

**ECO-PB symposium in Berlin was a great success**

About 70 participants took part at the ECO-PB symposium held in Berlin on November 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. The symposium started on Thursday evening with a friendly welcome by Prof. Nagel, the dean of the faculty for agriculture and horticulture of the Humboldt university who hosted the symposium.

State secretary Alexander Müller from the ministry of consumer protection, food and agriculture (BMVEL) then officially opened the symposium. He conveyed warm regards from minister Renate Künast, who is patron of ECO-PB. In his speech he gave details about the promotion of organic agriculture by the ministry. In particular, he pointed out what the future tasks with regard to an seed production and plant breeding for organic agriculture are and what his ministry has been achieved so far. Regarding the challenges involved in organic plant breeding and seed production he stressed the necessity of collaboration within Europe. In this respect he confirmed that ECO-PB does an excellent job.

He was followed by Martin Wolfe, research director of Elm farm Research Centre who started with the first oral presentation on the subject of plant breeding. He gave a thorough historical overview of the relationship of plant breeding, ecology and modern agriculture over the last 50 years. In his plea for biodiversity he emphasized that plant breeding based on ecologic principles may not run into disproportion of yield, plant variety and energy employment.

The second presentation on this evening was given by Urs Niggli, director of the Research Institute of organic agriculture. He demonstrated a promising example of socio-economically integrated solution for plant breeding. This model is carried out by SATIVA in Switzerland and is based co-operation among farmers, millers, bakers and consumers. With this approach breeding expenses are covered by market prices of bakery produce.

The evening session of the first day was then finished off by an delicious organic buffet which was a nice possibility for the participants to socialize and exchange views and news.

The presentation session on Friday was opened and chaired by Edith Lammerts van Bueren, president of ECO-PB. The first section in the morning dealt with the handling of seed borne diseases in organic seed production which is definitely a crucial point. Three oral presentations about approaches how to tackle those problems in different crops were given by Karl-Josef Müller (Getreidezüchtungsforschung Darzau, D), Ronald Driessen (Rijk Zwaan Zaadteelt en Zaadhandel B.V., NL), and Bent Nielsen (Danish Institute of Agricultural Sciences, DK). In the following plenary discussion participants asked lively, discussed own experiences and voiced still unsolved problems.

The second section was on new approaches in plant breeding and seed production for organic farming. Birte Boelt (Danish Institute of Agricultural Sciences, DK), Véronique Chabré (Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique, F) and James P. Welsh (Elm Farm Research Centre, UK) presented their research results on vegetable, fodder and cereal crops.

Attached to the lunch break there were about 25 posters on breeding and seed production issues being introduced by research experts. The warm atmosphere beneath photographs of a long line of noble price winners was the ideal basis for discussions and more.

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The last section dealt with socio-economic aspects of organic plant breeding and seed production. Valuable information's and experiences on official organic VCU testing, the role of public finance with regard to plant breeding and the economics of an organic seed program were presented by Aart Osman of Louis Bolk Institutie (NL), Cornelia Roeckl of Zunkunftsstiftung Landwirtschaft (D) and Dick van Zeijden of Bejo Zaden (NL).

The symposium was closed with remarks from Klaus-Peter Wilbois, Secretary of ECO-PB. The participants left the event with the firm wish to continue the exchange of knowledge and experience in the matter of plant breeding and seed production for organic agriculture on an international level.

By Klaus-Peter Wilbois

### **Proceedings of the Berlin ECO-PB Symposium available by end of January 2003**

The work on the proceedings of the ECO-PB Symposium on organic plant breeding and seed production is presently in progress and shall be available by end of January 2003. Orders for the proceedings are welcomed and can be directed to Edith Lammerts van Bueren of Louis Bolk Institute in the Netherlands (Fax: ++31-343-515611)

### **Organic plant breeding and propagation: concepts and strategies**

is the title of the PhD thesis of Edith Lammerts van Bueren. The thesis provides an overview of the current debate in organic agriculture on ecological and ethical principles with respect to plant breeding and propagation, discusses the state of the art and it also strengthens the basis for future development of organic plant breeding and organic propagation as new branches of organic agricultural science and practice. A summary of it can be found on ECO-PB Web site: [www.eco-pb.org/09/summaryphd.pdf](http://www.eco-pb.org/09/summaryphd.pdf)

For further information contact Edith Lammerts van Bueren

### **First call for papers for the 2nd International Seed Health Conference**

Healthy seed for healthy crop to be held 16-18 September 2003 in Poznan, Poland. Further information is available at: [http://www.au.poznan.pl/ptfit/konfer\\_2003\\_en.html](http://www.au.poznan.pl/ptfit/konfer_2003_en.html)