



**National Report for Poland:
How to improve the production and
the use of organic seeds?
National recommendations for Poland**

Work Package: WP01 - Regulation & policy framework regarding production, use, and transparency of organic seed

Dissemination level: Public

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Jaroslaw Stalenga (IUNG)

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Background

This report presents the results of the workshop held in Warsaw on the 13th of May 2019, under the Horizon 2020 [LIVESEED project](#). It aims at presenting specific recommendations for Poland on how to improve the production and the use of organic seeds.

This workshop gathered around 30 different stakeholders representing the Polish Ministry of Agriculture, national plant protection and seed organization (PIORIN), Agricultural and Food Quality Inspection (IJHARS), certification bodies, seeds companies, research organisations and associations of organic farmers.

As part of LIVESEED project¹, national visits took place in this country from June 11th to 13th in 2018, to better understand the bottlenecks and the possibilities of improvements regarding the production and the use of organic seeds at the national level. The main outcomes of those visits are summarized in the country report (see Annex IV) that was used as a basis for the workshop discussion in 2019.

During the first part of the workshop, different stakeholders reflected on the country report and gave testimonials on their analyses of the situation in their country. During the second part of the workshop, all stakeholders were invited to discuss the following issues. Guiding questions for discussions were:

- How to improve the organic seed database?
- How to improve the production of organic seeds?
- How to improve the use of organic seeds?

Based on those discussions a SWOT analysis, and policy recommendations were highlighted. The main outcomes of the discussion will be followed up by actions recorded in the Seed Declaration for Organic Seed that all stakeholders agreed to take at the end of the day (see Annex I).

This national report is an internal working document aimed at national policymakers and all stakeholders involved in the production and use of organic seed.

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1. Reflections on the Polish organic seed production and use

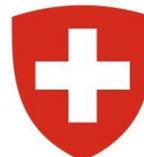
In 2018, there were 19,207 organic farmers in Poland, covering 3.4% (484,676 hectares) of its agricultural land area². Both those numbers have decreased compared to 2013, which was the year highest in numbers, by about 30%. The seed company Bejo on the other hand states, that the sale of organic seeds is growing in Poland. According to them, this is partly due to the fact that traders increasingly ask for organic products that were also produced from organic seeds.

¹ Work Package 1 'Regulation & policy framework regarding production, use and transparency of organic seed.

² IJHARS: Raport o stanie rolnictwa ekologicznego w Polsce w latach 2017-2018



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Nonetheless, organic seeds in Poland are mostly farm-saved and/or uncertified. This in turn hinders such small incentives as mentioned above in increasing the demand for organic seeds and keeps the number of seed producers relatively small. A lack of cooperation is not only found between farmers, but between them and other stakeholders as well.

Even though just slightly, the Ministry states that the number of organic certified processors and importers in Poland has steadily increased.² With that and the end of the equivalency import system by 2023, that facilitates high imports of organic products into the EU, the Ministry of Agriculture sees great potential for the national organic sector in the coming years. Besides the new Action Plan for Organic Food and Agriculture in Poland for the period of 2020 to 2026, which describes main problems and proposes solutions, the Ministry of Agriculture plans to give further support by producing a methodology of production of different crops based on research outcomes and providing data on different issues, such as pesticides, fertilizers and seeds.

2. Main outcomes of the Group Discussion

3.1 The organic seed database and its use could be improved by:

- Adding information about characteristics and quality of the varieties/seeds (this would help organic producers to make better decision about their production);
- Adding possible equivalents for each variety;
- Indicating the location of the supplier and the approximate duration of transport/shipment;
- Making the database more interactive by involving organic seed producers in updating the database (this would speed up the exchange of information, e.g. when a variety is sold out, and reduce bureaucracy) and more easily accessible for farmers;
- Showing links to related websites (e.g. Ministry, Farmers associations) and information material (e.g. manuals, publications).

3.2 Improving the availability of organic seed could be approached by:

- Subsidies for organic seed production as an incentive to start;
- Other ways to reduce the production costs for the supplier (e.g. by facilitating research to prevent seed losses from pest and diseases);
- Reduce the administrative burden for seed suppliers;
- Re-evaluate and define new criteria for organic production (e.g. lower hectare-threshold for cereal production);
- Trainings and conferences, and easily available information (e.g. publications and brochures) on how to produce organic seeds;
- Organic breeding can only use cultivars that are registered which limits the progress;
- Financial support for organic breeding and research;
- Raise the demand of organic seeds through various approaches (see below).

