

ECO-PB Board elected at the General Assembly

Attached to the 2nd EUCARPIA Organic and Low-input Section Conference in Paris on December 1st to 3rd 2010 ECO-PB held its General Assembly. The president of ECO-PB, Edith Lammerts van Bueren, presented the annual report on the activities of ECO-PB in 2009 and 2010 (see www.eco-pb.org/09/annual_report_2010.pdf) and chaired the General Assembly. During the ECO-PB GA a new board was elected. The elected board members are Monika Messmer (FiBL-CH), Edith Lammerts van Bueren (LBI-NL), Karl-Josef Müller (ABDP, D), Frederic Rey (ITAB-Fr), Klaus-Peter Wilbois (FiBL-D), and Thomas Döring (ORCEF-UK).

By Klaus-Peter Wilbois ([Klaus.Wilbois\(at\)fiibl.org](mailto:Klaus.Wilbois(at)fiibl.org))

New Swiss seed trade law for “niche varieties”

Since July 2010 a new Swiss seed trade law is in force. It deals with varieties for niche markets and is only valid within Switzerland, as export would conflict with EU law.

This newly changed Swiss seed regulation is very liberal when compared with the European legislation on Conservation varieties.

By introducing “niche varieties” which can be old cultivars, land races but also newly bred material it is now possible to cultivate and market registered varieties which do not need to meet the DUS-criteria (Distinctness, Uniformity and Stability) nor the VCU examination (Value of Cultivation and Use). The registration is rather easy, and of relatively low costs. You only need to describe the new variety. The seed must be declared as not approved by using a special coloured label. And the State has the right to restrict the area under cultivation, or prohibit the cultivation at all if there is any danger of environmental or human risk. Marketing is only allowed within Switzerland, as this does not comply with the EC regulations.

By Monika Messmer ([Monika.Messmer\(at\)fiibl.org](mailto:Monika.Messmer(at)fiibl.org))

Work in progress: Book on Organic crop breeding

The scientific editor Wiley-Blackwell has asked Edith Lammerts van Bueren, professor Organic Plant Breeding at Wageningen University and Jim Myers, professor plant breeding at Oregon State University to compose a book on Organic Crop Breeding. They both have a good network within Europe and America respectively and have invited several competent authors in this field to join and write chapters on either broader issues related to breeding research for approaches to deal with e.g. nutrient efficiency, broad disease resistance and tolerance, direct or indirect selection, and some on crop specific breeding experiences. The planning is to publish the book by the end of 2011 or early 2012.

More information: Edith Lammerts van Bueren ([E.Lammerts\(at\)louisbolk.nl](mailto:E.Lammerts(at)louisbolk.nl))

IFOAM plant breeding standards

For many years IFOAM published draft standards for organic plant breeding in their IFOAM Basic Standards (IBS). At the last IFOAM General Assembly in 2008 a joint ECO-PB motion

requested not to remove it as draft as long as it is not yet incorporated into the standard system. During IFOAM's first World conference on Organic Plant and Animal Breeding in Santa Fe, New Mexico 2009 a workshop was held to discuss a new text proposal from ECO-PB. IFOAM has now recently taken the initiative to incorporate the text into the current drafting the future IFOAM Standard system - an off-the-shelf certification standard. ECO-PB assisted to improve the text proposal in November 2010. This is now going to be discussed in IFOAM Standard committee meeting and then the new draft standard will go for consultation to the IFOAM membership, probably early 2011. ECO-PB Newsletter will keep you inform on the progress.

More information: Edith Lammerts van Bueren (E.Lammerts(at)louisbolk.nl) and Monika Messmer (Monika.Messmer(at)fiBL.org)

Proceedings Eucarpia conference in Paris, 1-3 December 2010

Recently an interesting conference was held in Paris, 1-3 December 2010. Some 130 breeding researchers, breeders and interested policymakers joined this conference which was organised by INRA and ITAB. The stimulate breeding for 'Resilience' many ecologists were invited to give the participants a view on ecological principles on resilience in ecosystems to translate such into breeding approaches. The proceedings can be downloaded following this www.eco-pb.org/09/Proceedings_Paris_101203.pdf or at the Eucarpia website: www.eucarpia.org.

More information: Isabelle Goldringer (isa(at)moulon.inra.fr)

European Patent Office (EPO): No European patents for essentially biological breeding processes

In its decision the EPO's Board of Appeal concludes that a process for the production of plants involving sexually crossing whole plant genomes, and the subsequent selection of plants is not patentable. The mere inclusion of a technical step which serves to enable or assist the performance of the steps of sexually crossing the whole genomes of plants or of subsequently selecting plants does not override this exclusion from patentability. While technical devices or means, such as genetic markers, may themselves be patentable inventions, their use does not make an essentially biological process patentable. The Board held finally that processes for producing plants by inserting or modifying a trait in the genome by using genetic engineering do not rely on sexual crossing of whole genomes and may therefore be patentable. However, in such a case sexual crossing and selection steps should not be in the claims, since adding further technical processing steps before or after the steps of sexual crossing and selection does not render such processes patentable either.

For further information see: <http://www.epo.org/topics/news/2010/20101209a.html>

Pre-Announcement of ECO-PB 10 year celebration

In 2011 ECO-PB will exist 10 year! We will celebrate this with a workshop on Organic Seed Regulation attached to a conference with the title "Organic Plant Breeding: What makes the difference?". The venue will take place in England early October 2011. The exact date an place will be announced in the coming newsletter.

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