

**2<sup>nd</sup> EUCARPIA Organic and Low-input Section Conference “Breeding for resilience: A strategy for organic and low-input farming systems?”**

Paris, 1-3 December 2010: The Eucarpia Organic and Low-Input Agriculture Section will hold a conference in Paris, France on December 1-3 2010 on breeding for organic and low-input farming systems with a special emphasis on strategies that allow for more resilience in response to global change. While organic and low-input agricultural systems are more exposed to heterogeneous environments, low nutrient availability and biotic as well as abiotic pressures than conventional ones, global change might increase fluctuation in environmental conditions by producing drastic variation in climate, epidemic pressures, nutrient availability etc. These changes could be considered an opportunity for the organic sector to develop original and innovative strategies for high level resilience. This conference wishes to take inspiration from the ecological sciences to reconsider the use of biodiversity without ignoring the new tools coming from genomics.

This conference will be jointly organized by INRA (UMR Le Moulon, SAD-Paysage Rennes, Montpellier) and ITAB at Le Comptoir Général, a special location in Paris which is based on ecological and social responsibility and supports a different view point on today's world. There will be a call for papers for oral and poster presentations. More information is available on the Eucarpia and ECO-PB website.

For more information see [www.eco-pb.org](http://www.eco-pb.org) and <http://www.eucarpia.org/> or contact Isabelle Goldringer, e-mail: [isa\(at\)moulon.inra.fr](mailto:isa(at)moulon.inra.fr) or Frédéric Rey, e-mail: [Frederic.Rey\(at\)itab.asso.fr](mailto:Frederic.Rey(at)itab.asso.fr);

**European action plan for Review of the Community legislation on marketing of seed and plant propagating material and related issues**

The European Commission has released a working document outlining an action plan to review the community legislation on seed and propagating material (S&PM) ([http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/propagation/evaluation/docs/AP\\_council\\_2009\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/propagation/evaluation/docs/AP_council_2009_en.pdf)). The action plan is based on the outcome of an evaluation of S&PM by an external consultant in 2007-2008. ECO-PB and its member organisations took the chance and outlined its view in a cost action workshop meeting in Brussels in February 2008 (cf. [http://www.eco-pb.org/09/Proceedings\\_Brussel\\_08022829.pdf](http://www.eco-pb.org/09/Proceedings_Brussel_08022829.pdf)). Furthermore, several filled questionnaires from ECO-PB and its member organisations were submitted to the public consultation process (cf. [http://www.eco-pb.org/07/nops\\_1\\_08.pdf](http://www.eco-pb.org/07/nops_1_08.pdf)).

The present action plan outlines an ambitious intention and its realisation could help the organic breeding sector to overcome today's obstacles in S&PM and particularly its very diverse national implementation. Among many other points like simplification, lowering of bureaucratic burden and costs, ECO-PB demanded an appropriate S&PM framework for crops that serves an increasingly diverse market including niche markets. Another important issue for ECO-PB was the concern of loosing biodiversity, which is for other reason partly induced by the current S&PM. The current action plan seems to take into account such concerns and states for instance under the first objective that for “crops of minor importance, of niche or emerging markets it is foreseen to explore in an impact assessment whether the current requirements for testing of seeds are proportionate to their market size in order to ensure an appropriate approach”. Moreover, one of the overall objectives of the current action plan is a European Seed Law that “contributes to halt the loss of biodiversity”. The action plan is a step in the right

direction and contains many promising points, but it remains to be seen whether its positive ambitions can survive the political process.

By Klaus-Peter Wilbois, E-Mail: Klaus.wilbois(at)fibl.org

**SOLIBAM (Strategies for Organic and Low-input Integrated Breeding and Management) is a European FP7 project that has started on 1 March 2010. The KOM was held in Opio (France) on 10-12 March 2010.**

SOLIBAM will develop specific breeding approaches linked to management practices to improve the sustainability, quality and performance of crops adapted to the diverse range of organic and low-input systems in Europe and Africa.

During 4.5 years, SOLIBAM will gather 21 organisations from 12 countries (10 in Europe and 2 in Africa) and ICARDA, the International Center for Agricultural Research In the Dry Areas. The consortium represents many different regions, from the North of Europe to Africa, and thus numerous agro-climatic conditions and cultural contexts. SOLIBAM will bring together scientific and methodological approaches and concrete models associating all kinds of actors in plant breeding and agro-ecological management in Europe and Africa (researchers, breeding companies, development and farmer organisations). A large component of the project is dedicated to participatory research to better respond to key adaptation criteria of organic and low-input agriculture from soil to market.

