

ECO-PB Newsletter – September 2026

European Consortium for Organic Plant Breeding



ECO-PB survey 2026: NGT-free genetic resources

ECO-PB has launched a survey to better understand **how organic breeders and seed systems can access and maintain genetic resources free from New Genomic Techniques (NGTs)**.

The survey explores current challenges and opportunities and how the ECO-PB network and wider organic breeding community can contribute. We also welcome input from breeders, organisations and initiatives working on dynamic seed management, participatory breeding, and the conservation and use of crop diversity.

Your input will help identify needs and possible actions to ensure that access to genetic resources remains transparent, fair and compatible with organic breeding principles.

[Participate in the survey until 26 October here](#)

ECO-PB receives funding for “Organic without NGT”

ECO-PB has received funding from Software AG Stiftung (SAGST) for the 2026 **“Organic without NGT” project**.

As part of the project, **ECO-PB will contribute its expertise on preventing NGT contamination in breeding and seed production**, raise awareness of the risks of dependency on conventional varieties, and support the development and communication of the benefits of organic breeding.

ECO-PB will also contribute to discussions on how NGT-free organic breeding can be defined and safeguarded, working closely with IFOAM Organics Europe, IFOAM Organics International and other partners.

The project brings together several organisations working towards maintaining organic breeding and seed systems free from NGTs.

New LiveSeeding training resources available

The LiveSeeding Training Programme supports the development of the organic seed sector in Europe by **strengthening capacities and promoting knowledge exchange across the organic seed value chain**.

The training resources cover a wide range of topics:

- Organic Plant Breeding
- Cultivar Testing, Organic Varieties (OV) and Organic Heterogeneous Material (OHM)
- Organic Seed Quality & Health
- Regulatory and Policy Aspects of the Organic Seed Market and Organic Seed Databases
- Entrepreneurship in the Organic Seeds and Breeding Sector
- Organic Seed and Cultivated Diversity in City Food Policies

For the **Organic Seed Quality & Health** module, the full course - including detailed guidance, an auto-corrected online quiz and additional references - is also available via [ITAB's website](#).

[Explore the trainings on the ECO-PB website here](#)

LiveSeeding Summer School 2026: A week of organic plant breeding

From 13 to 17 July 2026, the LiveSeeding project held its Summer School at the Universitat Politècnica de València (UPV), bringing together breeders, researchers, students, advisors and farmers for a week dedicated to organic plant breeding.

The programme combined lectures, hands-on activities, an on-farm visit and collaborative group work. Participants explored the full cycle of organic cultivar development, from crop diversity and plant genetic resources to classical, participatory and molecular breeding methods, as well as entrepreneurship in the organic seed sector.

ECO-PB was pleased to support the Summer School by providing seven participation scholarships.

Photo credits: FiBL Switzerland, Mariateresa Lazzaro



[More info and presentations here](#)

LiveSeeding Final Conference - 10 June 2026

The LiveSeeding project concluded its four-year Innovation Action with a final conference on 10 June 2026 in Brussels, bringing together researchers, breeders, seed producers, policymakers and civil society to discuss the future of organic seed and plant breeding in Europe.

ECO-PB Chair Edwin Nuijten closed the conference by highlighting the importance of diversity and flexibility in organic plant breeding and legislation. He stressed the value

of organic and non-DUS varieties for climate resilience, low-input farming and maintaining genetic diversity, as well as their importance as resources for future breeding.

He also welcomed the proposed flexibility in DUS and VSCU testing for organic varieties, while stressing the need to ensure that these varieties remain NGT-free and patent-free.

His key message: organic farming needs diversity, not a one-size-fits-all approach.

