

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

**DECEMBER 2010 – November 2011**

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

ECO-PB's 8th General Assembly (GA) was held on December 1 before the Eucarpia Conference of the Section Organic & Low-input conference in Paris (on Breeding for Resilience, 1-3 December 2011). During the GA four new board members were elected from the full members: Lawrence Woodward was retiring from Elm Farm, Hanne Østergård and ICROFS was no longer working on organic breeding projects and had no means to stay full member, Christine Arncken was replaced by Monika Messmer, and Francois LHopiteau was replaced by Frederique Rey. The ECO-PB board now consisted of:

Edith Lammerts van Bueren/Louis Bolk Institute (NL) – president  
Thomas Döring /The Organic Research Centre – Elm Farm (UK) – treasurer  
Klaus-Peter Wilbois/ Forschungsinstitut Biologische Landbau (D) – secretary  
Frederique Rey/Institut Technique de l'Agriculture Biologique (F)  
Monika Messmer/Forschungsinstitut Biologische Landbau (CH)  
Karl Josef Müller/ADBP and Bingenheimer Saatgut AG (D).

As not all board members can attend the ECO-PB workshops during the year, we organised a skype meeting on April 15<sup>th</sup> s to discuss organisational matters in 2011. This is an efficient and relatively cheap way to include all board members. Further we had lots of email exchanges among board members.

### **ECO-PB members by November 1st 2011**

Attached is an updated list of all full and associated members by 1st of November 2011. We have never done much extra effort to get ECO-PB members but it would help the policy activities of ECO-PB when we can show that we have the most important players in the field of Organic Plant Breeding and Seed Production amongst our members. Most of the organic research institutes are full member for 1000 euros/year. Even when full membership is not an option, we nevertheless would welcome very much when individuals who are active in this field would become associate member for 50 euros/year; that would strengthen the work and support of ECO-PB! So this autumn we started to contacted potential new members and that worked, so we can welcome several new members!

### **ECO-PB in International meetings in 2011**

ECO-PB has organised two meetings in 2011:

- 21-22 September 2011, 6th ECO-PB workshop on the Organic Seed Regulation at The Organic Research Centre – Elm Farm (UK)
- 3. – 4. November 2011, ECO-PB 10 years' anniversary conference Organic Plant Breeding: What makes the difference?

## **ECO-PB newsletter**

In 2011 already two issues were published in April and in August. And a 3<sup>rd</sup> issue will be sent out by the end of the year.

There are about 600 subscribers registered in the mailing list, which is a stable number of interested individuals over the past years.

## **Lobby actions in 2011**

- April: Commission opened a stakeholder consultation on seed legislation revision:  
Since the implementation of the present Common S&PM legislation in the different countries varies heavily and forms - at least in some countries - a major obstacle for the development and marketing of organically bred varieties or propagating material ECO-PB would welcome further interested stakeholders in the field to comment the analysis and scenario options given by DG SANCO. In order to make it easier to fill in the questionnaire everybody interested in commenting the analysis and options paper of DG SANCO was able to get an example of the completed questionnaire from ECO-PB.
- August: IFOAM Head office visited several Dutch members on a staff trip on August 16<sup>th</sup>, including Louis Bolk Institute and asked to present the work of ECO-PB as IFOAM is closely involved in seed issues and standards.
- October 4<sup>th</sup>: IFOAM Breeding Standards. We wrote an email to Joelle Katto/IFOAM headoffice to stress that "we are aware of the ongoing consultation process to revise the IFOAM Standards including the plant breeding standards, and that we would like to comment on the latest developments regarding the retention of a positive list of breeding methods suitable for an organic breeding programme. Therefore, we can support this idea in principal. But...  
Since the Santa Fe conference together with the fact that for quite a long time draft breeding standards remained a draft it is clear that such a list of breeding methods must not restrict committed breeders to a rather short list of accepted methods. The obstacle that a restrictive list of allowed breeding methods would apply to organic breeders is counterproductive and would hamper all creative developments that organic breeding strongly needs. And that insight was also clearly the outcome of the Santa Fe discussion in 2009.  
Due to this we would like to propose the adoption of a non-exhaustive list of suitable breeding methods for organic plant breeding in the IFOAM Standards, since this gives guidance without restricting breeders to a narrow choice of methods. Since in the current draft version of the IFOAM Standards... (vers. 0.1 as of 2010) it is said "Organic plant breeders shall disclose the applied breeding techniques" it is clear that an evaluation of the used methods against the principles of organic farming is already involved. If the respective breeding method fails to be in line with the organic farming principles the breeder may not market this variety as organic. So it is actually safeguarded that no organic variety can be bred by using ineligible (from the organic stand point) methods.  
Another argument is that the requirement "Organic plant breeders shall disclose the applied breeding techniques" only makes sense if the breeding methods are not restricted to an exhaustive list.

So, our proposal is: Keep the list of breeding methods (as of Basic Standards 2002) in the IFOAM Standards... for orientation as a non-exhaustive list of breeding methods.”

**Table 1. Updated list of all full and associated members by 1st of November 2011**

<b>Members of ECO-PB</b>	
<b>Full members</b>	Institut Technik Agriculture Biologique, France
	Forschungsinstitut für Biologischen Landbau, Switzerland
	Forschungsinstitut für Biologischen Landbau, Germany
	Danisch Agricultural Center of Organic Farming, Denmark
	Nafferton Ecological Farming Group, University Newcastle, United Kingdom
	Organic Research Center Elm Farm, United Kingdom
	Stichting Zaadgoed, The Netherlands
	Vitalis, The Netherlands
	Association Biologisch-Dynamischer Pflanzenzüchter, Germany
	Bingenheimer Saatgut AG, Germany
Louis Bolk Institute, The Netherlands	
<b>Assoc. Members</b>	Reseau Semences Paysannes, France
	Beat Boller, Agroscope, Switzerland
	Dirk Reheul, University of Gent, Belgium
	Franziska Löschenberger, Saatzucht Donau GmbH & CoKG, Austria
	Maria Finckh, University of Kassel, Germany
	Anders Borgen, Agrológica, Denmark
	Dominique Desclaux, INRA - UE DIASCOPE Domaine de Melgueil, France
	Aina Kokare, State Priekuli Plant breeding Institute, Latvia
	Géza Kovács, Agricultural Research Institute of the HAS, Hungary
	Bart Vosselmann, De Bolster, The Netherlands
Bram Weijland, Bejo Seeds, The Netherlands	