

### **Workshop on Organic Plant Breeding Strategies and the Use of Molecular Markers**

From 17 - 19 January 2005 , a combined ECO-PB/COST860 SUSVAR workshop on 'Organic Breeding Strategies and the Use of Molecular Markers' shall be held in Driebergen-NL. This workshop was originally planned for December 2004, but has been postponed to January 2005. The aim is to exchange results and stimulate discussion on different views on breeding strategies for varieties better adapted to organic cereal production, with special focus on the question whether and how molecular markers can be of benefit for organic breeding programmes.

Invited speakers will present their experiences with both field assessment and selection and markers for important traits for organic cereals, such as yield stability, quality, disease resistance, nutrient uptake and use efficiency, weed competitiveness. The number of participants is limited to 60. Those who would like to present a poster are requested to send in an abstract on maximal 1 Page (A4) before 1 December.

For more information: Edith Lammerts van Bueren, C/o Louis Bolk Instituut Hoofdstraat 24, NL-3972 LA Driebergen, phone: 0031-343-523869)

### **New Working Group within the Eucarpia network on Organic Plant Breeding**

EUCARPIA as the European Association for Research on Plant Breeding has invited Edith Lammerts van Bueren to set up a Working Group Organic Plant Breeding within the Eucarpia network. And this means that the network is growing. The request came in the Eucarpia General Assembly September 2004 in Tulln, Austria. It is an opportunity to bring the network of Eucarpia into contact with the ECO-PB network, and cooperate in workshops and conferences. Eucarpia has several sections, based on crops. There are some working groups on novel items, not based on a specific crops. For more information on Eucarpia, see [www.eucarpia.org](http://www.eucarpia.org).

### **SUSVAR – a COST network supporting organic plant breeding**

In March 2004 the network 'Sustainable low-input cereal production: required varietal characteristics and crop diversity' was initiated by common agreement of five European countries. Since then many more European countries have given their support and at this moment 21 countries have signed the Memorandum of Understanding, the official document defining the network. When a country has signed, its scientists can participate in meetings of the network and get reimbursed for this activity.

The main aims of the network are to ensure stable and acceptable yields of good quality for low-input, especially organic, cereal production in Europe by developing ways to increase and make use of crop diversity (e.g. variety mixtures, crop populations or intercropping) and by establishing methods for selecting varieties, lines and populations with special emphasis on influence of genotype-environment interactions. Finally, the network will also establish methods for appropriate variety testing.

In many countries national projects with some of these aims are in progress. In this network, these projects are coordinated by means of exchange of materials, methods for assessment and statistical analyses as well as combining national experimental results. The network is organised

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into six Working Groups each of them focusing on one of these five research areas: plant genetics and plant breeding, biostatistics, plant nutrition and soil microbiology, weed biology and plant competition, plant pathology and plant disease resistance biology; and the sixth on variety testing and certification. The common framework is cereal production in low-input systems with emphasis on crop diversity. It is very important that scientists from many disciplines work together to investigate the complex interactions between the crop and its surroundings to be able to exploit the natural regulation mechanisms of the systems to stabilise and increase yield. The results of the work in the network will contribute to commercial plant breeding as well as official variety testing through participants from these areas.

For more information see the SUSVAR homepage [www.cost860.dk](http://www.cost860.dk) or contact [Hanne Østergård](#), Risø National Laboratory.

### **Dutch National annex 2005**

Dutch expert groups at work for a national annex 2005 on organic seed The Louis Bolk Institute is involved in a project to evaluate the availability and suitability of organically propagated varieties for the national annex 2005. This project is conducted by Leny Lekkerkerk of the Expertise Centre (EC-LNV) of the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. The expert group meetings will be held on 3 and 4 November 2004.

For more information contact [Leny Lekkerkerk](#)

### **Calling for help to collect threshold values for field and seed inspection from all over Europe**

Cereal Breeding Research Darzau is going to make an overview about the threshold values and limits for seed borne diseases in as many as possible countries from all over Europe. The limits are different in northern, southern, western and eastern countries. Anybody who can send the data from his country related to diseases like loose and covered smut, leaf stripe, common bunt, dwarf bunt, net blotch, Fusarium, Microdochium, ergot or whatever is limited for wheat, barley, rye, oat and perhaps rice or maize is asked to send them to [Dr. Karl-Josef Mueller](#). Everybody who gives an input, will get the output (an Excel-sheet with an overview as soon as it is at least filled with 12 countries).

By [Karl-Josef Müller](#)

### **Let's keep a close eye on the breeder - Approaches to bio-dynamic plant-breeding**

is the title of the Conference of the Foundation for Future Farming in which vegetable and cereal breeders will present their ideas and breeding approaches and will allow you a look at their every day's work. Lectures, talks and discussion forums will give an insight into the development of new varieties and the varied work in breeding gardens. The congress is open to everyone from gardening, farming, trade, processing, science as well as the general interested public.

During the last 100 years, cultivated species and varieties of plants (plant length, composition, yield etc.) have been strongly influenced by professionalization in plant-breeding and new

breeding methods. However, breeders in organic farming with its holistic approach are faced with new tasks and challenges, as the aims of breeding in conventional farming are not always compatible with ecological farming. This is why ecological breeders have to include broader aspects in their work. If we look at the issue against this background, some important questions arise, which will be dealt with in the course of the congress:

- Which special aspects do breeders take into account in ecological farming?
- What are the differences between ecological and conventional plant-breeding?
- How do new impulses and ideas for breeding emerge?
- Which individual approaches do bio-dynamic plant-breeders follow?
- How can different breeding aims be balanced?

As speakers are invited: Dr. Karl-Josef Müller, Cereal breeder; Nikolai Fuchs, Agricultural Section at Goetheanum; Dorian Schmidt, Quality research; Vegetable breeders Ute Kirchgässer, Dieter Bauer, Thomas Heinze; Cereal breeders Martin Timmermann, Markus Buchmann, Peter Kunz, Dr. Hartmut Spieß, Dr. Berthold Heyden, Eckart Irion

The workshop is taking place on Saturday, January 15, 2004, 10.00 a.m. until 5.00 p.m. in the Anthroposophical Centre Kassel, Wilhelmshöher Allee 261, D-34131 Kassel (5 minutes walk from Kassel ICE station). Participation fee is € 30,- (incl. lunch). Registration before 7 January 2005.

For more information please contact: Oliver Willing, Foundation for Future Farming - Zukunftsstiftung Landwirtschaft, phone Tel. ++49 - 234/5797 - 141, Fax - 188, [www.zs-l.de](http://www.zs-l.de) and [www.saveourseeds.org](http://www.saveourseeds.org)