



European Consortium for Organic Plant Breeding

ECOPB Newsletter September 2014

NEW MEMBERS

Since the publication of the last newsletter we would like to welcome a number of new members to ECOPB:

- **Gunter Backes (University of Kassel, Germany. Chair for Organic Plant Breeding and Agrobiodiversity). Associate Member.**
Gunter Backes co-operates closely with the national and international organic breeding community, especially in projects involving practical organic breeders, in order to ground these projects in the realworld. The facilities of his department include organically managed fields in Witzenhausen as well as a recently established marker-lab to characterize genetic resources or diverse populations and reinforce breeder-driven projects by incorporating molecular aspects of trait expression.
Website: www.uni-kassel.de/.../prof-dr-gunter-backes.html
- **Bernd Horneberg (University of Göttingen, Section of Genetic Resources and Organic Breeding, Germany). Associate Member.**
The Section of Genetic Resources and Organic Plant Breeding was established in June 2013 at the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, Georg-August University Göttingen to support the development of high-quality plant varieties for organic and low-input agriculture and horticulture. It focuses on improving and developing breeding methods that can be used on-farm to address important topics, such as limited nutrient availability, regional demands, and field resistance against harmful fungi.
Website: www.uni-goettingen.de/de/48392.html
- **Amadeus Zschunke & Friedeman Ebner (Sativa Rheinau AG). Full Member.**
SATIVA is an SME that was founded in 1998 as a private breeding and seed company producing and marketing organic vegetable, flower, herb, cereal and forage seeds. It is committed to supplying the organic sector with a large and diverse set of locally adapted varieties with special focus on quality traits and taste. Intensive in-house breeding programmes are ongoing for carrots, sweet corn, onions, celeriac, broccoli, fennel, Chinese cabbage, Brussels sprouts, courgette and tomato. Open pollinated (OP) varieties that can be re-grown by farmers are of key interest. There is close collaboration with both Getreidezüchtung Peter Kunz (GZPK) and the foundation ProSpecieRara. SATIVA has its own state-of-the-art breeding station in Rheinau (CH), which is certified to organic and bio-dynamic farming standards. In addition to its breeding station it also has a network of over 70 farmers for on-farm selection and contract propagation of seeds according to the guidelines of Bio Suisse (organic) or Demeter (biodynamic). Amadeus Zschunke also heads the private organisation Bioverita, which promotes the marketing of products derived from organic plant breeding.
Websites: <http://www.bioverita.ch/fr/> and <http://www.sativa-rheinau.ch/fr.html>
- **Riccardo Bocci (Rete Semi Rurali, Italy). Full Member.**
Rete Semi Rurali was established in November 2007 by the Rural Italian (ARI), The Association for Solidarity of the Italian Campaign (ASCI), Archaeology Arborea, The Italian Association for Organic Agriculture (AIAB), Rural Life, the Consortium of Quarantine, The Coordination Toscano Organic Producers (CTPB) and the International Centre Crossroads (CIC). The network, and the 28 associations that come with it, facilitate contact, dialogue, exchange and sharing of information and initiatives regarding biodiversity in agriculture. They oppose activities that generate erosion and loss of diversity based on mining, intensive monoculture and genetically modified crops.
Website: <http://www.semirurali.net/>
- **Kostas Koutis (AEGILOPS, President). Associate Member.**
AEGILOPS is an NGO in Greece which acts as a network for biodiversity and ecology in agriculture supporting researchers, advisors, farmers and growers
E-mail: info@aegilops.gr Website: www.aegilops.gr (Greek only)
- **Karl-Josef Müller (Former ECOPB board member representing the Association of Biodynamic Plant Breeders). Associate Member**



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Cereal Breeding Research Darzau has carried out breeding under biodynamic principles for 25 years. The particular focus is on the specific conditions of organic farming (soil fertility, natural manure, weed competitiveness, seed transmitted diseases) and human nutrition taking into account spirituality. Recognising the importance of older cereal characteristics, the research organisation aims to breed them back into new varieties for use in modern organic farming. Such an organic breeding approach includes selecting new varieties adapted for low input conditions with resistances against several biotic and abiotic stress factors. Cereal Breeding Research Darzau has successfully released several cultivars like rye "Lichtkornroggen", wheat "Goldblumenweizen", "Govelino", spelt "Emiliano", monococcum "Terzino" and bread barley "Pirona"
Website: <http://www.darzau.de/index.php?id=60>

RECENT EVENTS

ECOPB 7th Workshop on Seed Regulation, 9th & 10th October 2013, Brussels

This workshop was hosted by the Flemish Government, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. There were 54 delegates from 16 different countries. Key topics discussed included the upcoming changes in organic regulation at the EU level, harmonisation of seed derogation policies across different EU countries, the status of national seed databases and the issue of accommodating local varieties within legislation. Presentations were given by representatives from the European Commission, seed and breeding companies, national representatives from derogation and control bodies, representatives from farmer networks and IFOAM EU. The full report will shortly be available on the ECOPB website: www.eco-pb.org

The Demeter Seed Conference on EU Seed policy and legislation. 'Challenges for Producers, Consumers and Citizens: Who will own the seeds?', 22nd January 2014, Brussels

This conference was supported by ECOPB and a paper was given on behalf of the Consortium by Edith Lammerts van Bueren entitled "Seed research and development: state of the art, participatory research". Other ECOPB members were also involved in leading working groups.

