

Germany: Control of common bunt of wheat successful

At the 7th scientific congress on organic agriculture, 24th - 26th February 2003 in Vienna, Hartmut Spiess, biodynamic wheat breeder and researcher from the Institute for Biodynamic Research (ibdf), Darmstadt gave an update on preventive measures, variety resistance and the development of organic seed treatment against common bunt. In their own experiments as well as in tests performed by other institutions, the newly developed "plant health enhancer" Tillecur (Schaette AG) proved to be highly effective in organic farming. For download of full text see the website of the institute, www.ibdf.de

For further information, contact [Hartmut Spiess](#)

Germany: 62 Winter barley varieties evaluated for loose smut susceptibility

62 winter barley varieties were evaluated in a field trial on the Dottenfelderhof, Bad-Vilbel, in 1999. All varieties were exposed to two modes of infection. The first group through natural and the second through artificial infection (POELHMAN-method). The artificial infection was performed with disposable syringes in the early blossoming stage. In the next generation in 2000, the first group reached a maximum of 39 % infection. In the second group the level of infection reached 84 %. The varieties ASTRID, YUKA and KRIMHILD showed no infection. INTRO, ARKONA and MAMMUT had infection levels < 1%. An evaluation, regarding the usefulness of various barley varieties for ecological cultivation, is in progress. (This work was presented by Stefan Klause and Hartmut Spiess at the 7th scientific congress on organic agriculture, 24th - 26th February 2003 in Vienna.) Download of full text see the homepage of the Institute for Biodynamic Research (ibdf), Darmstadt, www.ibdf.de

For further information, contact [Hartmut Spiess](#),

Switzerland: new booklet on food quality and plant breeding

A new booklet on food quality and plant breeding has been published by the biodynamic breeders Peter Kunz and Markus Buchmann. The emphasis of the publication is laid on a new methodology to describe food quality and to evolve current quality concepts. Three methods are presented and used to describe several wheat varieties and breeding lines:

- 1) Observation of morphology and development physiology together with baking quality and sensoric quality
- 2) Picture creating methods
- 3) Direct observation of life processes (together with Dorian Schmidt)

The booklet is in German ("Elemente zur Steigerung der Nahrungsqualität durch Pflanzenzüchtung") and can be ordered for € 10.- from Getreidezüchtung [Peter Kunz](#), Verein für Kulturpflanzenentwicklung, Hof Breitlen 5, CH-8634 Hombrechtikon.

USA: First Documentation on negative influence of genetic engineering on organic farming

The Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) performed an US-wide survey on influences of GMO-farming on organic farming. The results are the following:

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* 17% of survey respondents indicated that they have had GMO testing conducted on some portion of their organic farm seed, inputs or farm products. 11% of those that had GMO testing conducted indicated that they received positive test results for GMO contamination on some portion of their organic seed, inputs or farm products.

* 8% of the respondents indicated that their organic farm operation has borne some direct costs or damages related to the presence of GMOs in agriculture. These costs include: payment for testing seed, inputs, or organic farm products for GMO contamination; loss of organic sales/markets due to actual contamination or perceived contamination risk; loss of sales due to presence of GMOS in organic product; or loss of organic certification due to presence of GMOs in organic products.

* 48% of the survey respondents indicated that they have taken some measures to protect their organic farms from GMO contamination. The greatest percentage, 24%, indicated that they have communicated with neighbouring farmers about GMO risks to their farm.

* 19% indicated that they have increased the size of buffer zones to neighbouring farms, 18% have discontinued use of certain inputs at risk for GMO contamination, 15% have adjusted timing of crop planting, 13% have altered cropping patterns or crops produced, and 9% have changed cropping locations.

* 46% of the survey respondents rated the risk of exposure and possible contamination of their organic farm products by GMOs as moderate or greater, with 30% characterizing their farm's risk as high or very high.

Survey respondents identified contaminated seed stock as their primary concern as a possible source of GMO contamination of their organic farm products (identified as a moderate to high risk by 48% of respondents). This was followed by GMO pollen drift in the field (identified as a moderate to high risk by 42% of respondents) and contaminated farm inputs, other than seed, (identified by 30% of respondents as a moderate to high risk). Such inputs might include seed inoculants or manures and composts from materials obtained from off the farm.

Only 10% of survey respondents feel that a regulatory framework is in place to adequately protect their organic farm products from damages due to contamination from GMOs.

Reference: Organic Farming Research Foundation (2003). First impacts of GMOs on organic farmers are now documented. Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF), press release, 14.5.03, <http://ofrf.org/press/Releases/PR.051403.GMOSurvey.html> .

Philippines / Canada: Eco-Rice breeding project

On the Philippines, the Negros Center for Ecological farming (NCEF) has started a participative and ecological rice breeding project. The main idea of the project is selection under optimised ecological conditions (well-drained soil instead of flooded conditions, early planting of individual seedlings instead of small groups, wide spacing of plants). Farmers are involved in the process. Selection is done for performance under unfertilised conditions and suitability for "ratooning" practice (allowing a second crop to emerge from the stubble). The main challenges to the system will be increased potential for pest and disease problems in the main rice growing

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regions. The best results therefore will likely be introducing ECORICE to diversified farming regions where rice is not the dominant crop in the region.

The project is supported by the Canadian centre for Resource Efficient Agricultural Production (REAP-Canada). For further information, see their homepage www.reap-canada.com or the homepage of Pabinhi, the ecological farmers' organization in the Philippines. The innovative breeder Leopoldo Guilaran can be contacted through this homepage: pabinhi@yahoo.com

By [Christine Arncken](#)

Germany: GPZ-Conference on in-situ (on-farm) conservation and plant breeding in November

The German "Gesellschaft für Pflanzenzüchtung" (plant breeding society) is organizing a conference on "In-situ (on-farm) conservation and plant breeding" in Göttingen, November 20/21. In the afternoon of Nov. 20, invited persons will give basic contributions (Hammer, Frese, Graner, Horneburg, Wember, Becker, Glodek, Marggraf). For the morning of Nov. 21 short special contributions are welcome (oral or poster presentations). The conference will close with a one-hour round table discussion (conference language is German).

Registration of attendance and presentations is possible until **31st of July 2003**.

Preliminary programme and more information: [Heiko K. Parzies](#)