

## **MONOCULTURE**

Farmers who grow one crop variety are farming a monoculture. The trouble comes when pests or diseases strike. Devastation rushes through the whole farm, as there are no crop varieties with resistance and no other crops to act as a barrier. Wild insects like ladybirds and spiders could have kept the pests under control, but they were made homeless or killed by pesticides. The whole harvest is lost.

## WORKING WITH DIVERSITY

On her farm in Ethiopia, this farmer grows many different crops and varieties. There is more chance that some crops will survive bad weather or an outbreak of disease. Mixed cropping also makes it harder for pests and diseases to spread. She uses less chemical pesticides, protecting the soil life needed for healthy fertile soil, and has chosen varieties that ripen at different times to spread the harvest over the year. If the price of one crop goes down, she will still make money from the other crops.

After each harvest, she chooses seed from the best crops to save and sow next season. Over the centuries, farmers plant-breeding by seed selection has led to thousands of different crop varieties, each adapted to different climatic conditions and able to resist locally common diseases. These locally evolved varieties will grow well even if the farmer does not use chemical pesticides and fertilizers.

**i** ACTION SHEET 46: SETTING UP A COMMUNITY SEED BANK

