

**EU legislation: Petition on GMO contamination in seeds can now be signed online**

As reported in the March and May Newsletters, The German Zukunftsstiftung Landwirtschaft prepared a petition which will be submitted to the European Union as well as national ministries in charge concerning the EU Commission's draft directive on GMO contamination in seeds. The petition has now on its own website and can be signed online until 25<sup>th</sup> of June. Link: [www.zs-l.de/saveourseeds/index.html](http://www.zs-l.de/saveourseeds/index.html)

By [Christine Arncken](#)

**EU suppresses GE study: GE crops add high costs, threaten organic**

A secret European Union (EU) study leaked to Greenpeace states that all farmers would face high additional, in some cases unsustainable costs of production if genetically engineered (GE) crops were commercially grown on large scale in Europe. The study predicts that the situation would become particularly critical for organic farming of oilseed rape as well as for intensive production of conventional maize. It calculates additional costs between 5 and as much as 41 percent of the crop value. Download of Greenpeace Press release from May 16<sup>th</sup>: [www.greenpeace.org/~geneng/](http://www.greenpeace.org/~geneng/)

By [Benny Haerlin](#)

**European Commission publishes full report about additional costs of GM crops**

The EU's Joint Research Centre has published its report CO-EXISTENCE OF GM CROPS WITH CONVENTIONAL AND ORGANIC CROPS, on May 17<sup>th</sup>, which had been leaked a week before. The study confirms high additional costs for all farmers. The full 145 p study can be downloaded on the webpage as well. Download: [www.jrc.cec.eu.int/default.asp?sldSz=our\\_work&sldStSz=focus\\_on](http://www.jrc.cec.eu.int/default.asp?sldSz=our_work&sldStSz=focus_on)

By [Benny Haerlin](#)

**Pre-announcement: Eco-PB organises an international symposium on organic seed production and plant breeding on 21 and 22 November 2002**

Eco-PB will organise an international symposium on the state of the art and future developments in organic seed production and breeding in Germany. The symposium will start with a keynote speaker on the 21<sup>st</sup> of November and a buffet for the important networking, surrounded by a poster presentation. On 22 November the program will include oral and poster presentations. All breeders, researchers, specialists and farmers are invited to participate in this meeting. The official language will be English. Those who would like to present a poster or give an oral presentation are invited to send in the title and abstracts before August 1, 2002. More details in the issue of Eco-PB's Newsletter of July.

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**Association of Bio-Dynamic Plant Breeders (ABDP): Mission statement now also in English**

The "Mission Statement" of the Association of Bio-Dynamic Plant Breeders (ABDP) is now also available in English, see [www.abdp.org/mission\\_statement.htm](http://www.abdp.org/mission_statement.htm). For membership and support of motions and positions contact: [info@abdp.org](mailto:info@abdp.org).

by [Karl-Josef Mueller](#)

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**Germany: Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture held a two days Workshop on plant breeding for organic agriculture**

In a two days workshop at the Bundessortenamt in Hanover on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of June more than 100 scientists, plant breeding experts, officials and representatives of the organic sector had come together to discuss the needs of organic farming with regard to plant breeding. At the end of the meeting when the results of different crop groups were summarized in a plenary session it became clear that besides variety traits which are in common with those of conventional farming there are a lot of special needs by organic farming. A full report in German shall be available soon.

By Klaus-Peter Wilbois

**France: successful carrot seed treatment against *Alternaria* with vinegar, cinnamon and micro-nutrients**

(Article abstract): Organic farming seed offer is increasing, but still remains insufficient. European organic regulation dispensation allows until 12/31/2003 to use conventional seeds of varieties if organic seeds of the same varieties are not available. Carrot seed production is the main vegetable specie seed production in France. Wet climate promotes disease on carrot which is caused by pathogenous fungus *Alternaria dauci*. The main source of primary inoculum is seed. Fungicid efficienca of combinations of vinegar, cinnamon and micro-nutrients have been evaluated on seeds hard contaminated by *Alternaria dauci*, in order to find disinfection techniques compatible with organic regulation. Results give efficiency of 905 without phytotoxicity.

(Article title): Mise au point d'une technique de desinfection des semences applicable en agriculture biologique – *Alternaria dauci* sur semences de carottes

These trials were reported by J-F Lizot, B. Griboval and M. Guenard at the "2ème conference internationale sur les moyens alternatifs de lutte contre les organismes nuisibles aux vegetaux, Lille, 4. – 7. Mars 2002

Contact Jean-François Lizot to get a copy of the French article.

**UK: Wheat Breeding At EFRC**

The research department at Elm Farm Research Centre (EFRC), in collaboration with the John Innes Centre, have recently begun work on an exciting and highly innovative new project 'Generating and Evaluating a Novel Genetic Resource in Wheat in Diverse Environments'. The aim of this project is to develop and test the concept of population breeding for wheat. This six-year project, which started in November 2001, is funded by the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) (Ref: AR0914) at a total cost of £337K.

