

Great response on ECO-PB-Symposium 'Organic Seed Production and Plant Breeding – strategies, problems and perspectives'

This first international symposium on organic seed production and plant breeding in Berlin is getting closer. It starts with an opening ceremony in the late afternoon of November 21st. On November 22nd oral as well as poster presentations on the matter of organic seed production and plant breeding are given and discussed among the participants.

As yet, already about 70 participants have been registered through the form that is displayed on the Eco-PB web site under <http://www.eco-pb.org/07/registration.htm>. Since the number of participants is limited a quick registration is recommended. Registrations exceeding the limit of participants must be rejected.

Please find further information about programme, hotels and a link to the map of Berlin on the [ECO-PB Web side](#).

Contact: [Klaus-Peter Wilbois](#)

ECO-PB's General Assembly

will be held on the 21st of November in Berlin prior to the opening session of the international symposium. It shall last from 11:00 to 14:30.

By [Klaus-Peter Wilbois](#)

IFOAM EU Regional Group – commentary on Commission's draft regulation for Seeds in organic agriculture after 2003

IFOAM EU Group in general welcomes the drafted regulation, but would like to take the opportunity to put some comments.

Annex - We support the commission in their proposal to include an Annex of species for which no derogation can be granted. However we think that for reasons of clarity criteria should be drawn up before the annex is developed.

Subgroups - We support the principle of defining subgroups, however we think that defining them must be a matter for Member States, but with general criteria or guidelines developed at the EU level.

Seed treatment - We feel it is important to have clarified that there is no legal problem with using the Annex II B products for seed treatment, since there are no products specially listed for this method of use.

Database - For the database the IFOAM EU Group recommends a common framework with integration at EU level, but with national functionality (and subsidiarity). This is important for reasons of transparency, comparison and simplicity.

Conservation varieties - We ask the commission to ensure that the issue of conservation varieties is properly addressed. These varieties often fit perfectly with the principles of organic farming. Some of them are officially certified, others not.

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Quality of seed - IFOAM EU Group recognises that seed born diseases can be a serious problem in organic farming. Therefore we wish to support both proposals listed in the questionnaire as they are not alternatives. So on the one hand the general seed directive may need to be reviewed to take account of the special situation of organic farming, and on the other hand individual derogations must be possible provided it is not abused.

Seed sown under conversion - It should be possible to use non-organic seed in the conversion period, provided the product is not sold to consumers, but e.g. may be used as green manure or feeding stuff for the own animals. We feel it is fair that farmers can use their own saved seed during conversion without restriction.

Multiplication of seed on land under conversion - We propose that it should be possible to multiply organic seed on land under conversion for a period of five years, in order facilitate the development of this new regime.

Failure of seed crops - When a farmer wants to multiply seed and therefore uses non-organic basic seed, it might be that the crop does not fulfil the requirements for certification as seed. In this case IFOAM EU Group feels the resultant crop should be considered as an organic crop (e.g. feed purposes).

Mixtures of seed - The IFOAM EU group would like to support the idea of a minimum percentage organic of seeds sold as mixture which, provided the percentage is reached, would not need derogation. This percentage can be progressively lifted.

Vegetative propagating material - Under the regime drafted in this regulation vegetative propagation material should not be included, at least in the first instance. However, these materials should be put in the proposed database as a service to the farmers. We expect that the 'availability principle' will count with these materials, so when available in organic form, they should be used.

By Louise Luttkholt

Organic seed for organic vegetables – a standard that will have EU wide consequence, for all trade partners in this business!

The use of Organic seed for organic vegetables is a must concluded the European Demeter seed initiatives on their autumn meeting from 26th to 29th of September in St. Leonard by Hornerwald (Austria). The consequences of a stricter application of these standards in Europe have to be carried by all trade partners- and therefore have to bring the EU-commission behind them as they will be discussing a regulation concerning Organic seed.

An important point on the agenda at the meeting of the European Demeter seed initiatives in Austria was the planned changes to the EU regulation 2092/91 for organic production. "Organic growing starts with Organic Seed" say's the host of the meeting, Mrs. Reinhild Frech Emmelmann, of ReinSaat. „Organic seed production is of course only the start, the next step is a dedicated seed breeding programme for Organic farming.

Amadeus Zschunke from Sativa Rheinau GmbH (Switzerland) noted that the study of ESA (European Seed Association) on the availability of different varieties is a step in the right

direction, but the evaluation of suitable varieties for organic farming can not only be left to the Seed companies.

The European Demeter seed initiatives suggested that a committee should be created, with representatives of growers, advisers, organic sector bodies and organic seed producing companies, deciding for which vegetable species no further derogation should be allowed (varieties in group 1). There should be a second group of species where a limited time is agreed for how long the derogation can be applied. This group contains species of which an organic farmer cannot find a suitable organic variety. The commission should regularly consider the species in group 2 (not sufficient seed of different varieties available) and decide when it is time to move species to group 1 (no derogation possible). A third group should be set up for those species where no organic seed is available.

In this way it can be assured that in a foreseeable time span only organic seed is used for organic farming. A further advantage is that the interest of grower and seed industry can be evaluated. It is however extremely important that this regulation is applied in all EU member states in the same way.

The European Demeter seed initiatives would like to point out that they are not a member of ESA and their range of seed and varieties was not evaluated in the ESA study.

The base of the ESA (European Seed Association) internal study was a questionnaire sent to all 18 members from ESA. 10 offered organic seed from the 18 members. All ten members took part in the study. A summary of the study was sent to all organic certifying bodies. The study comes to the conclusion that by 57 of a total of 77 sampled vegetable species there is sufficient organic seed available with a wide enough range of varieties. The study listed 12 further species for which it is relatively easy to multiply and produce sufficient amounts of seed. For these species however investment and production, by the companies involved in this study, will only take place if the industry is given legal certainty about their sales. (The limiting of the use of non-organic seed) For eight further species is the use of organic seed so small that also in future no investment is planned by these companies. Here a long-term derogation will be necessary.

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