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## **Declaration of the international seminar**

### **“Environmental friendly food production system: requirements for plant breeding and seed production” (ENVIRFOOD)**

May 31 –June 3, 2005, Talsi, Latvia  
6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme  
FP-2003-SSA-1-007003

Introduction of organic farming system is an important condition for stabilising ecological situation in agriculture. In agricultural production farming methods friendly to environment are to be in harmony with people’s needs for qualitative food. Organic farming system is to ensure the production of healthy and competitive product with the development of closed production chain – from obtaining raw material to end product observing all environment friendly farming conditions and ensuring economically motivated process of production. Healthy food is starting with the use of suitable raw material. In agriculture these are ensured by environment friendly farming technologies, including the use of suitable varieties. Therefore it is important to fix criteria for organic food production: quality and other parameters for raw material, assessment of suitability of varieties and, in case of a need, develop new varieties according to defined criteria. Nowadays, the Baltic States with their organic products are trying to join in EU common market. The EU compulsory regulations, which strictly regulate production processes in organic farming system, are binding to the

Baltic States. In this situation it is important firstly, to estimate experience gained by the old EU member states when thinking about organizational activities in connection with introduction of this system, and its suitability to agro ecological and economic situation in the Baltic States, and secondly, achieve common understanding among organic producers and get support from the governments of the Baltic States and other administrative institutions.

The central event of the project “Environmental friendly food production system: requirements for plant breeding and seed production” (ENVIRFOOD) within the framework of the specific research and technological development programme “Integrating and strengthening the European Research Area” called together plant breeders, representatives from variety testing, seed inspection institutions, specialists from Agricultural Ministries and Agricultural Advisory services, representatives from Agricultural universities and seed producers from the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) and together with organic food producers discuss problems connected with the introduction of EU Regulations (2092/91, 1257/1999, 1452/2003) in the Baltic States. Representatives from eight countries participated in the seminar. Experts from Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands and Italy shared their experience gained in breeding new varieties, variety assessment and organic seed production.

Analysis of the current situation in raw material production for food in organic farming system in the Baltic States and comparison with other EU states resulted in several problem groups in the solution of which both organic food producers, researchers and advisors and representatives from the state institutions are to be involved.

## 1. Breeding of field crops

Introduction of organic systems in agriculture, including variety development, to ensure ecological stability is also prospective in the Baltic States. As organic production is closely connected with agro ecological peculiarities of a definite country, the task of a plant breeder is to find most suitable for this environment – most productive and resistant genotypes just for organic agriculture needs. Field crop varieties used in conventional agriculture frequently are not suitable for raw material production under environment friendly farming system. The main problems and tasks:

- 1.1. Development of varieties suitable to organic agriculture is in need of other criteria for plant morphological and physiological traits' selection and assessment. Initiation of purposeful development and selection of varieties just for organic agriculture requires now starting assessment of specific traits in the Baltic States within the framework of existing conventional breeding programmes.
- 1.2. Lack of financial support does not allow hoping on introduction into market of new varieties suitable for organic farming. Currently none of the plant breeding programmes for organic agriculture are financed in the Baltic States.
- 1.3. Good contacts have been made within the framework of the project ENVIRFOOD. In future, these contacts could promote cooperation between plant breeders from the Baltic States and EU member states in joint research projects, including plant breeding. Financial support to breeding and research activities in organic agriculture granted both by each member state, production enterprises and organizations are of great importance.

## 2. Varieties assessment

Understanding, that variety assessment for organic agriculture is connected with agro ecological peculiarities of a definite zone to a greater extent, is of great importance. Testing of new varieties and registration for organic farming system from the legislation point of view is the same as that fixed for varieties recommended for conventional production. When evaluating value for cultivation and use (VCU), variety testing in organic farming system in certified fields is an obligatory condition. This function is to be performed by official State institutions or under their supervision. The main problems and tasks:

2.1 Variety assessment and inclusion in Plant Variety Lists is an important condition for successful development of seed production system. Only in Latvia out of three Baltic States there has been started testing VCU (in 2004) for organic agriculture needs. Cooperation among the corresponding institutions of the Baltic States and joining in variety assessment should be promoted in the state level.

2.2. Methods of variety assessment used in conventional agriculture are currently exploited for comparison. Assessment and improvement of the existing methods used in testing of VCU are necessary, and traits essentially significant in organic farming conditions are to be included in assessment.

## 3. Seed production

EU Regulation 1452/2003 specifies that the use of seed of organic origin in organic fields is compulsory allowing some particular exceptions. Organic seed production in the Baltic States now is in the stage of development. Requirements and standards for conventional and organic seed production are similar, however organic seed producers must be much more educated to produce quality seed material making seed production a profitable branch of production. The main problems and tasks:

3.1. Current situation in seed market indicates that also in January 1, 2006, when EU Regulation 1452/2003 is taking effect, in the Baltic States the produced organic seed material will be insufficient enough. Though EU common market is allowing seed import from other countries, suitability of these seeds to local conditions and financial possibility to afford buy them are to be evaluated.

3.2. EU databases must contain information regarding organic seed existence and availability. Though all the Baltic States have databases at their disposal, they contain insufficient information about organic seed material offered by market.

3.3. Improve educational and training opportunities for farmers to make them aware of the role of seed material produced organic in the production of organic food. As in organic seed production environment friendly methods are to be used, state granted financial support is needed in practical seed production sphere.

3.4. As seed production is a resources-demanding branch of production, only state granted support allows introduction of organic seed production system.

## 4. Organic foods market

During seminar, exhibition of organic foods produced in the Baltic States was organized. There it was possible to get to know kinds of ecologically safe produce, estimate taste, appearance, packing and competitiveness of these products in market as well as attitude of the participants of the conference to these products. Results of enquiry indicate, that there is a great interest in organic foods among consumers. The main problems and tasks:

4.1. For successful integration of organic products in the common market it is necessary establish the producer's cooperatives, promote wholesale trade and retail trade systems, and develop distribution channels of organic-direct selling, specialized shops, net of restaurants, café and canteens.

4.2. With the development of small- and medium-size enterprises in the countryside, diversifying organic products assortment and increasing scope of production organic products market in the Baltic States will become more widespread and available to people.

Representatives of seminar ENVIRFOOD:

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Belicka I.        | Project ENVIRFOOD coordinator, Latvia                                  |
| Zute S.           | Director of State Stende Plant Breeding station, Latvia                |
| Kreismane Dz.     | Association of Latvian Organic Agriculture, Latvia                     |
| Vetemaa A.        | Estonian Organic Farming Foundation, Estonia                           |
| Koppel M.         | Director of Jogeva Plant Breeding Institute, Estonia                   |
| Lauk T.           | Head of Viljandi Variety Testing Center, Estonia                       |
| Ruzgas V.         | Director of Plant Breeding Centre, Lithuanian Institute of Agriculture |
| Sliesaravicius A. | Professor, Lithuanian University of Agriculture, Lithuania             |
| Narvidiene K.     | Agricultural Advisory Service, Lithuania                               |

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No 110  
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***Subject: Declaration of the international seminar ENVIRFOOD***

We send you the declaration accepted by the participants of international seminar “Environmental friendly food production system: requirements for plant breeding and seed production” (ENVIRFOOD) held in Talsi, Latvia on May 31-June 3, 2005. Aim of this document is to take notice of governmental institutions of Baltic States and EU organizations of organic movement to problems of organic farming on the subject of implementation of EU regulations 2092/91, 1257/1999 and 1452/2003 in these countries.

In attachment: the declaration on 4 pages.

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FP-2003-SSA-1-007003

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