



Bureau of Indian Standards under Department of Consumer Affairs Releases IS 20201:2026 to Safeguard Indigenous Crop Varieties and Align with Sustainable Development Goal 2

Empowering Indian Farmers: New Standard provides Guidelines for Seed Banks at Community level

IS 20201:2026 Released to Standardise Community Seed Bank Management and Protect Agrobiodiversity

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The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) under the Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India, has recently published a **new Indian Standard — IS 20201:2026 Community Seed Bank Management - Requirements**. Formulated by the Biodiversity Sectional Committee (EED 06) under the Environment and Ecology Department (EED) of BIS, this standard introduces a comprehensive, structured management framework for Community Seed Banks (CSBs) across the country.

As an agrarian society experiencing the impacts of climate change including erratic precipitation, rising temperatures, and prolonged droughts; India's native seed varieties represent an invaluable strategic resource. Different traditional seeds possess unique vital traits such as natural drought tolerance, disease resistance, and high nutritional value. By offering a standardised operating protocol for decentralised, community-led seed banks, IS 20201:2026 aims to promote conservation of these indigenous varieties, thereby enhancing agricultural resilience and securing long-term food safety.

The standard aligns with Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision and government's commitment to preserve agricultural biodiversity and support sustainable farming systems. It reinforces central initiatives, such as the **National Food Security and Nutrition Mission (NFSNM)** which provides a **one-time assistance of ₹50 lakh** for establishing community seed banks and statutory protections under the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act, 2001 and the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

By functioning as a decentralised repository, standard-compliant CSBs empower local farmers to reliably collect, store, and exchange high-quality, locally adapted seeds. **The standard outlines requirements relating to organisational arrangements, seed collection and acquisition, seed processing and storage.** This protects the livelihoods of smallholders, builds grass-roots resilience, and ensures access to resilient, traditional crop varieties.

The standard outlines rigorous requirements for the **end-to-end lifecycle of seed bank operations**, including organisational arrangements, seed collection and acquisition, viability testing, cleaning, drying, storage, documentation, quality assurance, seed regeneration practices, risk management, and continual

improvement.

The draft for this management system standard was developed under the convenorship of the **ICAR-National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources**, with critical inputs from the National Biodiversity Authority, the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority, Rythu Sadhikara Samstha, and the BAIF Development Research Foundation.

This is voluntary certifiable management system standard.

IS 20201:2026 can be downloaded free of cost from the official BIS portal. All community seed banks, cooperative societies, and agricultural stakeholders are strongly encouraged to adopt these guidelines to foster a quality-conscious, self-reliant ecosystem for indigenous seed preservation.

Established under the BIS Act, 2016, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) is the National Standards Body of India responsible for the harmonious development of standardization, marking, and quality certification activities. Through its Environment and Ecology Department, BIS is actively engaged in developing standards related to environment protection and sustainable resource management to support national goals.

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