

**IFOAM Conference on Organic Animal and Plant Breeding: A successful venue**

On August 25 - 28, 2009, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) held the "Breeding Diversity" Conference in Santa Fe, NM, USA. Leading scientists, activists, farmers and breeders came together to share their latest findings and positions on organic breeding and agro-biodiversity conservation in order to find new ways to address the challenges of today and tomorrow.

In her conference opening speech the Indian environmentalist Vandana Shiva, who is decorated with the alternative Nobel price, emphasized the importance of this IFOAM-conference within the context of the current development in animal and plant breeding. The ecologically oriented breeding and its contribution to biodiversity, the basis of our food and nutrition security, is threatened by the application of genetic engineering. This technique could not be qualified as breeding in its original sense. The ongoing loss of biodiversity meant an erosion of food and nutrition security, especially in times of climate changes and further ecological challenges. "This conference can contribute to both the preservation of biodiversity on our planet and to the protection of the means of existence of peasants in the whole world", Vandana Shiva pointed out.

An important workshop topic – especially for the European participants – was the discussion of strategies to develop guidelines for excluding the use of CMS-hybrid varieties made by cell fusion techniques, which was decided at the IFOAM general assembly in Modena in 2008. The CMS-hybrids in question are a special form of hybrid plants, which result from protoplast or cytoplasm fusion (CMS stands for cytoplasmic male sterility); this technique is not compatible with organic principles as cell fusion falls under IFOAM's definition of GMO. In April 2009 the ECO-PB und ITAB (Institut Technique de l'Agriculture Biologique) already held a conference on this topic in Paris, on which the European representatives of organic farming together with breeders involved with breeding for organic farming discussed strategies for the abandonment of such cultivars, report see [www.eco-pb.org](http://www.eco-pb.org). At the conference in Santa Fe it now became clear that Europe is ahead of being aware of this issue and it remains unclear at which rate such CMS varieties are used in the USA. Currently, the main concern of American organisation Organic Seed Alliance is focused on the law suits to prevent contamination of GMO with organic seed production. However, the strategies discussed in Europe for a phase-out of the use of "CMS-hybrids" was warmly greeted and supported by the American participants.

Another significant issue was the discussion of IFOAM plant breeding standards in the plenum during the conference. Prof. Edith Lammerts van Bueren, president of ECO-PB, opened the discussion by proposing a working document for organic plant breeding standards compiled by ECO-PB. The plenum appreciated the work of ECO-PB on this standards working document and found it an excellent basis to structure the discussion. As expected, there was a rather lively discussion with many valuable points to be considered in the redraft. In the coming step the working document is now redrafted and will be available for further comments and approval before submitting to the IFOAM standard making body for further consideration.

Klaus-Peter Wilbois

## First Standards for Certified Biodynamic Plant Breeding

In November 2008 Demeter Germany passed worldwide the first organic breeding standards. In the recent months about twenty vegetable varieties and three cereal varieties have been already certified.

### I Scope and Principles

1) The standard for certified biodynamic plant breeding has been developed largely by the Association of Biodynamic Plant Breeders. It is contained in the contract between the user of the descriptor “Biodynamically Bred Variety” and the respective organisation (e.g. Demeter e.V.). It applies to the breeding enterprise that is active in Biodynamic plant breeding, as well as to the products, the varieties produced by certified Biodynamic plant breeding.

2) Recognizing that not every conceivable case of variety development can be covered by these standards, extrapolation of these standards and the procedures concerning exemptions are to follow the mission-statement which is published by the Association of Biodynamic Plant Breeders (ABDP)

3) Any variety that is offered for sale and which originates from biodynamic breeding must have a full biography of its development published on the internet and freely available. The biography must comply with the template contained in Section 2 of the 'Regulations' as developed by the ABDP and entitled “Steps towards transparency in the development of varieties.”

### II Objectives of the plant breeding standards

The aim of this standard is to describe varieties that arise from biodynamic plant breeding using defined criteria in order to differentiate these varieties from others, which are not allowed to use this descriptor. The labelling of varieties in the way this standard foresees as “From Biodynamic Plant Breeding” is intended to make the breeding methods standing behind such products clearly visible. When products carry the Demeter logo, it is clear only that they have been grown on a Biodynamic property, but not however from which seed. Through reference to the breeding, the particular origin of the seed material can be highlighted.

