

Press Release

International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements – EU Regional Group

Don't tow corporate line on seed: MEPs must protect public good

Seed is too important to leave it to vested interests

Brussels, 27/11/2013 – Yesterday, the European Parliament [hearing](#) on the review of the legislation on rules for marketing of seed and plant propagation material raised concerns amongst stakeholders. Comments from many of the MEPs demonstrate lack of awareness of the importance of agro-biodiversity, our future food security and the role of small farmers.

"We are at a crossroad to decide what kind of farming will prevail in the EU in the future - and the decision on what kind of reproductive material farmers can buy and use to produce food will define this future in large parts," said Marco Schlüter, Director of IFOAM EU. "The Silvestris draft report on seed fails to deliver clear support for small operators to ensure the conservation and further development of genetic resources. It is moreover disturbing to see that many members of the AGRI committee seem to be concerned about protecting large seed companies rather than food security, biodiversity and the rights of farmers to choose seed suited to agro-ecological farming."

"Breeders who work according to the organic principles need fair access to the seed market," underlines Gebhard Rossmann, organic breeder and member of the IFOAM EU seed task force. "It must be ensured that open pollinated varieties can be registered under adapted standards provided by the legislation. There is an increasing risk that industrial varieties and hybrids become the rule - whereas traditional ways of breeding are sidelined under exemptions. This trend must be clearly rejected: If breeders want to market an open pollinated variety for organic farming and do not claim plant variety protection, their market registration must be possible following adapted rules: The varieties must be tested under adapted climatic and agronomic conditions, uniformity and stability must be assessed with adapted criteria."

"It is unacceptable that fewer and fewer companies increasingly control seed. It puts seed and farmers, not to mention citizens, in the hands of a few players. To ensure access to diverse seed and food, democratisation is needed. The organic sector will continue to raise awareness amongst citizens for the importance of diversity of genetic resources and varieties," explains Antje Kölling, IFOAM EU Policy Manager. "We demand smarter rules for a diverse sector: 1.) The seed work of small producers must be left out of the scope of the legislation - only activities on commercial scale must fall under this marketing regulation. 2.) Simplification is needed for the marketing of genetic resources as well as for varieties and populations that bear a wider genetic spectrum. 3.) Adapted rules must be applied for open pollinated varieties, the testing of the value of cultivation and use must be voluntary. 4.) Transparency rules must ensure that breeders and farmers have the freedom to choose what breeding techniques they want in their seed and to avoid seed that contains any patent."

The [policy seminar](#) "A future for diversity in the seed legislation reform" will take place today, 27 November 2013 in Brussels, Representation of Lower Saxony, Rue Montoyer 61. The seed law reform will be presented an organic perspective. Journalists and MEPs are invited to join this event.

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NOTES:

- 1) **IFOAM EU** represents more than 160 member organizations in the EU-28, the EU accession countries and EFTA. Member organizations span the entire organic food chain and beyond: from farmers and processors organisations, retailers, certifiers, consultants, traders and researchers to environmental and consumer advocacy bodies