² Based on a presentation by Bartosz Pytlak from the Ministry of Agriculture



3.3 Improving the use of organic seeds could be approached by:

- Reducing the real costs of seeds for farmers by either subsidising the use or the production to facilitate a lower price;
- Trainings for farmers to use organic seed and manage low-input varieties;
- Monitoring and surveying farmers/market demands to assure that the seeds of needed varieties are produced;
- Ensuring an adequate quality of seeds;
- Raising the consumers’ awareness about the importance of organic products (similar to the promotion of national products that has been done) and especially organic seeds (e.g. indication on products) to increase the demand.

3. SWOT analysis – Detailed analysis of domestic opportunities based on presentations and group-work

3.1. Subsidy system

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently a lack of economic incentives to produce organic seed. Without some form of financial support organic seed will remain non-competitive as far as production and use is concerned; • There is no financial support for the use of organic seeds through the Rural Development Program anymore.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subsidize organic seed production (if it is not intended for own use); • Subsidize the use of organic seed use again (with higher support for the use of certified seeds); • Subsidize transport costs for farmers to obtain organic seed; • Expand the list of subsidized cultivars, e.g. with vegetables. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many registered farmers only act as landowners and collect the subsidies that should go to the farmer managing the land.

3.2. Derogation rules, national annex

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficient derogation system with several regional authorities (Voivodeship) suggesting similar varieties if the requested one is not available. For that, variety lists which are developed annually by COBRU are used; • Agricultural advisors support farmers to prepare the derogation request. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers must always apply for derogation (for each derogation request specifically), as there is no general derogation list.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making derogations stricter could be a way to increase the demand for new varieties and good quality seed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...
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3.3. Database

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers are allowed to register on the database and sell seeds of crops that are outside the scope of the Polish National List. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently only a static version exists (excel); • Not modifiable by seed suppliers; • Regularly updated, but only once a month; • Database does not reflect the current supply situation.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An online, computerised database could be implemented; • The database should be more interactive and user-friendly, real-time, allow suppliers to enter offers directly, and should be updated at different times throughout the year; • Sanctions for seed suppliers that do not update regularly; • Location of the seed supplier, transport opportunities and duration could be indicated; • More descriptive information on varieties could be added; • Add useful links to database (Ministry, farmers associations); • Certificate for seed quality should be visible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm saved seed remains a problem as it distorts the understanding on available organic seeds and is not reflected in the database; • High use of uncertified seed.

3.4. Training opportunities

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good advisory resources to provide trainings for farmers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers do not see added value of organic seeds.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainings for farmers on how to produce, save and use organic seed should be available; • Training on low-input plants; • Education through publication and brochures on different topics; • Field trials should be carried out, where farmers can see advantages themselves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In lack of training, farmers will use uncertified seeds; • In lack of training, farmed saved seeds will be harvested and stored without proper management and hence lack the quality needed for growing under organic conditions.

3.5. Organic breeding and variety test

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different programs of variety field trials already established: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - COBORU and Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation - State Research Institute (IUNG-PIB): organic variety field trials started for some winter (rye, wheat, triticale) and spring cereals (barley, oat, wheat). Could be extended to include grain legumes. They will disseminate the results and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organic breeders are obliged to only use registered cultivars; • Strategic decisions are not taken soon enough. Developing a new variety can take up to 15 years; • As demand is still very low, companies have only little interest in breeding organic varieties; • In a lack of training, farmers will not be able to produce organic seeds of appropriate quality;



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<p>recommendations on varieties suitable for organic production;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research Institute of Horticulture in Skierniewice: organic field trials for vegetables crops; - Seed company Bejo organizes demonstration fields in some organic farms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Till 2018, there was no national organic variety assessment system; • Certain barriers in the current law towards organic plant breeding (e.g. limitations imposed on land size).
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tests for phytosanitary health; • Developing a network of field trials; • Breed more market oriented, good quality cultivars. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreign processing companies often tell or give farmers the seeds they want them to use, which lowers the demand for new organic varieties.

