

ANNUAL REPORT OF ECO-PB ACTIVITIES

DECEMBER 2005-DECEMBER 2006

Board meetings and General Assembly

ECO-PB's fifth General Assembly (GA) was held during the ECO-PB workshop on Participatory Plant Breeding in La Besse (France) on 13th June 2006. During the GA the proposed board was re-elected, except a change of the French member. Francois IHopiteau has replaced Oliver Ranke. The ECO-PB board now consists of:

Edith Lammerts van Bueren/Louis Bolk Institute (NL) – president
Lawrence Woodward/Elm Farm Research centre (UK) – treasurer
Klaus-Peter Wilbois/ Forschungsinstitut Biologische Landbau (D) – secretary
Francois IHopiteau/Institut Technique de l'Agriculture Biologique (F)
Hanne Oestergaard/Risø National Laboratory (DK)
Christine Arncken/Forschungsinstitut Biologische Landbau (CH).

In 2006 the board met by telephone conferences twice, on 24 March and 12 December to discuss the current activities.

ECO-PB members

Attached is an updated list of all members of 2006.

International meetings

ECO-PB has organised two large meetings in 2006:

- *ECO-PB Conference on Participatory Plant Breeding*

The ECO-PB workshop on participatory plant breeding has been held from 11 to 13 June 2006 in south-west of France with the help of INRA (Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique), ITAB (Institut Technique de l'Agriculture Biologique), and Réseau Semences Paysannes (National Farmers Organization) and above all the help of a local association of organic farmers involved in PPB program (Biocivam11). More than 100 farmers, researchers and breeders coming from 28 countries (from Europe, North-America and Middle-East) met to share their experiences on PPB, and to identify the main research questions and stakes for organic farming. The proceedings have been published on paper and as a pdf-file, see www.eco-pb.org.

Reference: Desclaux, D. & M. Hédont (eds), 2006. Proceedings of the ECO-PB workshop Participatory Plant Breeding: Relevance for Organic Agriculture? 11-13 June, 2006. La Besse, France, ITAB Press, Paris, France. 112 pp.

- *EU Organic Seed Regulations and international co-operation.*

A 4th international workshop on the EU Seed Regime was successfully organised by ECO-PB under the title 'Seed on the Move!' on 28-29 September 2006 at the seed company Bejo Zaden, Warmenhuizen (NL). The partners in the organisation were: EU project Organic Revision-WP5 Seeds, and the Danish Agricultural Advisory Service. By combining the forces with international partners is a successfully formula for ECO-PB to keep budgets as low as possible. Thanks to Bejo Zaden to host this workshop and covering large part of the local costs. Some 70 representatives of 13

countries participated. Like in other years the participants were convinced that this was a fruitful meeting to update each other. It again showed progress in the different countries, but still many obstacles need to be faced. A report on the results was sent to the participants and published on ECO-PB website (www.eco-pb.org) under Reports and Proceedings. The report with recommendations was also sent to the representative from the European Commission (K.Boesen) who attended the workshop.

- *2° European Seminar on Seeds "Lets us liberate diversity"*,
Cornelia Wiethaler represented ECO-PB on the Spanish meeting "*Lets us liberate diversity*", organised by Red de Semillas (Spanish Seeds Network, RdS) in cooperation with other spanish organisations, in Murcia: (Bullas).

ECO-PB newsletter

In 2006 four issues were published: January/February, March/April, May-August, Sept-November 2006. There are 675 subscribers registered in the mailing list.

Lobby actions

- *Conservation Varieties Directive 98/95/EC*

The Commission Directive on Conservation Varieties is still not out. Edith Lammerts van Bueren and KarlJosef Mueller followed the minutes of the meetings in Brussels through their national contacts as much as possible and send the contacts several comments.

- *Letter to the European Commission on seed purity*

On the occasion of the Vienna Conference on GMO co-existence of 5 April ECO-PB has taken the opportunity to send a letter to plea for the maintenance of GMO free seed as the imperative prerequisite for the consumers to choose food without GMO-contamination. For technical and practical reasons this means a legal maximum threshold level on the detection limit for adventitious GMO contamination which is at the moment 0.1%. ECO-PB further believes that such a legal threshold level must be adopted for all seed, conventional and organic.

Stimulating organic breeding and research activities in 2007

- *COST 860 project*

ECO-PB supports and cooperates with the network of the COST 860 project on *Sustainable low-input cereal production: Required varietal characteristics and crop diversity (SUSVAR)* coordinated by Hanne Østergård (DK). For further information see www.cost860.dk. This cooperation strengthens the power and network of ECO-PB and provides an opportunity for meetings and discussions.

