

## **ANNUAL REPORT OF ECO-PB ACTIVITIES**

**DECEMBER 2007 - DECEMBER 2008**

### **Board meetings and General Assembly**

ECO-PB's sixth General Assembly (GA) was held during the IFOAM World Congress in Modena (Italy) on June 19, 2008. During the GA the proposed board was re-elected, and the ECO-PB board now consists of:

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

As not all board members can attend the ECO-PB workshops during the year, we organised two telephone meetings to discuss organisational matters on 2 February and 17 November 2008 (both from 10.30-12.00h). This is an efficient and relatively cheap way to include all board members.

### **ECO-PB members by 31 December 2008**

Attached is an updated list of all full and associated members of 2008.

### **International meetings in 2008**

ECO-PB has organised two meetings in 2008:

- SUSVAR/ECO-PB workshop on Value for Cultivation and Use testing of organic cereal varieties, Brussels/ Belgium, Feb. 28-29, 2008

This was a very informative workshop with some 30 specialists including three EC officers who were highly interested. It fed their work on the evaluation of all the seed regulations in Brussels. ECO-PB by Klaus-Peter Wilbois prepared answers for such inquiry and had send that to the participants as an example for their individual input. A report on the workshop has been edited and published by F. Rey, L. Fontaine, A. Osman and J. Van Waes and is as pdf available on the ECO-PB website:

[Proceedings of the COST ACTION 860 - SUSVAR and ECO-PB Workshop on Value for Cultivation and Use testing of organic cereal varieties](http://www.eco-pb.org/09/Proceedings/Brussel/08022829), see <http://www.eco-pb.org/09/Proceedings/Brussel/08022829>

- ECO-PB workshop on 'International Attuning of the Assortment, Supply and Demand of Organic Seed in vegetable production of North-West Europe' Warmenhuizen/ The Netherlands, September 25-26, 2008

This workshop was a follow-up of previous ECO-PB workshops on the Organic Seed Regulation aiming at more progress towards 100% organic seed and harmonisation between

Member States with respect to derogation policies. Although we did not meet all the aimed results as hoped, the participants were very positive as it was a good and inspiring workshop. A new element was the participation of four members of the Brussels Standing Committee for Organic Farming (SCOF). The report with a clear list of recommendations for different stakeholder groups including the SCOF was sent to all participants and the SCOF. SCOF answered that they were very happy with the recommendations and will pay attention to it on one of the coming SCOF meetings.

The participants asked for a follow-up next year. UK/Roger Hitchings of Organic Research Centre - Elm Farm is prepared to host that meeting close an event around 15/16 September 2009.

The report of the Warmenhuizen meeting edited by Lammerts van Bueren, K.-P. Wilbois, C. ter Berg, 2008 is available on the ECO-PB website:

[Report of the ECO-PB Meeting 'International Attuning of the Assortment, Supply and Demand of Organic Seed in vegetable production of North-West Europe'](http://www.eco-pb.org/09/report_ECO-PB_Organic_Seed_meeting_NL_08092526), Warmenhuizen/The Netherlands, Sept. 25-26, 2008, [http://www.eco-pb.org/09/report\\_ECO-PB\\_Organic\\_Seed\\_meeting\\_NL\\_08092526](http://www.eco-pb.org/09/report_ECO-PB_Organic_Seed_meeting_NL_08092526)

### **ECO-PB newsletter**

In 2008 four issues were published in April, July, October and December: There are about 700 subscribers registered in the mailing list, which is a stable number of interested individuals over the past years.

