers were surprised by the range of diversity they saw in the landrace field.

Will make a mixture of the landraces when we have enough seed to this.

Methodology for the participatory evaluation must be further developed, including inviting farmers from other relevant provinces.
Aegylops - the wild ancestor of bread wheat
Thank you for your attention