

**ECO-PB/ITAB-Workshop in Paris: Strategies for a future without cell fusion techniques in varieties applied in Organic Farming**

Cell fusion technique is a breeding technique that falls according to the IFOAM Norms and the EC law under the definition of genetic engineering. Additionally, at the IFOAM General Assembly 2008 it was made clear by the general assembly that cell fusion techniques do not comply with the principles of organic farming. Therefore, this technique must not be used in organic plant breeding and seed originated from it should not be allowed in organic farming. Many organic farmers and breeders agree on that and cell fusion is not indispensable for plant breeding. But in reality its products might be widely used by organic farmers. Therefore, the question is how to find strategies to phase out seed of especially vegetable varieties in which cell fusion played a role from organic farming.

This is the background for an ECO-PB/ITAB Workshop which takes place on April 27th and 28th 2009 in Paris. The aim of this workshop is to define short and long term strategies to get rid of varieties originated by cell fusion in organic farming. It should also give a clear signal to seed companies who choose to not using this technique. The workshop is also considered as preparation of European countries for the 1<sup>st</sup> IFOAM Conference on Organic Animal and Plant Breeding in Santa Fé (New Mexico, USA) in August 2009 (see announcement below).

Attached to the ECO-PB/ITAB Workshop a French workshop organized by ITAB will follow on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> April 2009 in order to understand and discuss novel breeding techniques and their compatibility with organic farming principles, in particular those with hidden genetic modifications (Reverse Breeding, Cis-Genesis etc). Furthermore, European innovative approaches to plant breeding for organic farming will also be presented in this workshop.

See registration form, invitation and program on <http://www.eco-pb.org/>. There is a limited number of seats, registration before 31 March 2009!

**1<sup>st</sup> International IFOAM Conference on Organic Animal and Plant Breeding  
–BREEDING DIVERSITY–**

Sante Fe, New Mexico, August 25 - 28 2009. The time is right to bring together all endeavors to focus on organic breeding. Fostering the sustainable development of new successful low input breeds is urgent in the face of future challenges of food insecurity and massive threats to the livelihoods of millions of people caused by climate change. Through the conservation and promotion of Agro-Biodiversity of both animal and plant genetic resources, organic agriculture will again prove to be a viable alternative to genetically modified organisms. Both organic plant and animal breeding are therefore gaining momentum in several parts of the world. Successful organic breeding is the basis of organic production, but it is only in early phases of development.

Organic breeding includes efforts of both professional companies involved in the organic market, as well as participatory farmers' initiatives from all around the world. The conference is aiming at encouraging the dialogue between commercial and subsistence farmers; scientists and practitioners; professional farmers and hobby gardeners/animal keepers to promote the lively exchange of experiences and perspectives on organic breeding. Even though technical aspects may differ dramatically, each field can inspire the other to develop and build upon successful strategies.

This conference provides for the opportunity to revive traditional knowledge from the global North and South and connect it with the current international organic research. Through the fusion of traditional breeding knowledge and newly developed organic breeding methods, there is a great opportunity of intercultural learning and also valuing knowledge which was kept through generations for the well-being of communities. Because of the key role women play in the selection of seeds and management of small livestock the conference will center on their knowledge and contributions. Bringing all together in one international conference explicitly highlights important thematic and geographic interdependences and strengthens the holistic approach of organic agriculture in respecting and including the voices of the world's regions in their full diversity.

For more information:

[http://www.ifoam.org/events/ifoam\\_conferences/2009\\_Animal\\_and\\_Plant\\_Breeding/animal\\_plant\\_breeding.html](http://www.ifoam.org/events/ifoam_conferences/2009_Animal_and_Plant_Breeding/animal_plant_breeding.html)

### **Directed Mutagenesis – a new GE technique that might avoid the GE regulatory process?**

The German chemical group BASF announced that it had developed a new generation of genetically altered crops, by precisely manipulating the plant's own DNA without inserting foreign genes. This new technology, known as "directed mutagenesis", produces new traits such as herbicide resistance, which are very similar to those achieved through conventional genetic modification of plants. But because no genes are added, the company is confident to avoid the political and regulatory difficulties when comes to GE-crops, especially in Europe. BASF expects to have its new herbicide-resistant canola crops on the market as soon as 2013.

See article at [www.ft.com/cms/s/0/12360324-eca1-11dd-a534-0000779fd2ac.html](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/12360324-eca1-11dd-a534-0000779fd2ac.html)

### **Initiative for GE-free Seeds and Breeding: Rejecting GMO needs independent GM-free plant breeding**

On 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> February 2009, the members of the Initiative for GE-free Seeds and Breeding (IG Saatgut) organized their 12<sup>th</sup> workshop in Nuremberg. The nine member organizations and companies from Germany, Austria and Switzerland have set the course for their cooperation. IG Saatgut aims at addressing the specific concerns of GM-free seed production and breeding in the European discussions on agro-genetic engineering. Rejecting GMOs means to the members favouring independent GM-free plant breeding. They are committed to advocating their positions at the revision of the EU seed legislation in Brussels and expanding their European networking and cooperation. The main task is achieving transparent purity of GM-free seeds and therefore preventing European thresholds for labelling of GM shares in seeds, which would be hiding any slight contamination.

Contact and Information: [www.gentechnikfreie-saat.de](http://www.gentechnikfreie-saat.de). IG Saatgut works closely with the organization Save Our Seeds. Members of IG Saatgut: ABDP, Arche Noah, Bingenheimer Saatgut AG, Dreschflegel e.V., Kultursaat e.V., ProSpecieRara, ReinSaat KG, Sativa Rheinland AG, VEN.