

ECO-PB Newsletter – June 2026

European Consortium for Organic Plant Breeding



Further information, programme and registration here

LiveSeeding Final Conference - 10 June 2026

The LiveSeeding Final Conference will take place on 10 June 2026 in Brussels at Venue L42 Rue de la Loi.

As the project is in its final year, the conference will be an important moment to reflect on key results achieved so far and to discuss their relevance for the future of organic and low-input plant breeding in Europe. Project partners, stakeholders and policymakers will come together to exchange views on the project's scientific, practical and policy outcomes.

The conference is supported by ECO-PB and will also celebrate our 25th anniversary. As part of the programme, ECO-PB President Edwin Nuijten will reflect on the future of organic plant breeding and the role of holistic breeding approaches.

EU PRM Reform: Opportunities and Concerns for Organic Breeding

The revision of the EU Plant Reproductive Material (PRM) legislation is entering its final stage, with a vote in the European Parliament scheduled for **15 June**.

ECO-PB, together with LiveSeeding, IFOAM OE and other partners, has advocated for suitable frameworks for organic and diversity-based cultivar types and for VSCU testing under organic conditions.

Organic stakeholders are concerned that recent compromises could weaken farmers' rights, seed diversity and the organic sector. The discussions are also increasingly linked to the debate on NGTs, highlighting differing views among seed companies, farmers, NGOs and civil society organisations.

While the proposal offers opportunities for the organic sector, several concerns remain:

- **Adapted DUS testing:** Developing crop-specific DUS protocols for the 60–80 species covered by the regulation will take time. A more flexible approach to off-type assessment has been proposed, but is not yet secured in the text.
- **Organic VSCU testing:** VSCU testing under organic conditions remains voluntary. ECO-PB supports at least a requirement for Member States to justify when such

testing is not carried out.

- **Amateur varieties:** The Council favours a very restrictive approach. ECO-PB advocates integrating these into broader categories such as conservation and locally adapted varieties. This is particularly important for farmers and small breeders working with fruits, vegetables and cereals.
- **Transparency on breeding techniques:** Requests for transparency on methods such as cytoplasm fusion, protoplast fusion, chemically induced mutagenesis and irradiation-induced mutagenesis have been rejected. Information on these techniques is important for operators applying organic standards that restrict or prohibit their use.

The final outcome will be crucial for the future of organic breeding and seed systems in Europe!

Further readings:

- [EU reform on seed marketing regulation from the perspective of organic breeders](#)
- [Joint letter ahead of the Trilogue of 21 April on the production and marketing of Plant Reproductive Material Regulation](#)
- [From field to regulation: LiveSeeding at the European Parliament on the future of seed diversity](#)



Recap: Let's Liberate Diversity! Forum & ECO-PB Workshop

ECO-PB was pleased to participate in the **15th Let's Liberate Diversity! Forum** in Scandicci, hosted together with Rete Semi Rurali. As part of the programme, ECO-PB co-organised with the European Coordination Let's Liberate Diversity (ECLLD) the workshop **“Strengthening Collaboration on Cultivated Biodiversity - Building Synergies for Advancing Organic Plant Breeding in Europe”**, hosted by Rete Semi Rurali in its community seed bank and headquarters.

The workshop brought together 58 participants from ECO-PB, ECLLD and partner organisations, including Organic Seed Alliance and IFOAM OE. Participants exchanged experiences on common challenges such as linking cultivated diversity, organic varieties and food systems, financing models, and strengthening networks. At the end of the workshop all participants gathered at the main venue of the LLD forum for a celebration of **25 years of ECO-PB**.



New Board Elected & ECO-PB Working Groups

During our latest General Assembly, held on 22 April, ECO-PB members elected a new **Board**. We warmly thank the outgoing Board members for their commitment and welcome the newly elected representatives.

ECO-PB's working groups continue to address key topics in organic plant breeding:

- **Communication & Outreach** (Micha Groenewegen)
- **Definition of Organic Plant Breeding** (Edwin Nuijten)
- **Knowledge Sharing & Training** (Federica Bigongiali)
- **NGT Regulation** (Gebhard Rossmanith)
- **PRM Regulation & Plant Variety Protection** (Abco De Buck)

Interested in contributing as an ECO-PB member? Contact us at: info@eco-pb.org

New Training Resources Available

Several new training resources on organic seed production, plant breeding and cultivar testing are now available through **ECO-PB's website**:

- **From field to data: participatory breeding for more robust apples and pears:** This webinar, organised within the InnOBreed project, explores participatory approaches to organic fruit breeding, with a focus on developing more robust apple and pear cultivars adapted to low-input and climate-resilient farming systems.
- **The LiveSeeding Training on organic seed quality and health:** This training addresses the limited supply of organic seed by identifying key skills for high-quality organic seed production and developing targeted training materials based on a training needs assessment.
- **The LiveSeeding Training on Organic Plant Breeding:** This comprehensive training package on organic plant breeding includes modules on: Plant genetic resources, Phenomics, Breeding method fundamentals, Molecular methods in organic breeding, and OHM design and development.
- **The LiveSeeding Training on cultivar testing, OV and OHM:** This training package addresses cultivar evaluation methods and the regulatory frameworks for Organic Varieties and Organic Heterogeneous Material.

[Browse all trainings here](#)

Rethinking variety testing to recognise mixing ability: bridging breeding, policy, and practice in diversified agriculture

A new peer-reviewed article by Hohmann et al (2026) explores how current variety testing systems can better support diversified agriculture and intercropping systems.

The article highlights how current variety testing frameworks are still largely designed for pure stand cultivation, creating barriers for the breeding and registration of varieties adapted to species mixtures. The authors argue that recognising mixing ability in breeding and official testing could help align breeding innovation, agricultural policy and farmer needs in support of more resilient and diversified agroecosystems.

[Read the full article here](#)



News from our Member gzpk

Our member gzpk (Cereal breeding Peter Kunz) has several upcoming opportunities to share:

- Upcoming Event: **Guided Tours of the Breeding Garden in Feldbach – 23, 24 and 25 June 2026**
- Job Opportunity: **gzpk is looking for temporary workers at the Mönchhof estate in Germany**

For further details, please visit the [gzpk website](#).



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