EkoSeedForum - European conference on organic plant breeding, organic seeds and crop biodiversity, 20th-22nd March 2014, Poznań, Poland

This involved 150 participants from 19 different countries. It was organized by EkoConnect e.V in cooperation with the University of Life Sciences in Poznań, under the patronage of IFOAM EU Group (Belgium) and the following partners: ECO -PB (Switzerland), Foundation on Future Farming (Germany), Association for old varieties and breeds (Poland), Kultursaat e.V (Germany), Forum for Organic Agriculture "Mieczyslaw Gorny" (Poland), Bingenheimer Saatgut AG (Germany), SAVE Foundation (Switzerland), Agrolink (Bulgaria), the University of Göttingen (Germany), Noah's Ark (Austria) and Seed Guardians (Slovenia). Monika Messmer gave a paper on organic plant breeding highlighting the need for organically grown varieties to undergo official variety testing specifically under organic farming conditions "Our studies have clearly shown that most of the well-suited varieties for organic farming would not be approved if they were tested only under conventional conditions". She urged that as this is not yet possible in most CEE countries, the Member States need to initiate change.

SOLIBAM Final Congress 'Diversity Strategies for organic and low-input agricultures and their food systems' and COBRA General Assembly, 7th-9th July 2014, Nantes, France

The final congress of the FP7 funded SOLIBAM project was combined with the Core II funded COBRA project general assembly and brought together researchers in organic crop production from across Europe. SOLIBAM, which officially ended on 31st Aug 2014, aimed to develop novel breeding approaches integrated with management practices to improve the performance, quality, sustainability and stability of crops adapted to organic and low-input systems in Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa. The Congress focused specifically on diversity in agriculture and in addition to presentations from Consortium members, keynote speakers included Philippe Baret, Kevin Murphy, Salvatore Ceccarelli, Giovanni Dinelli, Johanna Bjorklund, Jan Douwe van de Ploeg and Terry Marsden. The complete book of abstracts can be downloaded from: <https://colloque6.inra.fr/solibam2014/Media/Fichier/Solibam-Book-of-abstracts>



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UPCOMING EVENTS

Brussels Seed Festival, 11th October 2014, Université Libre de Bruxelles Campus de la Plaine Forum, Brussels.

Why are traditional seeds important for biodiversity? How could ecological seeds support local economies? What are organic seeds? How would TTIP affect agriculture in Europe? These are some of the questions that will be addressed during the Seed Festival. Please see the program for more information:

<http://www.zadenfestival.be/#!symposium/c11zw>

The Organic Producers Conference, 26th-27th November 2014, Solihull, UK.

Producer-focused technical and business workshops on the first day (26th November), and a more specific focus on current research and innovation activities on the second day (27th November), with the aim of bringing producers, researchers, advisers and students together to make change happen. Workshop session on 'Breeding for organics – new populations and varieties (Organised by ORC). This session will explore the opportunities for exploiting heritage varieties, composite cross populations (now marketable as part of an EU-wide marketing experiment) and organically bred European varieties for use in UK organic agriculture.

http://www.organicresearchcentre.com/?i=events.php&event_id=288

PUBLICATIONS

Breeding for Nitrogen Use Efficiency

A special issue of Euphytica on Breeding for Nitrogen Use Efficiency is now available. The volume contains 17 articles (see link) based on presentations at the Eucarpia conference in Göttingen 24th-26th Sept 2013.

http://link.springer.com/journal/10681/199/1?wt_mc=alerts.TOCjournals.

Potato Breeding Manual

This manual is particularly aimed at potato breeders, growers and advisors, but also for consumers interested in the background of varieties. It was produced within the Bioimpuls project and has been funded by the Ministry of Economic Affairs under the programme Green Breeding. The Handbook is composed by Marjolein Tiemens-Hulscher, Jaap Delleman, Jacob Eising and Edith Lammerts van Bueren and can be ordered at

www.louisbolk.org/potatobreeding. Price: € 53 incl VAT, excl shipping and handling. For more information please contact [Edith Lammerts van Bueren: e.lammerts@louisbolk.nl](mailto:e.lammerts@louisbolk.nl).

IFOAM MOTIONS

ECO-PB has submitted two motions for the IFOAM General Assembly asking IFOAM to take action concerning cell fusion and new breeding techniques, which were accepted by the IFOAM Board. They will be presented by Gebhard Rossmann and voting will be open to all IFOAM members. Please support us in this as individual or organisation members. They will be presented at the IFOAM Motion Bazaar, October 15th 2014

<http://www.ifoam.org/en/events/ifoam-general-assembly>

NEWS

ECOPB are now members of the IFOAM EU group who are very active in seed regulation at the moment.

ECOPB BOARD

ECO-PB held its General Assembly in Göttingen on Sept 24th 2013, chaired by the President, Monika Messmer. A new board was elected and the members are: Monika Messmer (FiBL-CH), Maaïke Raaijmakers (Stichting Zaadgoed-NL), Frederic Rey (ITAB-FR), Edwin Nuijten (Louis-Bolk, NL) and Sally Howlett (ORC-UK).