

### **First IFOAM/FAO/ISF World Conference on Organic Seed 5-7 July, Rome: Challenges and Opportunities for the Organic Sector and the Seed Industry**

Together with FAO and the International Seed Federation (ISF), IFOAM as the international umbrella organisation for organic agriculture movements will organise an international conference on organic seed production. The conference will be on 5-7 July 2004 at the FAO Headquarters.

It is addressed to all the relevant stakeholders of the organic seed sector: scientists/plant breeders, seed producers, farmers, certifiers, governments and other stakeholders interested in organic farming and seed production. The goals of the conference are to

- create a platform for international information and knowledge exchange between the organic movement and the conventional seed sector
- focus on scientific/technical aspects related to organic seed issues
- evaluate regulatory requirements and related issues for organic seed
- provide a platform for networking and cooperation

The preliminary programme is as follows. Monday, 5 July 2004: Challenges of Organic Seed Production with speakers on the technical and socio-economic challenges faced in organic seed production. In four parallel sessions, the afternoon sitting will deal with technical issues facing the production of organic seed for cereal, vegetable, potato and forage crops.

Tuesday, 6 July 2004: Seed Quality with contributions in four crop group specific parallel sessions on germination and purity standards, thresholds for seed-borne diseases, seed pelleting and priming, and approved seed treatments. In the afternoon: Regulatory Issues in Organic Agriculture with focus on similarities and differences in regulations between major trading partners and the need for and steps towards their harmonisation for organic seed production.

Wednesday, 7 July 2004: Maintenance of Biodiversity with presentations on a wide range of subjects such as the needs of the organic sector for biodiversity as it pertains to organic seed availability, comparison of open-pollinated versus hybrid seed for breeding and organic seed production, and the important variety characteristics for organic seed producers are planned.

Call for contributions: the organisers invite papers and/or posters, either on practical experience or research that are compatible with the outline programme format. A time of 15 minutes is allocated to speakers in parallel sessions and 25 minutes total in plenary sessions. The Programme Committee reserves the right to final selection of speakers for oral presentations and posters. January 15, 2004 is the deadline for submitting abstracts (one A4 sized page).

Please send abstract with address details to [Edith Lammerts van Bueren](mailto:Edith.Lammerts.van.Bueren@ifoam.org)

More information: <http://www.organicseedconf.org>, per mail: [seedconference@ifoam.org](mailto:seedconference@ifoam.org).

### **EU Regulation: 2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop on the Organic Seed Regime 2004**

In a follow-up workshop of the ECO-PB workshop in Frankfurt, held in April 2003 on the organic seed regime 2004, ECO-PB will organise a second workshop in December 2003 to compare and discuss the various results of activities in several countries adopting the EU Regulation 1452/2003. Main issues are the criteria and segmentation on (Sub)species for EU- or 'national'

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annexes. This involves a list of (sub)species with no more derogation for the use of conventional seed.

The workshop will take place on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2003. In order to allow a fruitful discussion, like in the previous meeting, we are inviting only two participants per country: one on behalf of national authorities involved with the implementation of the organic seed regime and one on behalf of decision makers of national organic agricultural movements, concerned with the implementation of the organic seed regime. Additionally we will invite the EU commission and the European Seed Association (ESA).

More information: [Edith Lammerts van Bueren](#)

### **“Crop Science”: Concepts of Intrinsic Value and Integrity of Plants in Organic Plant Breeding and Propagation.**

An article on “Concepts of Intrinsic Value and Integrity of Plants in Organic Plant Breeding and Propagation” is recently published in *Crop Science* 43:1922-1929 (2003) by E.T. Lammerts van Bueren, P.C. Struik, M.Tiemens-Hulscher & E. Jacobsen.

The natural approach of organic agriculture involves ecological and ethical principles. It includes an appreciation for the integrity of plants, which refers to their inherent nature, wholeness, completeness, species-specific characteristics, and being in balance with their environment. To instrumentalize this concept, Lammerts van Bueren et al. evaluated integrity using criteria derived from the integrity of life, plant-specific integrity, genotypic integrity, and phenotypic integrity. The results were applied to evaluate existing breeding and propagation techniques. In vitro techniques and techniques that engineer at the DNA level were found to be incompatible with the integrity of crops, with the exception of use of DNA markers.

By [Edith Lammerts van Bueren](#), requests for reprints can be sent by mail

### **Netherlands: National annex 2004**

The Louis Bolk Institute has been involved in composing a Dutch ‘national annex’ or 2004, which means a list of (sub)species with enough appropriate varieties to cover the main cultivation use, see newsletter Aug/Sept 2003. On the 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of October 2003 five expert group meetings have taken place: i. e. for potatoes, cereals, fodder crops, vegetable fruit crops under glass and in open air, and other vegetable crops. There was full commitment of seed companies to provide information on their planned organic variety assortment for 2004 as input for the expert group meetings. During the expert group meetings growers and seed companies showed full commitment to find solutions to realise a good assortment for the coming years. The advice to the Dutch ministry of Agriculture for lifting the derogation for certain (sub)species by having them on a national annex/list contains: potatoes, cereals, some grasses and green manure species, and some twenty vegetable (sub)species. For some vegetables a proposal was made to start with a percentage of organic seed (10, 25 or 50%) in 2004 and to raise this percentage in the next years.