Photo: ECO-PB board members, from left to right: Gebhard Rossmann, Kaja Gutzen, Stephanie Klaedtke, Freya Schäfer, Edwin Nuijten, Matteo Pettiti, Mariateresa Lazzaro

Photo credits: IPS/LiveSeeding



[More info and presentations here](#)

FiBL Seed Conference: Building the path to 100% organic seed by 2037

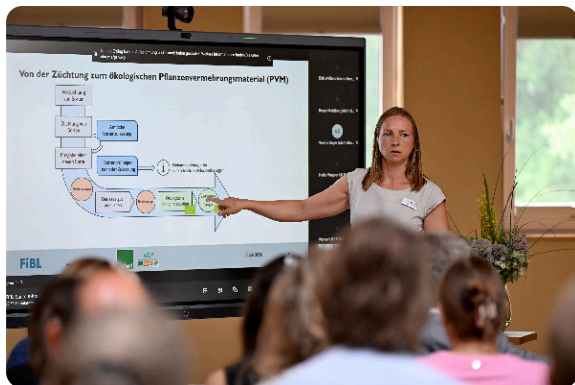
Held on 7–8 July 2026 near Fulda, Germany, the FiBL Seed Conference marked an important moment for the transformation of the organic seed sector. Organised by FiBL Deutschland e.V. and Bioland Praxisforschung GmbH as part of the RoadmapsOekoPVM project, the event brought together actors from across the organic seed and planting material value chain.

The conference highlighted a central challenge: achieving the EU target of 100% organic seed by 2037 will require shared responsibility, long-term investment and close collaboration. Participants discussed supply gaps, market conditions, breeding priorities, regulatory requirements and strategies to strengthen the availability and uptake of organic seed and planting material.

As the first conference fully dedicated to organic seed and planting material, it provided a unique space to look at the issue from different perspectives across the value chain. A key takeaway was the need to create reliable demand, strengthen cooperation and invest in breeding and multiplication systems. Without timely and coordinated action, supply shortages could become a serious constraint for the wider organic sector.

The conference focused mainly on the German organic market, while also bringing in perspectives from Switzerland and Austria. It was funded by the German Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Regional Identity (BMLEH).

Photo credits: FiBL Deutschland, Marzena



More info here

ECO-PB at the CPVR/CPVO evaluation workshop

On 6 July 2026, ECO-PB Chair Edwin Nuijten contributed to the **European Commission's evaluation of the EU Community Plant Variety Rights (CPVR) system and the Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO)**, including the validation workshop held in Brussels.

The workshop brought together stakeholders from across Europe to discuss the functioning of the current system and its future development. ECO-PB brought the perspective of organic plant breeding, highlighting the need for plant variety rights and testing frameworks that support greater diversity in breeding approaches and plant material, as well as the needs of organic farmers and breeders.

In particular, **ECO-PB stressed the importance of recognising diverse and locally adapted varieties, supporting alternative breeding approaches and ensuring access to genetic resources for future breeding.**

Rice Organic Heterogeneous Material notified in Italy

The Resilient Rice population has been at the center of the LiveSeeding Organic Rice Living Lab, coordinated by **Rete Semi Rurali** in Rovasenda (Vercelli province, Piedmont). This medium-grain dynamic population has been developed by assembling 16 genotypes selected through a participatory process in 2019, within a collection of 264 Italian rice accessions largely rematriated from the IRRI genebank in the Philippines. Agronomic, morphologic and physiological traits were also considered, followed by quality and culinary evaluation. Rice processing, cooking and panel tests were conducted before distributing the first 400 packets to households for a consumer survey.

"Riso Resiliente - Popolazione Risi Medi" is the first rice OHM notified in Europe and an important step for organic rice breeding in Italy. Furthermore, it provides proof of concept, that it is possible to cultivate a wide diversity in the field and still obtain a uniform commercial product, satisfying the strict commercial grain-size requirement of rice marketing laws.

For more details: <https://doi.org/10.50974/0002002001> and <https://rsr.bio/living-lab-riso-resiliente-resilient-rice/>

Photo credits: Rete Semi Rurali



New carrot Organic Heterogeneous Material from Portugal

Our member **Living Seeds – Sementes Vivas S.A.** has notified “Castro 26”, the first **Organic Heterogeneous Material (OHM)** for a vegetable crop registered in Portugal.

The purple carrot combines a wide range of colours and expressions across the root, while being adapted to hot growing conditions and maintaining uniformity in cycle and shape. It is based on several traditional landraces from southern Portugal and is currently being multiplied, with availability expected from early 2027.

This is a great example of the kind of diversity that organic breeding can bring to the field.

ECO-PB aims to promote breeding approaches that increase diversity and help develop plant material adapted to the needs and conditions of organic agriculture.

You can consult the list of all OHM registered in Portugal on the following link: **Material Biológico Heterogéneo – DGAV.**

Photo credits: Sementes Vivas





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