

ANNUAL REPORT OF ECO-PB ACTIVITIES

DECEMBER 2003-DECEMBER 2004

Board meetings and General Assembly

ECO-PB's third General Assembly (GA) was held on the 9th December 2003 in the Institute of Cultural Affairs in Brussels, just after the 2nd International Workshop on the new Organic Seed Regime. During the GA the proposed board was re-elected and ECO-PB's board now exists of:

Edith Lammerts van Bueren/Louis Bolk Insitute (NL) – president
Lawrence Woodward/Elm Farm Research Centre (UK) – treasurer
Klaus-Peter Wilbois/ Forschungsinstitut Biologische Landbau (D) – secretary
Oliver Ranke/Institut Technique de l'Agriculture Biologique (F)
Hanne Oestergaard/Risø National Laboratory (DK)
Christine Arncken/Forschungsinstitut Biologische Landbau (CH).

In 2004 the board met in Frankfurt on March 26th for the 9th board meeting where we looked anew at the goals of ECO-PB, the value of the workshop on the new seed regime, ongoing research projects, plans for future workshops, relationship to the IFOAM EU Group. During the rest of the year there was frequent contact between board members at different conferences or by email.

ECO-PB'S ACTIVITIES

ECO-PB new leaflet

The 2-page leaflet on ECO-PB has been renewed and was available at the Rome conference in July.

ECO-PB poster

A general poster on the aims and activities of ECO-PB has been made and 5 copies are available through board members. It was used at the Rome conference in July.

ECO-PB newsletter

Klaus-Peter Wilbois and Christine Arncken have managed to produce six email newsletters, that appeared mostly every two months: January, February/March, April/May, June/July, August/September and October/November. Although the board had decided to go on with the current format and monthly frequency of publishing, it is not easy to get text in time. As a consequence the publication frequency has been reduced to two-monthly.

Reprint of the Proceedings of the 1st ECO-PB Symposium on Organic Seed production and Plant Breeding November 2002 in Berlin.

Because we ran out of copies of the proceedings of the 1st ECO-PB Symposium on Organic Seed Production and Plant Breeding November 2002 in Berlin, we decided to reprint the proceedings to be able to have something to offer on paper.

Brussels workshop on the EU-Organic Seed Regime 2004, 8-9 December 2003

ECO-PB is an active network supporting the production and use of organic seeds. It sees the European Union's Organic Seed Regime as potentially a great step forward in the

development of organic seed but is concerned about the slow progress in some European Member states.

ECO-PB aimed to facilitate an international follow-up workshop with two key national players per country to exchange information about progress in member states and state of the art of adopting the EU Regulation 1452/2003; to share valuable information and concerns, and to establish common points of view on the organic seed regime in the organic sector on international level.

With 18 participants from 8 countries, including Per Ahle as representative of the EU Commission and a written contribution from the UK a constructive meeting was realised. In the present countries (Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, France, Norway and United Kingdom) managed progress on the database and different kinds of handling the derogation rules. All present countries committed themselves to regularly exchange information on efforts and achievements with regard to the new organic seed regime in their countries in the ECO-PB newsletter during 2004. The participants were grateful for having this exchange of experiences and positions and asked ECO-PB to organise a third meeting in October 2004 to see if collaboration on EU level could be continued.

- Extended minutes of the workshop was made and sent to the participants.
- A short report of the workshop was published on http://www.eco-pb.org/09/short_report_2nd_workshop.pdf

1st World Conference on Organic Seed – Challenges and Opportunities for Organic Agriculture and the Seed Industry, 5-7 July 2004 in Rome

ECO-PB was one of the organisations supporting the first World Conference on Organic Seed by announcing it in the ECO-PB newsletter, and helping with selecting speakers out of the ECO-PB network. The conference aimed at bringing the networks and the knowledge of International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements/IFOAM, International Seed Federation/ISF and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation/FAO together. 270 farmers, scientists and policy makers met each other and exchanged knowledge, experiences and challenges and dilemma's. The wish was to continue such conference in two years time and maybe to add the animal breeding to it.

