

### **First results of testing barley for loose smut in Germany**

At Cereal Breeding Research Darzau the German marketed spring barley collection is still tested for susceptibility to loose smut with support of the German Ministry for Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture. Provisional results of the first testing period now are available under [http://www.darzau.de/en/projects/barley\\_loose\\_smut.htm](http://www.darzau.de/en/projects/barley_loose_smut.htm) Only variety STEFFI remained without infection under natural and artificial infection with local loose smut. Three genetic resources with defined resistance also seem to be useful for breeding resistant barley, because they showed no diseased plants after inoculation with thirteen European origins of loose smut. These sources should be implemented in modern varieties for organic farming together with other characters, for instance light competitiveness and protein ripeness.

First results of testing winter barley in cooperation with Dr. Hartmut Spiess, IBDF are also available on this site. For continuing the research with loose smut in a European context, for instance to develop a set of tester lines, cooperation is welcome. In case of interest please contact [Dr. Karl-Josef Mueller](#)

### **Sustainable low-input cereal production: required varietal characteristics and crop diversity**

The Network SUSVAR (Sustainable low-input cereal production: required varietal characteristics and crop diversity) COST Action 860 (mentioned in a previous Newsletter) has been granted and the procedures for signatures have begun. At the earliest, the 1<sup>st</sup> Management Committee Meeting will be in May and hopefully it is possible to have the first Working Group meetings end of June to be able to plan the collaboration for the coming season 2004/2005. More information on the topics considered in the Network may be found in the Technical Annex on <http://ue.eu.int/Cost/default.asp?lang=en> (search for Action 860, English text).

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### **The French Database for organic seed and vegetative propagating material**

French internet database [www.semences-biologiques.org](http://www.semences-biologiques.org) is online from the 1<sup>st</sup> of January on. On January the 15<sup>th</sup> 550 varieties of 86 different species (170 varieties of 24 species of arable crops ; 375 varieties of 56 vegetable species; 6 aromatic species ) of 47 suppliers were registered in the database . For all major species at least one variety was proposed.

At present, the number of suppliers has increased to 59. More than 3500 demands for a derogation have been yet registered, mostly for vegetable varieties.

Discussions between farmers representatives and the ministry of agriculture about general authorisations have first ended by a list of species or sub-species with no available seed in organic quality. That list is updated each time there is one variety available in the species. The expert group for vegetable crops is going to meet for the first time on march 18<sup>th</sup>.

By [Jean Wohrer](#)

### **Progress on organic seed regime in Belgium and State of the art of the Belgian database**

The national database of Belgium will be linked up with [www.organicxseeds.com](http://www.organicxseeds.com). At this moment the Belgian page (in French and Dutch) is still under construction and will be online by the end of March.

To take hold of the question on which criteria to use as basis for the authorisation policy, the Administration of Agriculture and Horticulture of the Flemish Ministry has written out an assignment to accompany the implementation and development of the Belgian database in the starting phase. Three organisations, namely PCBT, CLO-DFE and BLIVO, will fulfil this assignment by a project that has started up and will run until the end of this year. In the project the following steps are foreseen:

- 1) accompany the start up of the database: the division of crops in subgroups, the drawing up of a address file of seed suppliers in Belgium, ...
- 2) motivation of the seed companies to register their offer on the database
- 3) evaluate the actual variety offer listed on the database and indicate for which species the use of organic seed can be obliged or not the possibility for authorisation is needed. Therefore expert groups will be set up in which the different relevant parties are represented. These groups will define appropriate criteria for the derogation policy and will generate advice towards the season 2005.
- 4) information of the farmers

The delay in establishing the national database, the lack of experience by the control bodies and the limited offer of organic seeds makes that 2004 is as yet a transitional year with a flexible derogation policy. For the moment farmers must demand derogation, but little motivation will be enough to get authorisation for the use of non-organic seeds.

By Femke Temmerman