- *IFOAM standards on organic plant breeding*

IFOAM has published the draft standards for organic plant breeding as they were published in 2002. IFOAM head office was planning a subcommittee on this issue for 2006 to plan future steps, but IFOAM did not managed to put it on the agenda yet. ECO-PB will be involved. FiBL is preparing a certification system for organic plant breeding and it will be interesting to learn from this format as soon as it will be published (in 2007?).

- *On farm conservation and selection*

A new EU policy project, called *Opportunities for farm seed conservation, breeding and production*, (acronym: *Farm Seed Opportunities*), has been accepted and will start in 2007 with 12 partners from six countries (Fr, IT, NL, ES, UK, CH). De coordination is in hands of Veronique Chable of INRA (Fr). Although the issue of conservation varieties is not limited to organic agriculture, most partners are involved in organics. Combining scientific competences and farmer knowledge will enable, in an

approach of participatory innovation, the development of on-farm plant breeding and genetic resources management. The project will:

- Characterise requirements of the different stakeholders with regards to the diversity of varieties derived from the on farm conservation / management / breeding and of regional agricultural systems in Europe;
- Identify bottlenecks and challenges for participatory on-farm breeding and seed production;
- Develop methodologies, combining scientific approaches and farmers know-how, sited to targeted improvements of conservation, breeding, seed production and marketing;
- Provide practical recommendations for the decision-making processes relating to the market release of seeds of landraces, conservation and amateur varieties;
- Provide a practical framework for the protection and promotion of landraces, Conservation varieties and amateur varieties, especially issued from the participatory plant breeding and small scale breeders;
- Provide the society at large with adequate information about scientific results and on-going research to address its demand for locally produced food concerns on the preservation of endangered agro-biodiversity and to stimulate its involvement in decision-making.

Another EU project under the frame of AGR *GEN RES 2006 community program* submitted by the Louis Bolk Institute was assessed as eligible but not selected for funding. LBI will try to find funds elsewhere to be able to run this project and contribute to exchange and improvement of knowledge.

- *Workshop on 'Different models to finance Organic Plant Breeding'*

Aart Osman, Louis Bolk Institute (NL) together with Karl Josef Müller (Darzau-Germany) are organising a one-day, international workshop in Frankfurt on February 27th in 2007.

- *Symposium on 'Plant breeding for organic and sustainable, low-input agriculture: dealing with genotype-environment interaction'*

The Eucarpia Working Group Organic Plant breeding will hold a conference in Wageningen, The Netherlands on November 7 - 9, 2007 on 'Plant Breeding for organic and low-input farming systems with special emphasis on how to deal with genotype-environment interaction'. This conference will be jointly organized by COST SUSVAR: WP1 genetics, ECO-PB and the Graduate School Production Ecology & Resource Conservation (PE&RC) of the Wageningen University. There will be a call for papers for oral and poster presentations. At the start of the conference an abstract book will be presented. Instead of a proceedings the editors of *Euphytica*, a peer-reviewed journal on plant breeding, has offered the possibility to release a special issue on the theme of this workshop and to publish 10-15 selected (peer-reviewed) papers in this issue.

2008/2009

- *1st IFOAM World Conference on Organic Plant Breeding*

In Dec 2006, Edith Lammerts van Bueren has been invited to the IFOAM head office to discuss the possibilities of a 1st IFOAM World Conference on Organic Plant Breeding as a follow-up on the 1st IFOAM World Conference On organic Seed in Rome 2004. The possibilities are now being investigated for autumn 2008 or early 2009.

Members of ECO-PB

Full members

Institut Technik Agriculture Biologique, France
Forschungsinstitut für Biologischen Landbau, Switzerland
Forschungsinstitut für Biologischen Landbau, Germany
Danisch Agricultural Center of Organic Farming, Denmark
Tesco, University Newcastle, United Kingdom
Elm Farm Research Center, United Kingdom
Stichting Zaadgoed, The Netherlands
Vitalis, The Netherlands
Louis Bolk Institute, The Netherlands

Associate members

Association Biologisch-Dynamischer Pflanzenzüchter (ABDP), Germany
Reseau Semences Paysanne (RSP), France
Beat Boller, Switzerland
Dirk Reheul, Belgium
Sharon Rempel, Canada
Michaela Cerne, Slovenia
Fred van de Crommert, Bejo, The Netherlands