### **Lobby actions**

- 2 ECO-PB motions at the IFOAM GA passed, see ECO-PB newsletter II-2008:

#### **Motion on Protoplast fusion**

Seed companies who want to enter the organic market are seeking clarity on a short term on the issue of protoplast fusion in organic agriculture. Therefore several organisations prepared motions on this issue for the IFOAM General Assembly. On request of IFOAM the individual motions were put together in a joint ECO-PB motion and submitted to the IFOAM General Assembly (GA) on June 22-24, 2008 in Modena. The following motion text was put forward for voting and was accepted unanimously (four abstentions, no objections) by the General Assembly of IFOAM at Modena: **“The IFOAM GA 2008 confirms that cell fusion, including protoplast and cytoplasm fusion, do not comply with the principles of organic agriculture. Therefore we urge the IFOAM World Board to develop clear guidelines on how to deal with varieties derived from cell fusion, including protoplast and cytoplasm fusion breeding techniques.”**

What the consequences are for the use of varieties bred with these techniques in the organic sector in Europe and other parts of the world has to be discussed in 2009, see workshop planned in Paris April 2009. The planned IFOAM World Congress on animal and plant breeding 25-28 August 2009 in Santa Fe, New Mexico will offer a broad platform for proposals for guidelines.

Background: The IFOAM definition of genetic engineering (GM) as formulated in the IFOAM Basic standards includes cell fusion. So within the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) there seems consensus on the fact that cell fusion does not comply to the IFOAM principles as GE is banned. However, the problem is how to

deal with it in practice since varieties bred with this techniques are not labelled as GM and the use of these varieties is not explicitly forbidden in the EU regulation on organic farming. Some countries have green or black variety lists to show which varieties are bred or not with cell fusion techniques, but most countries have not taken any measures. FiBL-CH has published a report on this issue to enhance the discussion, see [www.fibl.ch](http://www.fibl.ch).

### **Motion on plant breeding standards**

ECO-PB had also submitted another motion together with the same organisations that were partners in the above mentioned motion to the IFOAM General Assembly with the following text:

“Complete the work on the draft plant breeding standards as soon as possible with the view of adopting them as IFOAM (certification) standards”. Also this motion was accepted.

The reasoning of the motion was as follows. In the current version of the final draft of the IFOAM Basic Standards (IBS) in chapter 4 “Crop production” it reads “The objective is to ensure that organic practices are implemented along the entire production chain from propagation to final product including the production of seed and propagation materials”. ECO-PB agrees with this objective but wants to ensure that the breeding process is included along with the production of seed and propagation material. Such has already been made explicit in the IFOAM Basic Standards with respect to breeding under animal production (see IBS 5.4) and under aqua production see 6.2) by stating that: “Only breeding techniques consistent with organic production methods are used.” Such a statement is missing for crop production! Organic plant breeding has long been an essential part of organic farming. Because of this ECO-PB considers that IFOAM must now give clear guidance regarding the nature of organic plant breeding. It would otherwise be in danger of leaving the door open to all manner of inappropriate claims regarding the term, organic plant breeding. To make a public statement on organic plant breeding methods, it is vital that the current draft standards on plant breeding become full standards as soon as possible. ECO-PB would like to offer its expertise within the ECO-PB network to assist IFOAM in refining standards for organic plant breeding and adapting them to the new IBS framework (maybe as sector specific certification standards). But regardless of the need for refinement we now demand that in the meanwhile these draft standards stay published to feed the awareness that IFOAM is working on full standards.

The World Board agreed to keep the draft standards in place until new standards are accepted and welcomes new proposals to be discussed at the next World Congress on Animal and Plant breeding 25-28 August 2009 in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

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## **Members of ECO-PB**

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### **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 Research Centre, University Newcastle, United Kingdom  
Elm Farm Research Center, United Kingdom  
Stichting Zaadgoed, The Netherlands  
Vitalis, The Netherlands  
Louis Bolk Institute, The Netherlands

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### **Associate members**

Association Biologisch-Dynamischer Pflanzenzüchter, Germany  
Reseau Semences Paysannes, France  
Beat Boller, Switzerland  
Dirk Reheul, Belgium  
Sharon Rempel, Canada  
Michaela Cerne, Slovenia  
Fred van de Crommert, Bejo, The Netherlands  
Franziska Löschenberger, Saatzucht Donau GmbH & CoKG, Austria  
Marc Cool, Seeds of Change, USA  
Philipp Stefan, Keyserling Institut, Germany  
Maria Finckh, University of Kassel, Germany

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