

Demeter-Plant-Breeding-Standard established

Demeter has passed a Plant-Breeding-Standard, which will become valid from January 2009 on. Till it will become available on the Demeter-Website you can find the standard under the ABDP-Website:

Demeter-Zuchtrichtlinie (Deutsche Version): <http://www.abdp.org/index.php?id=116>

Demeter-Breeding-Standards (English version): <http://www.abdp.org/index.php?id=117>

Organic variety trials better with organic seeds

Cereal Breeding Research Darzau has finished a project about comparing certified organic seeds from all available organic seed lots in Germany during three years with conventional seeds usually used for organic seed trials and delivered by the seed companies. On average the organic seeds obtained 95% of the yield of the conventional seeds of the same variety. Organic seeds on average had less protein, lower Thousand-Grain-Weight and a higher contamination with fungi than conventional seeds.

There was a broad variance among the different organic seed samples. The range of the yields from different seed lots of a certain variety could be the same like the range of yields between different varieties tested with conventional seeds. Only the most commonly used varieties in organic farming showed the same ranking in yields of organic seed when compared with those of conventional seed. But some varieties showed either better or much poorer results when organic seed was used. Unfortunately, those conventionally bred varieties with a better performance when using organic seeds could be discovered only randomly under practical farming conditions. Most often then they will not be available any more, because their use in conventional market is disappearing and the variety also.

The results indicate that organic variety trials should be done with organic seeds only in particular to find those varieties, which have a better performance under practical organic farming conditions, where only organic seed is allowed.

The report is still only available in German under:

<http://www.darzau.de/fileadmin/PDF/herkunftswert2008final.pdf>

The results will be presented at the scientific conference in Zurich in February.

Comparing rye varieties from different breeding methods with more sensitive quality tests

Cereal Breeding Research Darzau has finished a project about comparing different varieties of winter rye from three organic trials by using Picture Creating Methods (copper-chlorid-crystallisation), Fluorescence-Stimulation-Spectroscopy and Rational Formative Forces Assessment. The hybrids showed the highest yield, but the poorest quality related to the different sensitive tests. Among the tested population-varieties the older variety Danko did better related to formative forces than the new variety Recrut, which was closer to the hybrids. But the two "conservation varieties" Lichtkorn and Firmament, which came out of a bio-dynamic maintenance-breeding done for many years showed the best quality related to formative forces. Concerning yields Lichtkorn showed the same level like organic seeds of Danko.

The Results will be published in German in the magazine "Lebendige Erde" in January 2009.

The report and the additional reports about the different testing methods will become available in German in January under: <http://www.darzau.de/index.php?id=115>

Campaign “Sowing Future!”

‘Sowing Future!’ is a campaign which took place during fall 2008 on 25 farms in Switzerland and bordering countries. People were invited to jointly sow fields with cereals. This was to act both as an unforgettable event for the people taking part and manifestation against genetic engineering. The aim was to show that we need to sow today what we like to harvest and eat in the future. The report on this campaign is now available under the following web links:

http://08.avenirsem.ch/index.php?article_id=120 and http://gz.peter-kunz.ch/index.php?article_id=234

Announcement: Workshop on the role of Marker Assisted Selection in breeding varieties for organic agriculture

A workshop on the role of Marker Assisted Selection in breeding varieties for organic agriculture will be organised from 25 (13.00h) – 27 February 2009 (13.00h) in Wageningen, the Netherlands.

The workshop is organised in cooperation between the EU-project BioExploit and the EUCARPIA Section Organic and Low-input Agriculture. We invite the following stakeholders as participants: Breeders and researchers involved and/or interested in plant breeding for organic agriculture with or without detailed knowledge on molecular techniques as well as opinion leaders, e.g. from organic or conventional umbrella organisations focusing on breeding and seed production for the organic sector. There will be a maximum number of 60 participants. The aim of the workshop is to facilitate a broad discussion with invited speakers on the state of the art and progress in relation to whether, when and how breeding programs for organic agriculture can benefit from Marker Assisted Selection.

The workshop is a follow-up of the discussion on MAS in plant breeding programs for organic agriculture, organised by COST SUSVAR and ECO-PB in January 2005 in Driebergen, the Netherlands. In the meantime, science has made progress, practical breeders have got more experience with MAS, and questions for breeding for organic agriculture may be more articulated. So now it is time for an update and further deepening of the issues involved. The workshop will discuss basic selection principles as well as contrast breeding strategies according to organic principles and MAS in a few crop and trait cases. Next to proceedings, the workshop will contribute to a policy paper identifying and clarifying key issues based on an analysis of role of MAS in breeding for organic agriculture.

A detailed program and registration forms will soon be available on the websites of BioExploit, EUCARPIA, ECO-PB and Cost 860 Susvar.

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