

1a Work with a partner. Look at the two photos on the right. Talk about what you can see. What do you think is the connection between them?

1b Look at the title of the article and the photos. What could 'the most important building in the world' be and why?

2 You have three minutes to read the text and check your prediction.

3 Choose the correct alternative. Write the letter of the paragraph where you found the answer. Write the answers in your notebook.

- Countries pay/don't pay to keep their seeds there.
Paragraph ☐
- If there is an electrical problem at the Seed Vault, the temperature will/won't be a problem.
Paragraph ☐
- The most important thing about the location of the Seed Vault is that it is easy to protect from attacks/the altitude will keep the seeds dry.
Paragraph ☐
- In the case of a future catastrophe, the important thing is to have a lot/wide variety of seeds.
Paragraph ☐
- The Svalbard Global Seed Vault has/doesn't have millions of types of seeds.
Paragraph ☐
- Norway built the Svalbard Global Seed Vault because of global warming/possible environmental disasters.
Paragraph ☐
- People believe droughts and floods might/will never make it difficult to find food in the future.
Paragraph ☐

4 CRITICAL THINKING

Think! Then compare ideas with your class.

- Do you agree that this is the most important building in the world? Why?
- What plants from your country do you think are important to protect?

5 What do the underlined words in the text mean? Guess and then check in your dictionary.

6 What about you?

Are you generally optimistic or pessimistic about the future of the planet? Why?

Is this the most important building in THE WORLD?

A Future problems

Each year, people are becoming more and more worried about the future of our planet. People are now starting to agree – global warming will definitely make a difference to the world's weather. On the one hand, some parts of the world may have more floods. But some other parts might suffer terrible droughts. All of this will have a serious impact on the world's agriculture. And that could make it difficult for us to get enough food to survive.

B A possible solution

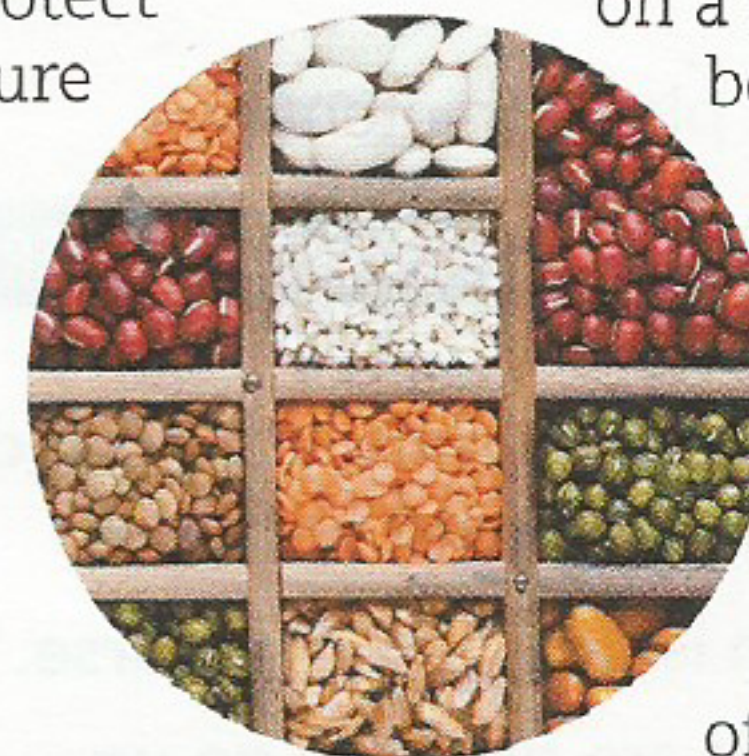
This explains the idea behind the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. The Seed Vault is built into a mountain on an island near the North Pole. The aim of the building is to protect the world's agriculture from future catastrophes. This may not just be a question of global warming. Perhaps there will be a major nuclear disaster or war one day. These things definitely won't be a problem for Svalbard. Thanks to careful planning, experts say that it is going to survive any catastrophe.

D Helping worldwide

Any country in the world can leave seeds in Svalbard. And the service is free. There are 1,500 potatoes from Peru, bananas from the Pacific Islands, and rice from more than a hundred different countries. The seeds of some plants, such as peas, only survive for 20 to 30 years. But others will last for hundreds of years.

E The most important building?

In 2028, the Svalbard Vault will celebrate its 20th anniversary. 200 years in the future, it's possible that the ice caps will melt. Even if this happens, Svalbard will be safe. That's because it is on a mountain and will be above the water level. And because it is so close to the North Pole, even if their electricity stops working, the ice will maintain a cool temperature of -3.5°C to keep the seeds safe. But the best protection is the fact that it is in such a remote place. After all, maybe one day this will be the most important building in the whole world.



C Protecting our plants

Some experts think that the population of the Earth will probably go up by 50% in the next 40 years. Because of climate change, it probably won't be easy for some plants to survive. Having many different types of plants will be essential for agriculture to adapt to changes in the environment. In the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, there is space for 4.5 million types of seed. That's 2.5 billion individual seeds! At the moment there are over 770,000 different types there.