Our main focus is “diversity”: genetic diversity within crops, diversity in cropping systems as well as in management practices and wild biodiversity in agro-ecosystems. Our research hypothesis is that developing diversity at all levels is the best strategy for improving crop adaptation to fluctuating environmental conditions and for increasing yields and yield stability. The species considered (wheat, maize, beans, tomato, broccoli and cabbage) will be used as models for arable and vegetable crops from biological, genetic, agronomical and economical points of view.

SOLIBAM aims to create a new research space in Europe for stimulating organic and low input agricultures. As such, our consortium remains open to collaborations in the context of organic and sustainable agriculture and in the larger sense of conserving biodiversity and protecting the natural environment. Within a few weeks, further information can be found on [www.solibam.eu](http://www.solibam.eu).

By Véronique Chable, INRA France, coordinator: e-mail: Veronique.Chable(at)rennes.inra.fr

### **Meeting of the Bio-Dynamic Plant Breeders**

More than 60 people, breeders, interested farmers, employees of an organic seed company and students, attended a meeting on bio-dynamic vegetable and cereal breeding of the world largest group of bio-dynamic plant breeders in Northern Germany.

About fifteen bio-dynamic as well as organic on-farm vegetable breeders discussed during the KULTURSAAT - Meeting (non profit association for biodynamic vegetable breeding) for instance the quality management within different breeding procedures. Several working groups, lead by horticultural crop experts, worked on a special issue of each crop. Due to the complexity of problems regarding so called "cms-varieties" of cauliflower and broccoli, these crops where in the strategic focus of two groups.

Cereal breeders from Germany, Switzerland and Denmark discussed their results of the previous year and their priorities in breeding.

In the attached meeting of the Association of Bio-Dynamic Plant breeders (ABDP), the question was raised how to bring together the demand for varieties as a common commodity with a consciousness for public and non-profit breeding support. It remained a point for further discussion whether variety protection in the ownership of a non-profit organisation will be necessary or renounceable.

By Kultursaat e. V. and ABDP

### **First organically bred cereal variety now certified**

Demeter has started to certify bio-dynamic bred varieties in accordance with their new standard for plant breeding. The first certified organically bred cereal is "Lichtkornroggen", a population of winter rye which possesses formative forces with a high proportion of etheric light.

It is developed and maintained by Cereal Breeding Research Darzau, Germany and presently under registration as conservation variety.

For further information see [www.lichtkornroggen.de](http://www.lichtkornroggen.de) or contact Karl-Josef Müller; e-mail: [k-j.mueller\(at\) darzau.de](mailto:k-j.mueller@darzau.de)

### **The IFOAM EU Group strongly criticized the authorisation of commercial cultivation of genetically engineered potato variety *Amflora***

In a press release the IFOAM EU Group strongly criticizes the authorisation of the commercial cultivation of the genetically engineered potato variety *Amflora* by the European Commission at the beginning of March this year. The potato variety *Amflora* owned by the German company BASF is a genetically engineered potato variety that solely produces amylopectin starch which is used in certain technical applications like glues etc.

Genetically engineered crops are rejected by a vast majority of consumers in the European Union. Additionally, their cultivation threatens organic crops as well as the crops of conventional farmers that fear contamination with genetically modified organisms (GMO) in their produce. A wider spread of GMO in Europe is considered to increase the cost of GMO-free production.

<http://www.eucarpia.org/> For full text and more information see: <http://www.ifoam-eu.org/>

**STOP 'MONSANTOSIZING' FOOD, SEEDS AND ANIMALS! Global alert from the No Patents on Seeds! Coalition**

Farmers' organisations from around the world, breeders, UN institutions as well as development and environmental organisations have repeatedly raised major concerns about the increasing monopolisation of seeds and farm animals via patents over the last few years. The loss of independence and rising indebtedness of farmers, a reduction of plant and animal diversity and ever higher constraints for breeding and research activities represent some of the most worrying impacts of this trend. But despite these alarming experiences, so far no legal measures are in sight to stop this trend. On the contrary, a recent survey of applications filed at the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) shows that the big international seed corporations still try to push through their monopoly claims without caring about the consequences for global food security and the livelihoods of farmers around the world. This is becoming obvious by analysing the recent patent applications of the top three global seed companies, Monsanto (US), Dupont (US) and Syngenta (Switzerland).

Source: <http://www.no-patents-on-seeds.org>

More information and online signing:

[http://www.no-patents-on-seeds.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=93&Itemid=56](http://www.no-patents-on-seeds.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=93&Itemid=56)