The approach we are using is to produce composite cross populations in wheat. The key to this is to ensure that we include the greatest possible genetic diversity in the parent lines, as this will provide the populations with the capability to adapt to different growing conditions. Some 20 outstanding wheat varieties from the last half-century in Europe are being crossed in all possible combinations. Unlike physical cereal mixtures, this inter-crossing will result in a re-assortment of genes, providing completely new genotypes. Population samples from the F<sub>2</sub> generation will be grown at a range of organic and non-organic sites to determine the degree and rate at which the populations adapt to the local environment over several generations. If successful, the material produced could be used either directly by farmers or as a rich genetic resource for further selection and breeding. The genetic variation should allow the mechanisms of niche spread, complementarities and compensation to make the populations highly, and

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rapidly, adaptable in terms of disease, pest and weed restriction together with buffering against variation in the physical environment.

This type of approach was used very successfully in a barley breeding programme undertaken in California during the early part of last century (1920s). In fact, many of the barley varieties we see today can trace their ancestry back to these populations. We hope that our programme will be equally successful and look forward to presenting results as the project develops over the next few years.

By James P. Welsh

### **UK: New book on organic cereals and pulses**

Organic Cereals and Pulses is a detailed, practical guide to the successful production and marketing of arable crops grown to organic standards. The book contains the papers presented at two conferences held in November 2001, organised by Scottish Agricultural Colleges and Elm Farm Research Centre. Experienced researchers and advisors, together with leading farmers, have been brought together to provide a comprehensive overview of the state of the art in organic cereal and pulse production. This guide is essential reading for farmers, advisors, teachers and students. There is also a chapter looking at seed production on organic farms which focuses on seed borne disease. Organic Cereals and Pulses. 2002. (Eds) D. Younie, B.R. Taylor, J.P. Welsh & J.M. Wilkinson. Chalcombe Publications, Lincoln, UK. 172p, ISBN 0 948617 47 0, Price: £17.50 (including Post & Packaging) UK; £19.50 (including Post & Packaging) Elsewhere  
The book is available from:

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### **Austria: breeders' conference in Gumpenstein adopts "breeding for organic farming" as second conference topic**

The renowned breeders' conference that is held at Gumpenstein each year will focus on "experimental design and data recording" as main topic this year. For the first additional topic, "breeding for organic farming" was chosen. The second additional topic is "barley yellow dwarf virus in winter barley of Austria in spring 2002". The conference will take place from 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> of November 2002. Conference language is German. The German conference title is "53. Arbeitstagung der Vereinigung der Pflanzenzüchter und Saatgutkaufleute Österreichs". Traditionally not only Austrian but also German, Swiss, Dutch, Danish, Czech and other nationalities' breeders give contributions.

Breeders or Scientists who want to give a presentation or a poster demonstration should contact the organizing committee by giving title, desired speaking time and name of the speaker not later than 30<sup>th</sup> of August, 2002. Speakers will get a reimbursement of € 70.-

Contact: Vereinigung der Pflanzenzüchter und Saatgutkaufleute Österreichs, Wiener Strasse 64, A – 3100 St. Pölten, Tel. +43 (0) 2742/259-2000, Fax: +43 (0) 2742/259-2009, e-mail: [pflanzen@lk-noe.at](mailto:pflanzen@lk-noe.at)

### **Switzerland: First spelt variety from organic breeding programme suggested for national catalogue**

After successfully passing conventional VCU trials and the test on distinctness, uniformity and stability (DUS-test), the first spelt variety "Aikor", bred by bio-dynamic wheat and spelt breeder Peter Kunz was

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suggested for the national catalogue of cereal varieties by the Federal Research Station for Agroecology and Agriculture, while spelt variety "Sirino" (in Germany under the name "Cyrus") failed the conventional trials because of lodging problems and insufficient general index. (This variety is now tested in the new organic VCU trials as well where it has much better chances since it has been bred for organic conditions). Two wheat varieties from the same breeder, **Atar** and **Pollux**, also passed the conventional VCU trials successfully, but are still in the DUS-test.

Further information: [Mathias Menzi](#)

### **Switzerland: 10 Mio Swiss Francs for second phase of action plan for plant genetic resources**

From 2003 to 2006, the Swiss Federal Bureau for agriculture will support the second phase of the national action plan (NAP) with 10 million Swiss francs. It has now determined the main topics for the plan: bringing all crop plants on the same level of conservation and documentation, and public relations for the concept of biodiversity

Forms for project proposals at the bureau of the Swiss Commission for the Conservation of Crop Plants (SKEK): Tel: 022 363 47 01; e-mail: [beate.schierscher-viret@rac.admin.ch](mailto:beate.schierscher-viret@rac.admin.ch)

For more Information contact Hans-Jörg Lehmann, Chef Stabsstelle Ökologie, 031 322 26 28

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