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LIVESEED - A project boosting varieties and seeds in organic farming funded by EU

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LIVESEED (www.liveseed.eu) is a project funded by EU H2020 research program and consists of 49 partner organizations coming from 17 Member States and Switzerland. LIVESEED aims to improve the sustainability, performance, and competitiveness of the organic sector by boosting organic seed production, developing novel breeding approaches to increase the choice of cultivars of various crop species adapted to organic and low-input agriculture for different pedo-climatic conditions in Europe and by harmonizing the implementation of the European regulations in relation to organic seed.

In order to achieve its goal, LIVESEED will specifically provide a level playing field regarding the use of organic seed across Europe. Some activities are analyzing the determinants of the current production and use of organic seed, the identification of breeding gaps of crops, increasing transparency of the EU organic seed market or improving the implementation of legislative requirements in close collaboration with national authorities in EU Member States.

A further work package is aimed to increase the volume and quality of organic seeds derived from cultivars suited for organic farming by developing and improving the efficiency of cultivar testing under organic farming. Suitable and adjusted protocols for 'Distinctiveness, Uniformity, Stability' (DUS) and 'Value for Cultivation and Use' (VCU) testing will be identified to foster the registration of open pollinated varieties and develop new descriptors for

the marketing of heterogeneous population. Furthermore, knowledge will be shared and training courses on smart practices for organic seed multiplication be organized across countries, as well as novel seed health strategies and technologies focusing on the vitality of organic seed will be investigated.

In the two above mentioned work packages AGES is involved in providing experience and adapting testing protocols and certification processes corresponding to the needs and characteristics of organic farming which have been established in Austria. AGES will contribute to an increased harmonization of the existing systems across Europe.

Further work packages within the project are, in brief, activities on accelerated breeding processes and adoption of new cultivars, improving the competitiveness of the organic seed sector by identifying gaps and bottlenecks in the market development of organic seeds and breeding and knowledge sharing and dissemination of LIVESEED results by building the capacity of breeders, seed producers, farmers, retailers, researchers and other actors of the food value chain.

The project has a duration for four years and will end in 2021.

Keywords

Organic breeding · organic seed · seed certification · seed health