

Eco-PB-Symposium 'Organic Seed Production and Plant Breeding – strategies, problems and perspectives'

The program for the international Eco-PB Symposium on November 21st/22nd taking place at the Humboldt University in Berlin is now put on the web side of ECO-PB and can be downloaded there <http://www.eco-pb.org/07/symposium4rd.pdf>

Contact: Klaus-Peter Wilbois

International Seed Federation: Position Paper on Plant Breeding for Organic Farming

As an answer to the current breeding standards discussion in the organic sector (see eco-pb homepage) the International Seed Federation (ISF) spread a position paper. It is the position of ISF that the proposed evolution, in which several in-vitro breeding techniques should be banned, will lead to enormous difficulties for the organic farming community. The paper can be found under http://www.worldseed.org/Pos_org_farming.htm).

By Christine Arncken

EU legislation: New organic seed regulation draft for 2004

The EU commission presented a new draft of an amendment to the EU regulation on organic agriculture on the use of organic seed after 2003. In the new draft an annex is envisaged that will contain a list of species for which organic supply is big enough, so that there will be no derogations for these species.

In the new draft the obligation of seed suppliers to tell amounts of available seed was taken out. It is only planned that suppliers have to inform the database if they are sold out.

The following issues are not regulated in the draft:

- any financial measures to encourage organic seed production
- regional distance unto which organic seed has to be bought by the farmer before he can get a derogation
- maximal price threshold for organic seed.

The article 14 committee will next meet in October. People engaged in organic seed issues are asked to give their comments to their national delegates (you can ask your national delegate for the draft text).

By Christine Arncken

More information: Louise Luttikolt

UK: New Research Project at Elm Farm Research Centre

Elm Farm Research Centre, in collaboration with NIAB, HDRA, University of Kingston and University of Middlesex, have just begun work on a new project entitled "Cereal varieties for organic production: Developing a participatory approach to seed production and varietal selection". The projects overall aim is to develop a robust system for identifying, testing, multiplying and marketing cereal varieties, lines, mixtures and populations best suited to organic

production in different parts of the country. This four-year project is funded by the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Project Ref: OF0330).

More information and abstract of research: [Dr. James P. Welsh](#) at EFRC

Spain: GE pollution in spanish organic maize and soya revealed

Traces of transgenes have been identified in three different organically grown crops (two maize varieties and one soya variety) in the Navarre region of the Basque Country, Spain.

Tests have been carried out by two independent laboratories commissioned by the Navarre Organic Agriculture Council, which closely monitors such crops to avoid any transgene pollution of the organic food chain. Further tests on one of the maize crops revealed that the polluting agent derived from the GM variety Bt176, commercialised as COMPA CB by the Swiss company Syngenta and currently cultivated in the area.

The local farmers' union, EHNE, the local organic farmers' association, Biolur, the local organic consumers' association, Landare, and a local organic producer cooperative, Trigo Limpio jointly stressed the worrying aspects of this case, particularly the lack of control and future difficulties for non-transgene food production and consumption (whether conventional or organic). They demand maintenance of the actual EU moratoria on authorisation of new GMO crops and an end to the cultivation of Bt maize in the Spanish State.

Several months ago actual research data of the official farm research institution of Navarre (ITG-A) revealed that the yields of the maize variety Bt176 are no higher and in fact often lower than equivalent non-GMO varieties. Regarding these results, higher seed costs and the fact that transgenic maize is now hard to market, the institute is advising farmers not to cultivate the Bt176 maize (EHNE ñ Basque Family Farmer Association, Spain, 05/15/2002; cited from GENET 05/15/2002).

Source: 31 July, Genetic Engineering Newsletter No. 33/34,
<http://www.biogene.org/e/themen/biotech/e-news.html>

Germany: a statement from the seed retailer's view shows present and future problems in organic (vegetable) seed supply

In the July, August and September issue of the „Ökumenischer Gärtner-Rundbrief“, Dr. Paul Rubitschek from HILD Samen GmbH gives a clear statement in favour of a strict EU organic seed regulation without derogations after 2003. He states that at present too many organic farmers or gardeners are using the possibility of derogations to use conventional seeds. Experience shows that they often choose varieties that are not available in organic quality to avoid extra seed costs. For this reason, breeders often don't produce important varieties organically because they fear their consumers might buy the competitors' cheaper conventional seeds. An absurd situation.

By [Christine Arncken](#)

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Germany: 40th Conference of Horticultural Science in München-Weihenstephan, 26.-28.th of February 2003

General issue of the first day is „Ensuring Future by Training and Innovation“. There will be five oral presentations, one of them about „Breeding, Production and Selling of Vegetable Seeds – Present Situation and Future View from a Breeding Company’s Perspective“ by Dr. P. Rubitschek, Nunhems/Hild Saatzucht, Marbach. The following two days are reserved for short presentations, poster presentations and workshops. Contributions from all sectors of horticultural science are welcome until September 1st, 2002. (not per Fax or e-Mail).

By Christine Arncken.

More information: Deutsche Gartenbauwissenschaftliche Gesellschaft e.V., Herrenhäuser Str.2, D – 30419 Hannover

France: Seed company Vilmorin stopped production of some of its organic vegetable seed

According to Andreas Thommen, manager of the organicXseeds database, the french seed company Vilmorin stopped organic propagation of some of its varieties for reason of too high costs and too low revenues. Vilmorin is the biggest vegetable seed producer for the hobby gardeners’ sector and third biggest for the professional sector in the world.

More information: Andreas Thommen

Switzerland: FiBL accepted an order from BioSuisse to work out seed regulations for 2004

When the new seed amendment of the EU regulation on organic agriculture will be completed, Switzerland is expected to take it over. The Suisse organic umbrella organisation BioSuisse realised that there will be still a lot of work to do: A practicable derogation regulation, a good inspection tool, discussion about equivalence groups of varieties and financial tools to manage demand for organic seeds. FiBL has been commissioned to work out suggestions.

More information: Christine Arncken and Andreas Thommen