



Transition paths to sustainable
legume-based systems in Europe

Guidance to the small-scale, organic growing of selected grain-legume species

The production and consumption of legume grains is very low in Hungary. However, domestic crop seed- or gene-banks maintain significant collection of indigenous grain-legume types, termed 'land races'. Based on a 4-year cultivation experiment, assessing land-race varieties cultivated at small-scales organic gardens, the following key practical findings which are targeted to small-scale producers of all kinds: farmers, kitchen-garden owners, community gardeners – all who want to immerse in the rich culinary world of beans can be made.

1. Apart from the commonly grown *Phaseolus vulgaris* (common bean), 6 further neglected, or at least little-known species can be successfully grown at small scales. These are: *Cicer arietinum* (chickpea); *P. coccineus* (runner bean); *P. lunatus* (lima or butter bean); *P. acutifolius* (teparty bean); *Vigna sinensis* (cowpea sp.), *V. unguiculata* subsp. *sesquipedalis* (asparagus or yardlong bean).

2. In addition to the central gene-banks, decentralized, community-based collections can be excellent sources of good quality seeds. These sources are also more likely to provide tested, well-performing species, with information on best-cultivation practices.

3. Changing climate, and the increasing frequency of atmospheric droughts, may cause significant yield-loss but drought-tolerant species and cultivars may still be found and successfully grown.

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4. While the grain legumes types are robust garden crops, they may still present growth challenges and suffer from pests. Yet, there are effective methods against these in organic farming.

5. These lesser-known legumes may also provide novel foodstuffs for the gastronomist: such as edible flowers, green chickpeas, green cowpea, and yardlong bean pods.



Figure 1. Norbi csicseri teli, traditional dish with chickpeas (left) and *Phaseolus vulgaris* (common bean) (right). Photo credits ©: Attila Králl



About TRUE

The EU funded project "Transition paths to sustainable legume based systems in Europe" (TRUE) is a balanced practice-research partnership of 24 institutions, which aims to identify the best routes, or "transition paths" to **increase sustainable legume cultivation and consumption across Europe** and includes the entire legume feed and food value chains.

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