- The report of the organisation is published on <http://www.ifoam.org/orgagri/OSC-Final-Report.pdf>.
- There is also a proceedings available: Lammerts van Bueren, E.T., R. Ranganathan & N. Sorensen (Eds), 2004. Proceedings of the 1st World IFOAM/ISF/FAO Conference on Organic Seed – perspectives, challenges and opportunities, Rome, Italy, 5-7 July 2004. IFOAM, Bonn, 188 pp. To be ordered online at www.ifoam.org (24 euros)

A third workshop on the Organic Seed Regime to be held in 2004 was cancelled

ECO-PB board had discussed its position in this field of seed regulations and concluded that it can be ECO-PBs task to initiate activities and lobby, but that in this case of a European Seed Regime the IFOAM EU Regional Group should support it. This was discussed in the IFOAM EU Regional Group. The IFOAM EU Regional Group concluded that they would appreciate it if ECO-PB would organise a third meeting aimed at sharing national experiences with the implementation and encouraging the use of organic seed in close co-operation with IFOAM-EU Regional Group.

After putting quite some effort into the preparations of the workshop on the implementation of the new EU seed regulations, the board of ECO-PB and the executive committee of IFOAM-EU decided not to go ahead as planned. We were unable to find a clear enough focus and

guarantee broad enough participation, in particular by new Member States, to feel that the workshop would justify the effort and expense involved.

ISO FAR's Section on Plant Breeding and Seed Production

In July 2004 the International Society of Organic Agriculture Research (ISO FAR) has made a vertical structure with 12 sections and 5 working groups. There is a Section 6 on Plant Breeding and Seed Production (PBS). Edith Lammerts van Bueren was nominated as head and Hanne Østergård as vice-head. Each section can develop its own activities within the framework of the ISO FAR's statutes. As a first activity the heads are asked to review the scientific papers for the International Scientific Conference in Adelaide/Australia organised by IFOAM/ISO FAR.

Launching of the EUCARPIA Working Group Organic Breeding

Two board members (Hanne Østergård and Edith Lammerts van Bueren) each presented a paper on organic breeding projects at the Eucarpia XVIIth Congress on Genetic Variation for Plant Breeding 8-11 September 2004 in Tulln/Austria. During the General Assembly of the European Association for Research on Plant Breeding (Eucarpia), it was proposed by the Eucarpia board to start a Working Group Organic Breeding and to have it chaired by Edith Lammerts van Bueren. Edith gratefully accepted this and said that she would aim at bringing the network of ECO-PB and EUCARPIA together to get an added value. Eucarpia financially supports the organisation of a workshop once in the two/three years.

Participating in an EU-Community programme on the conservation, characterisation, collection and utilisation of genetic resources in agriculture

During the ECP/GR meeting in 2003 contacts had been established with representatives of the European Commission in Brussels for the upcoming Community programme on the conservation, characterisation, collection and utilisation of genetic resources in agriculture. The idea is to bring together the potential partners from the organic sector together in a joint project. Initiative for co-ordination of an organic proposal has been taken by Cornelia Wiethaler (D) and Edith Lammerts van Bueren (Louis Bolk Institute/NL). Although the call for proposals has been delayed to spring 2005 a first two-days meeting with potential participants has been organised by the two co-ordinators in March 2004.

COST 860 project

ECO-PB supported the proposal to set up the COST 860 project on *Sustainable low-input cereal production: Required varietal characteristics and crop diversity (SUSVAR)* by Hanne Østergård (DK). Brussels has accepted it early 2004 and already two workshops have taken place (Roskilde/DK and Witzhausen/D). It contributes to the European collaboration on organic cereal production among researchers, breeders, advisors and farmers, and the exchange of knowledge between organic and conventional low-input systems. The next workshop will be organised in collaboration with ECO-PB. The theme will be Organic Breeding strategies and the use of molecular markers 17-19 January in Driebergen/NL.

EU-STOVE project on Seed treatment for organic vegetable seed, coordinated by BBA (D).

ECO-PB is asked to be observer at the meetings of the project-participants to give support in the organic network. Edith Lammerts visited the meeting in Wageningen (NL) in March 2004, and Klaus Peter Wilbois attended the meeting in Turin (I) in November 2004.

Future activities

ECO-PB plans a workshop on Participatory Breeding Strategies in the future. ITAB/Laurence Fontaine has proposed to organise it possibly in France in 2006, and maybe a collaboration with EUCARPIA can result in a symposium in 2007.