

Report on the First World Seed Conference of IFOAM, FAO and ISF

The report on the First World Seed Conference – Challenges and Opportunities for organic agriculture and seed industry organized by the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Seed Federation has been published on the IFOAM web side and can be found under <http://www.ifoam.org/orgagri/OSC-Final-Report.pdf>. The workshop took place in Rome, 5 – 7 July and aimed to be a discussion forum for knowledge exchange between farmers, scientists and policy makers.

Money sows the seeds of ecological plant-breeding

The "seed savings account" is a new idea helping to save our seeds. The GLS Gemeinschaftsbank eG, known as the oldest ethic ecological bank in Germany, offers a seed savings account in cooperation with the Zukunftsstiftung Landwirtschaft, an Agricultural Foundation supporting several long-standing ecological vegetable- and cereal-breeders. Plant-breeding is an expensive and time-consuming work: to develop a new variety costs more than 600.000 Euro and takes about ten years.

The "seed savings account" has many advantages:

The money works exclusively for ecological and social projects (such as wind-energy, ecological farming, homes and workplaces for handicapped persons, etc.). The account owner decides when the investment flows back. The interest is donated to the Zukunftsstiftung Landwirtschaft, which supports GMO-free and ecological breeding. Twice a year the saver gets information about seed- and breeding-projects. By the end of the year the saver receives a certificate of donation that can be relevant for tax relief.

For more information about the "seed savings account" please contact Zukunftsstiftung Landwirtschaft, Mr. Oliver Willing, Oskar-Hoffmann-Str. 25, D-44789 Bochum, Tel. ++49 234 / 5797-141, Fax –188 , email: willing@zs-l.de

Progress organic seed regime – The database project in the UK

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 Alasdair Smithson

IFOAM Standards Committee (SC) proposes the revision of Basic Standards on plant breeding by a SC sub committee

The IFOAM Standards Committee has suggested employing a subcommittee on plant breeding which should further develop standards on plant breeding with regard to the IFOAM Basic Standards. At the moment the plant breeding standards are draft standards but might be lifted to full standards. Since the draft standards need to be thoroughly revised before becoming full standards a sub committee shall experienced in breeding and seed issues shall take care for the revision.

Food Quality and Organic Food and Farming: Concepts and Methodology

is the title of the Elm Farm Research Centre Conference (EFRC) that is taking place on 23rd November 2004 (10am to 4.30pm) at The Kindersley Centre, Sheepdrove Organic Farm, Lambourn, Berkshire. EFRC The conference will be of interest to a wide audience of those interested in food, its quality and food systems.

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