3.6. Expert roundtable

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently, there is no organic seed expert group in Poland; • Low level of trust between organic farmers and seed companies.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference for seed companies to tell them what is important; • An expert group with representatives from farmers, seed companies, certifiers and experts would foster trust and could give (binding) advice to the competent authority • They could discuss about seed offers and variety needs and commit to synergetic actions with stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Without an expert group that defines essential varieties needed by farmers, it will be more difficult to build up market supply of seed of such varieties; • The gap between demand and supply will continue and the 2036 target of phasing out derogations will not be met.

3.7. Traditional varieties and farm-saved seeds for own use

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association of Organic Farmers EKOLAN: some farmers are involved in multiplication of old varieties (gene bank); • Farmers with less than 10 ha are not obliged to pay an agricultural exemption fee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes farmers must pay an agricultural exemption fee to the breeder if they want to use FFS; • It takes three years to adapt conventional seeds to organic conditions, according to some farmers.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making use of the gene bank and its traditional varieties as they can be better adapted for organic farming than conventional ones. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High use of farm saved seeds limits the demand and therefore the incentive for companies to start organic seed production; • The use of farm saved seed will remain significant until organic certified seed is much less expensive and does provide the yield or quality expected by growers.



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4. Policy changes proposed based on the Organic Regulation

- Include organic seed production issues in the new Action Plan for Organic Food and Agriculture in Poland
- Subsidize production and use of organic seed (especially certified seed);
- Subsidize transport costs for farmers to obtain organic seed;
- Carefully limit derogations to raise the demand and support organic seed production;
- Improve the Polish database in terms of content available (e.g. description of the variety) and be more user friendly and interactive than an excel file;
- Inform farmers as well as consumers about the benefits of organic seeds;
- Identify and remove limiting legal factors on organic plant breeding (see examples at 3.5.)
- Provide trainings dedicated to breeders and farmers on how to produce, save and use organic seeds;
- Set up a seed expert group that includes all stakeholders to facilitate trust between them, attune each other's needs and monitor and advise on current developments;
- Invest more in research related to organic breeding to be able to develop an organic variety assortment for at least a selected strategic group of crops.



