



Report

Workshop Organic Seed on the Move!

4th Workshop on the EU Organic Seed Regime

**Bejo Zaden, Trambaan 1
1749 CZ Warmenhuizen**

28th and 29th September 2006

Opening and Introduction by the President of ECO-PB, Edith Lammerts van Bueren

Edith Lammerts van Bueren welcomed everybody to this fourth workshop which has been organized in collaboration with the Danish Agricultural Advisory Service, National Centre and the Organic Revision Project.

In Denmark, as in other EU countries the experience of many growers shows an inconsistent management of the organic seed legislation and possibilities for derogation, especially concerning vegetable varieties. Differences concerning the interpretation of implementation of the European Organic Farming Regulation (concerning seeds) between countries lead to unfair competition among growers, for instance on export markets. This, in turn, may hinder the further development in the production and use of organic seeds in European countries.

To ensure that there is compliance with the rules in the individual European countries, we considered it worthwhile to arrange this joint meeting for growers, scientists, advisors and representatives from the official bodies/departments administering the rules in the individual countries. The organisers were pleased to see some 70 participants from 13 different countries. We were very grateful to Bejo Zaden for hosting the meeting during their "open day's event". The "open days" at Bejo Zaden gave the participants a great chance to visit Bejo's organic test plots in the field showing their assortment of varieties from organic seeds next to some organic varieties from other seed companies.



Presentations on projects, results and experiences regarding the current EU organic seed regime

- Inger Bertelsen: How are the rules implemented in the different countries?
- Inger Bertelsen: Constraints for use of organic vegetable seeds in Denmark – Danish project 2005-2006
- Andreas Thommen: Presentation on the evaluation of the Nationals Reports 2004/2005 (Organic Revision project)
- Kim Holm Boesen, European Commission, Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development, Unit F5 -Organic Farming: Examination of the effective implementation of Commission Regulation 1452/2003
- Coen ter Berg, Edith Lammerts van Bueren (Louis Bolk Institute) and Douwe Monsma (Organic Farmer): How to improve the use of organically produced onion seed
- Fred van de Crommert, Bejo on Bejo's organic seed commitment, organic seed price and quality, production steps and seed availability
- Jan Velema, Vitalis Organic Seed on the development of Vitalis' organic seed activities

For the different presentations and a list of participants see the links: 'Presentations given on the ECO-PB-Workshop...' and 'Participants list of the ECO-PB-Workshop on the EU Organic Seed Regime, Warmenhuizen, 28/29 September 2006' on the ECO-PB web site.

Results of working groups on different issues related to organic seed production and use in organic farming

Participants were divided in different working groups to work on the issues in respective headlines below. The results were gathered, presented and discussed in the plenum.

Is the use of organic seeds important?

The use of organic seeds is important but there are several other issues to take into account at the same time for organic vegetable production. We think that the consumers and buyers expect that the seeds are organic but no one has actually investigated this question. For the farmer it is more a long term issue. There is a tendency that for small growers organic seed is a bigger issue than for large farms.

How fast should this process of shifting to organic seeds go?

The availability differs among vegetable species with respect to the question whether or not it is possible to produce organic seeds. The process should go slow for the species with difficulties in producing organic seeds (e.g. biannual crops) and faster for species where the productions of organic seeds are easier.

Experiences with the management of the rules

In general the management of the rules supports the development of the use of organic vegetable seeds, and the overall view is that it works quite well. But there are big differences between countries. This means that each country found ways to interpret the regulation according to the respective context in each country.

The biggest difficulties for using organics seeds

- Price
- Quality of the seed
- Local availability, too limited assortment



- Regional demands



Ideas to further improve the use of organics seeds?

- The vegetables should be divided into groups according to how easy it is to produce organic seeds from each species. It could be considered to apply a % approach per farm within different crops on country base.
- Sharing trial information across all advisory bodies or a better database with information. Keeping the databases up to date is crucial
- There is a need for more cultivar comparison trials under organic conditions for each production region.
- Projects to stimulate organic seed production of regional-, local-, farmer- or conservation varieties.
- Communication between seed companies, growers, buyers and consumers are very important and must be stimulated
- Moving towards national "annexes" or similar are good but then all country must do so.

Support needed from European Commission

We would like the EU to help to standardise the template for national annual reports - so it is easier to compare handling of derogations between countries. The annual reports must be written in the same language. We also wish that the EU will put pressure on countries that don't fulfil their obligations.

Final plenary discussion to identify follow up action points

In a thorough plenary discussion the main topics to be dealt with were identified and addressed. Only the action points that have been agreed on by all participants were written down.

To further improve the production and use of organic seed it is important to group crops and crop types with the regard to their importance and to focus the work on most important crops and crop types.

It was agreed upon the necessity to improve reporting according to the Article 12 and 13 of Regulation (EC) 1452. Data must be filled in a given template in order to be usable for evaluation and make figures comparable. Andreas Thommen of FiBL Switzerland is going to prepare a draft template for this purpose. The Commission will be kindly requested to support this approach and to advocate the use of such a template for uniform data gathering in the Member States.

Participants proposed to integrate also vegetative material and also basic seed (arable crops) into the data bases and also in the scope of the organic seed regime in the mid term.

Furthermore, it was consented that a better networking and spread of information is necessary. Especially inspection bodies would like to involve themselves into this exchange of information. An opportunity to find information on this issue is to visit the ECO-PB web site and subscribe on the newsletter function on the ECO-PB web site.

It was proposed to enhance the involvement of the IFOAM EU Group with regard to the organic seed issue as the official counter part for the commission.

The importance and necessity of such workshops on organic seed was stressed by the participants.

Report: Klaus-Peter Wilbois, ECO-PB