For further information see: <http://www.abdp.org/index.php?id=117> or get in contact with Michael Fleck, (ABDP and Kultursaat e.V.), fon: ++49 (0) 60 35 / 20 80 97  
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**International Conference on the issue of seed laws and their impact on landraces, population and conservation varieties**

14-15 October 2009 Marseille: The Farm Seed Opportunities (FSO) project is organizing an International Conference on the issue of seed laws and their impact on landraces, population and conservation varieties. After a short presentation of the main outcomes of the project, a list of invited experts from Northern and Southern countries will give their comments, suggestions and views regarding their national situation. The conference will aim at validating the results of the FSO research program, promoting exchanges amongst stakeholders, outlining a set of legal strategies for a sustainable and efficient use of agricultural biodiversity, taking into account all benefits shared globally.

In this framework, there will be a poster session dealing with the following subjects: participatory plant breeding, landraces (or any kind of “farmers’ varieties”) or the use and valorisation of local varieties.

At the end of the year the FSO project will draft a set of possible legal strategies for on farm plant breeding in Europe, taking into account the need to enlarge the seeds legislation (certification and marketing rules, property rights). Given that most interesting on farm breeding strategies have been developed in the South and that these countries are adopting new seed laws by following the rules of Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), it is important that the FSO partners share their views with experts, scientists and farmers from the South.

For more information or sending posters or abstracts, please contact: Riccardo Bocci, e-mail: [r.bocci@aiab.it](mailto:r.bocci@aiab.it)

**First announcement on the 2<sup>nd</sup> EUCARPIA Organic and Low-input Section Conference “Breeding for resilience: A strategy for organic and low-input farming systems?”**

Paris, 1-3 December 2010: The Eucarpia Organic and Low-Input Agriculture Section will hold a conference in Paris, France on December 1-3, 2010 on Breeding for organic and low-input farming systems with a special emphasis on strategies that allow for more resilience in response to global change. While organic and low-input agricultural systems are more exposed than conventional ones to heterogeneous environments, low nutrient availability and biotic as well as abiotic pressures, global change might increase uncertainty in environmental conditions by producing drastic variation in climate, epidemic pressures, nutrient availability, etc. These changes could be considered an opportunity for the organic sector to develop original and innovative strategies for high level resilience. This conference wishes to take inspiration from the ecological sciences to reconsider the use of biodiversity without ignoring the new tools coming from genomics.

This conference will be jointly organized by INRA (UMR Le Moulon, SAD-Paysage Rennes, Montpellier) and ITAB in a special site in Paris, Le Comptoir Général, which is based on ecological and social responsibility, and supports another view point on today’s world. There will be a call for papers for oral and poster presentations. More information will be available on the Eucarpia and ECO-PB website by the end of November 2009.

For more information contact: Isabelle Goldringer, e-mail: [isa@moulon.inra.fr](mailto:isa@moulon.inra.fr) or Frédéric Rey, e-mail: [Frederic.Rey@itab.asso.fr](mailto:Frederic.Rey@itab.asso.fr)

**Postponed: Venue on International Attuning of the Assortment, Supply and Demand of Organic Seed**

ECO-PB together with Organic Research Centre, Elm Farm planned to organise a venue on the European organic seed regime to be held on October 26 – 27 in the Organic Research Centre, Elm Farm, Hamstead Marshall, Newbury. Berkshire, UK.

This meeting has now been postponed to 2010. The postponement was necessary since the proposals for improvement compiled during the last meeting (cf. [http://www.eco-pb.org/09/Report ECO-PB Organic Seed meeting NL 08092526.pdf](http://www.eco-pb.org/09/Report%20ECO-PB%20Organic%20Seed%20meeting%20NL%2008092526.pdf)) have not yet been taken up by policy makers although we had a positive response for consideration by the EU Commission. In this situation it does not make much sense to carry another venue on the issue before we have taken the steps raised in the conferences before.

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**News from Denmark**

A screening of varieties in 2009 has identified lines and varieties with resistance to common bunt in spelt, emmer and macha. The research will be continued in 2009 and 2010.

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A 2nd Nordic workshop on domesticated cereals will be held in Järna October 27th-28th. Further information will be presented at [www.gastronordisk.net](http://www.gastronordisk.net)

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