

Dr. Mehmet Öztan is a Turkish seed keeper, farmer, commercial seed grower, and co-owner of [Two Seeds in a Pod](#). While the company is currently based in Tallahassee, Florida, he previously farmed in the Tampa Bay region and on his six-acre farm located in Reedsville, West Virginia. Dr. Öztan used the farm as a learning space and a gateway to exploring more than fifty food crops for their cultural significance, culinary uses, climate adaptability and creative programming related to seed and food justice matters as well as a space in which he built relationships with plants and their original stewards. Dr. Öztan is also the founder of the [Anatolian Seeds Recovery and Preservation \(ANATOHUM\) Project](#) that aims to re-vitalize, preserve, document, and promote the traditional seeds of Türkiye. The project is the backbone of Two Seeds in a Pod. Through the company's seed catalog, and because of his field work for the ANATOHUM Project, he has introduced more than 150 open-pollinated seed varieties to the American seed market for home gardeners, small farmers and chefs to grow and cook with.

As a minoritized seed industry professional, Dr. Öztan continuously thinks, writes and creates around the issues of racism, favoritism, grief and extractive labor practices in American seed industry. He was the creator and organizer of [Seedy Talks](#), a widely known speaker series that focused on environmental, food and health justice, seed and food sovereignty, local economies, and story telling around food traditions of underrepresented minoritized communities. He is dedicated to creating and co-creating publicly available resources such as the Prospective Seed Grower's Manual, a comprehensive document that provides guidelines for the success of beginner-level commercial seed growers, and grassroots, community centered products such as the [CICS Pledge](#) to influence positive change in small seed industry in the U.S.

Dr. Öztan holds a Ph.D. in civil engineering from Michigan State University, previously served as a Service Assistant Professor in Eberly College of Arts & Sciences at West Virginia University, and is currently the Director of Community Engagement and Communications in the [Resilient Infrastructure and Disaster Response \(RIDER\) Center](#) in the FAMU-FSU College of Engineering.