Dutch growers and seed companies are well aware that not all countries are involved in filling such ‘national annexes’, and that higher seed prices have consequences in the market. Nevertheless, it was agreed that progress is necessary not to frustrate seed companies for their

efforts and to make the organic sector more reliable in closing the production chain. The final decision on the results of the expert groups is up to the Ministry of Agriculture.

More information: [Edith Lammerts van Bueren](#)

### **Germany: Zukunftsstiftung Landwirtschaft organises Conference on Organic farming and marketing 'Organic varieties are served! Discussion about new ideas and ways of marketing'**

After many years of selection and crossing, organic plant breeders have developed new high-quality varieties. As the whole process of breeding is based on a holistic approach, these plants now offer many advantages like for example excellent taste, good ripening abilities and nutritional qualities as well as best characteristics for cultivation in organic farming. But how can this quality reach the consumer? Are we in a position to change the anonymity of today's goods flows? Do consumers really want "Quality instead of Quantity"? In this context we are faced with important aspects and questions about the sale of varieties from organic breeding:

- Are organic varieties a means against price dumping?
- How can customers recognise 'their own' regionally and organically bred favourite carrot and thus increase demand?
- Can trade and processing businesses win a better profile by dealing with organic varieties?
- Is it possible at all to handle different varieties separately?
- When is a product 'good value for money'?
- How can the production process contribute to finance organic breeding?

Marketing approaches and perspectives with regard to organic and bio-dynamic varieties will be discussed with vegetable growers, farmers, and members of trade and the processing industry as well as with the interested public. Practical examples will be given. The conference will offer workshops, discussion groups and lectures.

Speakers are Udo Hermannstorfer, management consultant, Switzerland; Robert Dax, Ökoring Handels GmbH, Mammendorf; Gebhardt Rosmanith, Bingenheimer Saatgut AG, Echzell; Dr. Berthold Heyden, cereal breeder, Salem; Julian Jakobs, vegetable breeder, Obergrashof, Dachau and many others.

The conference will take place on Saturday, January 17th 2004 from 10:00 to 17:00 in the Anthroposophical Centre Kassel, Wilhelmshöher Allee 261, D-34131 Kassel. The participation fee includes lunch and is € 30,-. Registration is open until 9th January 2004

For more information and the conference programme contact: Oliver Willing, Zukunftsstiftung Landwirtschaft PB 10 08 29, 44708 Bochum, Tel. ++49-234-5797-141, Fax -188 or visit <http://www.zs-l.de/aktuelles/tagung2004.htm>

### **Denmark: Preliminary results from research project on characteristics of spring barley varieties for organic farming**

Do modern spring barley varieties possess the right combinations of characteristics such as disease resistance, weed competitiveness and nutrient uptake efficiency to ensure a stable and acceptable yield of good quality when grown under different organic growing conditions? How can genetic diversity contribute to this by use of variety mixtures as well as other kind of

'heterogeneous varieties' e.g. re-sown mixtures? We know that varieties often perform and yield differently in different environments due to genotype-environment interactions, so it may be important to evaluate characteristics of varieties in organic as well as in conventional farming systems. However, for which traits are the differences between the conventional and the organic growing systems large enough to justify breeding and testing of varieties in both environments? The aim of an inter-institutional Danish research project within The Danish Research Centre for Organic Farming (DARCOF) is to investigate these questions. Data from the first two years of field trials with different organic and conventional management systems at three Danish locations are being analysed at the moment. Most data are available on a web side under <http://www.planteinfo.dk/obsparceller/foj2003.html>.

Some of the preliminary results are:

- The analyses of yield data show a clear interaction between varieties and environments due to different management systems as well as other factors. Among others, yield seems to be negatively correlated with straw length, however, this effect is much stronger in the conventional systems.
- For six variety mixtures (composed of three high yielding varieties following the official Danish rules for resistance to diseases and date of maturity but with larger height differences), in general the yield was higher, the total amount of disease was lower (especially for powdery mildew) and the presence of weeds was a little lower in the mixtures than in the average of the components.
- Simultaneous disease severity assessments of different natural inoculated diseases on the same variety in our trials were mainly negatively correlated. An analysis of detailed assessments of the interaction between scald and netblotch severity is in preparation.
- Finally, interactions between nutrient uptake, weed management and diseases are assessed.

Further information can also be found on <http://www.darcof.dk/research/darcofii/vi2.html>

By [Hanne Østergård](#), Head of project, Risø National Laboratory, P.O. Box 49, DK-4000 Roskilde

### **Switzerland: Bio-dynamic wheat breeder Peter Kunz received "golden larch" award**

On Sunday, Nov. 9<sup>th</sup>, Bio-dynamic wheat breeder Peter Kunz was awarded the "golden larch", a price of SFr.25 000.- (ca. € 16 700.-), from the swiss MUT-foundation (Stiftung für menschen-, umwelt- und tiergerechte Landwirtschaft). Peter Kunz said he wanted to invest the price sum in his breeding programme, especially the project to breed wheat resistant to smut (*Tilletia caries*), and in the project to strengthen plant health to rise the level of field tolerance to smut. In 2003, the first spelt variety from his breeding programme ("Alkor") was put on the official Swiss variety list, in 2004 another spelt variety and at least two wheat varieties are expected to be admitted to the national list. More information visit the Web site <http://www.peter-kunz.ch/>

By [Christine Arncken](#)