

Progress organic seed regime in Belgium - Belgian database on line

For the set up of a national database Belgium decided to join the database www.organicxseeds.com. Within this database a Belgian page has been made up by FiBL which is on line since May 20. Seed companies can now register also their organic seed offer on the Belgian site. At present the offer on the database is still limited.

The consortium of PCBT, CLO-DFE and BLIVO co-operates in the implementation and development of the database. On June 17 an information session has been organised for all seed suppliers to explain the functioning of the database. Beside this, the project group will present their working method to bring about a sound derogation policy towards the season 2005. Another question which will be discussed is how the Flemish organic grower views to the use of organic seed.

Due to a great delay in implementing this new regulation, there has been no big change in the current derogation policy with regard to the previous years. Nevertheless the Flemish authorities and the organic sector bodies have the intention to extend this database into an operative instrument. In the autumn of 2004 three expert groups will be convened to define criteria for a national Annex, the individual and general derogation and evaluate the current variety offer. In these sector groups suppliers, nurseries, farmers and crop experts will be represented.

By Lieven Delanote and Femke Temmerman

Progress organic seed regime - the French website: www.semences-biologiques.org clearly improved the available information on organic seed offer

Setting up the database surely contributes to give a better information on seed offer: 63 suppliers and more than 700 varieties of 90 species have been registered and updated for availability; (200 varieties for agricultural crops and 500 for vegetables), 9 000 authorisation applications have been asked for (mostly on cauliflower, tomato, corn and alfalfa) and be transmitted to the certification bodies.

Expert groups meet under supervision of Ministry of agriculture to propose evolutions on the web-site. For example, discussions about "general authorisations" have first ended by a list of species or sub-species with no availability in organic seed. That list is now on line, and updated each time there is one variety available in a species.

By Jean Wohrer

First announcement and call for papers for the COST/ECO-PB workshop on low-input/organic breeding strategies and use of molecular markers in organic breeding programmes, 5 - 8 December 2004, in the Netherlands.

In the newly started COST 860 programme SUSVAR (Sustainable low-input cereal production: required varietal characteristics and crop diversity) a workshop is planned by the COST Working Group 1: Genetics & Breeding together with ECO-PB on 5 - 8 December 2004 in Driebergen, The Netherlands. The central issue will be: low-input/organic breeding strategies and use of molecular markers in organic breeding programmes.

One page abstracts for contributions are requested by September 1st and send to Edith Lammerts van Bueren. For more information contact Isabelle Goldringer (INRA Le Moulon) or Edith Lammerts van Bueren.

Development of winter beans and winter peas for organic agriculture

In a joint approach to improve our knowledge on winter faba beans and winter peas, the University of Göttingen and Naturland carried out a one-year-project, funded by the German Federal Program for Organic Agriculture. Winter types of pea and faba bean are nowadays nearly unknown in Germany. The main problem is insufficient winter hardiness and insufficient data on winter hardiness. Three types each of winter pea and winter faba bean were compared at 20 Naturland farms throughout Germany, moreover, 50 winter beans were grown and studied at two organic sites at Göttingen in 2002/2003. From December 2002 until March 2003, several times there were extreme frosts, hence, a marked breeding progress is expected from the selection at Göttingen. The winter pea "E.F.B.33" expressed an already adequate, good level of winter hardiness, the winter pea "Assas" and the winter bean "Göttingen Population" were less winter hardy, but still superior to the other test variants. Pre basic seed of "E.F.B.33" will be available in summer 2004.

A new project was successfully launched in order to compare genetically homogenous and heterogeneous experimental cultivars of both spring and winter faba bean on five organic farms. Selection is performed jointly by farmers and researchers.

Further information: Prof Dr Wolfgang Link, University of Göttingen and Werner Vogt-Kaute, Naturland e.V.

First World Conference on Organic Seed

The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) as the worldwide umbrella organisation for the organic movement together with the International Seed Federation (ISF) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) are going to hold the first world conference on organic seed in Rome from 5 to 7 July 2004. For the programme and further information see <http://orgseed.spiralfx.com/partnerorg.html>.