Welcome to the 7th European Workshop on Organic Seed Regulation in Brussels 2013

• Hosted by Flemish Government
• 54 participants from 16 different countries
• Two half days of intensive exchange and discussion

→ Roadmap for the harmonisation and increased usage of organic seed

Monika Messmer, President of ECO-PB, monika.messmer@fibl.org Brussels 9th 2013
Program 9th October 2013

14:10  Aim of the meeting and short update of the previous workshop (M. Messmer, S. Howlett)
14:30  Revision of the organic regulation process and its impact on organic seed (L’Her)
14:50  Country reports
Summary of online survey, Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, France, Czech Republic, Italy, Greece, Spain
16:15  Coffee break
16:45  Perspective of seed and breeding companies
17:45  Perspective of organic farmers organisation
18:15  Plenary discussion
20:00  Dinner at Ethiopian restaurant KoKoB in city centre
Program 10th October 2013

8:30 IFOAM EU role related to seeds (E. Busacca)
9:30 Three case studies on production and use of organic seeds
  ➢ Potato (J. van Hoogen, Agrico)
  ➢ Cereals (E. Muehlhausen, KWS)
  ➢ Vegetables (H. Haitsma, Vitalis)
10:10 Coffee break
10:30 Discussion in supgroups
12:00 Presentation of outcome of group discussion
12:15 Plenary discussion & Development of roadmap
13:00 Light Lunch offered by Flemish Government
Why is ECO-PB active in organic seed

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<th>Seed propagation</th>
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## Varieties for organic farming

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Strengthening organic farming by breeding varieties adapted to specific growing conditions

Plant material for organic farming

- organically bred varieties
- conventionally bred, propagated under organic conditions
- conventionally bred & multiplied, but without seed treatment
Guidelines for organic plant production

Bio Suisse 17.4.2013

› Organic plant breeding defined according to IFOAM
  › All steps performed under certified organic conditions
  › No technical intervention below cell level
  › Respects natural crossing barriers
  › Promotes fertility and natural reproduction of plants
  › Transparency of breeding methods
  › Refrains from patents on living organisms

› From 1.1.2014 on cultivars used for the production of Knospe products are preferably from organic plant breeding programs

› If it can be shown that no cultivar in sufficient quality and quantity is available, other cultivars may be used. Bio Suisse is responsible for the monitoring and derogation
  › This includes cultivars according to national seed legislation and UPOV regulation as well as population varieties, niche varieties, land races and farmer’s selections
Main Outcomes I

- Reporting on organic seed by member countries to the EU needs to be more harmonised.
  - Textual explanations of derogation
  - Info about why a derogation was issued
  - Availability of species/varieties on Category 1 (no derogation)
  - Reports should be structured by derogation category system

- SCOF requested more input from organic stakeholders regarding organic seed issues.
  - Main role of reports is to serve as policy instruments
Main outcomes II

- Differences and commonalities in the organisational structure of Expert Groups (EG) between countries were discussed.

  - **NL**: EG comprised of farmers, seed company reps, growers & researchers
  - **DK**: EG is the advisory service of Danish Organic Association & variety testing authority
  - **FR**: EG is responsibility of Ministry of Agriculture & there are two groups 1) organic seed database 2) derogations

EG groups are important to decide about suitability of organic seed available, to get support from farmers about decisions for Annex & increase production and use of organic seed
Main outcomes III

- The wider organic community needs to invest in seed databases
  - *Currently no common European database*
  - *Some countries have no national databases*
  - *Suggestions made to harmonise existing national databases (e.g. Latin names, meaningful units for quantities...)*

- To protect seed diversity the use of local varieties should not be hindered by seed regulation
  - *Possibly allow a derogation for conservation varieties, even those in Category 1.*
  - *Include users of local varieties on EG discussions*
General Conclusions

- The organic sector has improved in different ways in different countries over the past few years
  - Use of National Category 1 has increased
  - Seed companies reported rise in organic seed sales in some countries

- Potential players may lack a strong incentive for development because current regulations are not clear or not coordinated enough among countries.

- Still urgent need for further European harmonisation on organic seed regulation & derogation reports
Publications

Workshop outcomes summarised in paper:


Proposals to foster organic seed usage

- Compensate for price difference of organic and untreated conventional seed (private label, government, market chain?)
- Definition of timeline until derogation has to be submitted, otherwise no longer derogation
- «warning lists»: Definition of timelines until when category 1 will be implemented
- Harmonisation of database across countries
  - Timely update, available quantity, more userfriendly
- Broader list of cultivars that are available as organic seed
- Discourage use of seeds from companies not investing in organic seed
Proposals to foster organic seed usage

- Harmonisation concerning the handling and labelling of seed mixtures
- Harmonisation about handling of vegetative material
- Derogation for conservation varieties, local varieties, landraces or their inclusion in the data base
- Implementation of expert groups of different stakeholders in all countries
- Guidelines for cultivars derived from breeding techniques not bred in compliance with organic agriculture (IFOAM definition) like cytoplast fusion
Topics mentioned to be discussed:

- Harmonisation for derogation system (potato)
  - Which criteria used
  - Less derogations
  - Timelines for end of derogation
- Database (satisfaction average 3.2 but nine times 5 and ones 6)
  - Update, availability, userfriendlyness
  - To what degree are cultivars available to cover demand
  - How to increase number of registered cultivars
- Harmonisation for Seed mixtures
  - Declaration and labelling
- Cytoplast fusion (vegetables)
- Farmers participation, handling of local varieties
- Revision of EU seed regulation
Expected outcome of the workshop

- Exchange of status quo and recent progress among countries

- Development of a roadmap on the harmonisation of Organic seed regulation
  - Identify main topics to be enhanced the next 3-5 years in smaller working groups
  - Identify participants that coordinate these working groups
  - Involvement of experts from all European countries (especially in South and Eastern Europe)

- Define role of different stakeholders
  - SCOF, IFOAM EU Group, Seed companies, ECO-PB