

ECO-PB Newsletter – March 2026

European Consortium for Organic Plant Breeding



This newsletter may have been asleep for a while — but ECO-PB's commitment to organic plant breeding certainly has not.

Over the past period, important progress has been made by our members, new policy steps have been taken at EU level, and organic plant breeding continues to demonstrate its relevance far beyond the organic sector alone. In this edition, we are pleased to share inspiring success stories, policy developments, and upcoming events.

May 23/24/25

2026

@Scandicci – Florence



Let's Liberate Diversity! Forum & ECO-PB 25th anniversary

ECO-PB, together with the European Coordination Let's Liberate Diversity, is organising a workshop at the 15th Let's Liberate Diversity Forum in Scandicci, Florence, Italy.

The workshop, titled "**Building Synergies for Advancing Organic Plant Breeding in Europe**", will engage ECO-PB and ECLLD members to identify common objectives and develop a strategy to increase cultivated diversity in all its forms across Europe.

The workshop will take place on **23 May, from 15:00-18:00 at RSR's headquarters**, followed by a celebration of ECO-PB's 25th anniversary, with a special apero in the Acciaiolo Castle starting at 19:00.

[More info, draft programme and registration here](#)



LiveSeeding Final Conference - Save the Date

The LiveSeeding Final Conference will take place on **10 June 2026 in Brussels**. The conference is supported by European Consortium for Organic Plant Breeding to celebrate its **25th anniversary**.

As the project enters its final year, the conference will be an opportunity to reflect on key results and discuss their relevance for the future of organic and low-input plant breeding in Europe.

Further information on the programme and speakers will follow soon here

PRM Reform - Trilogues Begin

ECO-PB recently contributed to the event “**Safeguarding Europe’s Cultivated Plant Diversity – PRM Reform**”, held on 4 March at the European Parliament.

The event was hosted by Herbert Dorfmann, Martin Häusling, and Christophe Clergeau, bringing together policymakers from the Parliament, Commission and Council, alongside stakeholders from across the seed sector.

As trilogue negotiations on the new EU PRM Regulation begin, discussions focused on how the reform can safeguard cultivated plant diversity, strengthen a diverse seed market, and support farmers’ and breeders’ access to innovative and traditional varieties.

Special thanks to our members **Edwin Nuijten** (Chair of ECO-PB, Kultuuraat e.V., Stichting Zaadgoed) and **Riccardo Bocci** (Rete Semi Rurali), who clearly highlighted key ECO-PB priorities during the discussions — particularly the importance of local varieties, organic varieties, and appropriate rules for PRM sold to amateur gardeners.

Further readings:

Policy letter: [Regulation on the Production and Marketing of Plant Reproductive Material – Conservation and Local Varieties](#)

NGT Trilogues - Key Concerns

Negotiations on the EU legislation on New Genomic Techniques (NGTs) have reached an advanced stage. While the current proposal maintains that NGTs will not be permitted in organic production, several key concerns remain unresolved:

Firstly, the requirement for labelling throughout the value chain — as previously requested by the European Parliament — has been removed from the text.

Secondly, although NGT-1 plants are described as comparable to those obtained through conventional breeding (which are not patentable), the possibility to patent NGTs remains.

Finally, the issue of co-existence is insufficiently addressed: it remains unclear how organic breeding and production can effectively be kept free from NGT presence.

There is still an opportunity to engage: you can contact Members of the European Parliament to raise these concerns. Votes on the proposal are expected in April and May.

Several initiatives are currently mobilising citizens and stakeholders:

Citizen campaign: [blacked-out-ingredients.eu](#) – write directly to MEPs
Email action tool: [“No GMOs through the back door!”](#) by Demeter

Public Consultation on Plant Variety Rights

The European Commission has launched a **Public Consultation on the evaluation of EU legislation on Community Plant Variety Rights (CPVR)** and the functioning of the Community Plant Variety Office.

This evaluation, commissioned by DG SANTE, is supported by a consortium including Wageningen University, Ecorys, Arcadia International and Technopolis Group.

The consultation is open to all stakeholders and provides an important opportunity to share views on how the current system supports innovation, diversity, and access to plant genetic resources.

Deadline: 20 April 2026

We strongly encourage you to contribute and ensure that the perspectives of organic plant breeding are well represented.

[Participate in the CPVR Public Consultation](#)



Organic Variety Registration & Testing – Webinar Replay Available

On 13 January 2026, our member **Abco de Buck** (Louis Bolk Institute) in the framework of LiveSeeding organised an EU webinar on the **registration of Organic Varieties and adapted DUS and organic VCU testing**.

Experts from across Europe discussed regulatory developments and national experiences under the current EU framework.

The **recording** and a **summary article** are now available online.



Member Success Story

A strong example comes from our member **Frans Carree** (De Bolster).

In 2012, De Bolster started a pepper rootstock breeding programme after organic greenhouse growers faced serious nematode problems. At the time, growers had to steam their soils because no resistant varieties were available.

Working closely with growers and researchers, De Bolster developed resistant hybrids. One variety, **Skyborn F1**, combined high yield with very strong nematode resistance — even reducing nematode levels in the soil. This led to market leadership in the organic segment.

In 2023, a mysterious disease affected conventional pepper growers. Trials with grafting showed that Skyborn F1 performed best among tested rootstocks. Since then, more conventional growers have adopted this organically bred variety. This story shows how breeding for organic systems creates robust varieties with impact far beyond the organic market.

Picture credits: <https://www.bolster.eu/pepper-rootstock-skyborn-f1-capsicum-annuum/p11514>

New ECO-PB Policy Letters

In 2025–2026, ECO-PB published several key documents contributing to EU policy discussions.

These contributions help safeguard agrobiodiversity and strengthen the framework for organic plant breeding in Europe.

All ECO-PB key documents are available here.

Policy Letter: Regulation on the Production and Marketing of Plant Reproductive Material – Conservation and Local Varieties

Joint Letter: PRM Reform – NGOs, farmers’ and breeder representatives urge Member States to protect and enhance agrobiodiversity

Policy Brief: Definition of Organic Plant Breeding for the registration of organic varieties suitable for organic production

ECO-PB now has a LinkedIn page

Follow us (@eco-pb) for updates on policy, research, and events — and help us expand our network.



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