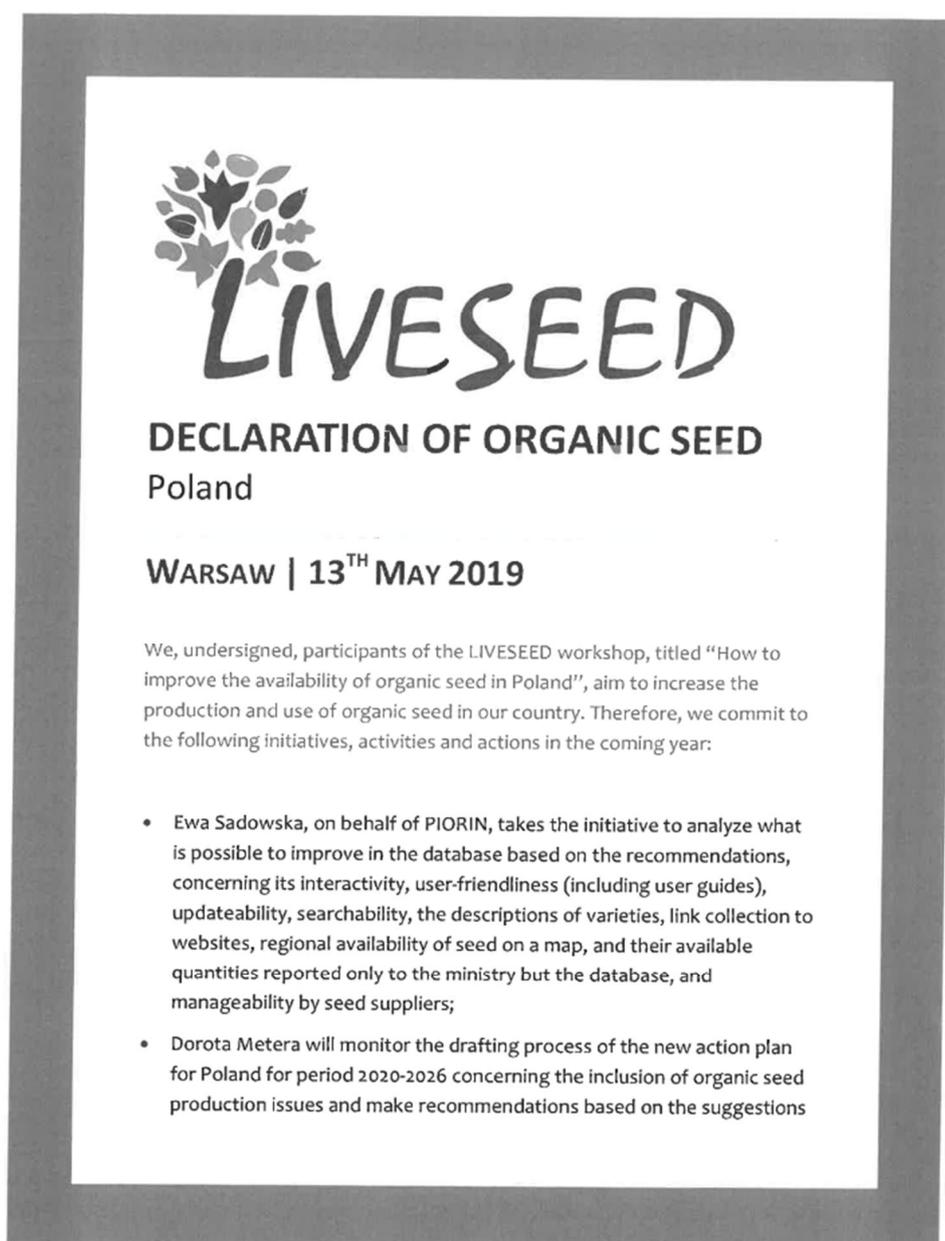
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Annex I: Declaration of Organic Seed Poland

The National Workshop held in Warsaw in May 2019, was an opportunity for the different stakeholders participating to discuss and agree on the best activities to implement in order to increase the production and the use of organic seeds in Poland. In 2020, during the last phase of this project, an assessment will be done to compare those following agreement and see what was done in the country, what was not feasible and if the situation regarding organic seeds improved.

At the end of the workshop, all participants were invited to co-sign the following 'Seed Declaration'.



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from today, including conveying the request of lowering of the quality requirements for grain legume;

- Wiesław Podyma (IHAR) will coordinate the formulation of a letter addressed to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food concerning the barriers in the current law towards organic plant breeding (especially on the limitations imposed on land size, min. 2 ha), together with other research institutions;
- IUNG will initiate educational actions based on their developed network of field trials to demonstrate to farmers the advantages of using organic seeds;
- Agnes Bruszik IFOAM EU takes the commitment to reach out to the Ministry Representative Bartosz Pytlak, Head of Department of Organic Farming, Poland, to communicate the different suggestions concerning subsidies for farmers arose today;
- Marcin Moczulski will initiate a survey to farmers on seed and variety demand;
- The upcoming organic fairs, such as Naturafood Fair could be a good opportunity for the expert group to meet and discuss further the roles of a national organic seed expert group, and how much progress was made to the points today. This will be coordinated by IUNG.

Signed in Warsaw, on the 13th of May 2019 by:

Anna P. Ogińska
 Ewa Szulowska
 Dorota Chęćka
 Małgorzata Cimbak
 Hanna Grogan
 Jolanta Harnacka
 Katarzyna Kopyńska
 Odrzyńska
 Wiesław Podyma

Helena Supronińska
 Aleksandra Kopiec
 Marta Modzelewska
 Daria Świątek
 Justyna Niewolska
 Tomasz Leutorz
 Andrzej Wójcicki
 Bogdan Iliński
 Marcin Jankowski
 Jarosław Stalenga



Annex II. Workshop Agenda

National Workshop – How to improve the availability of organic seeds in Poland?

Warsaw, Poland, 13 May 2019

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

Chair: Jarosław Stalenga (IUNG-PIB)

Timing	Agenda
09.00-09.30	Registration + coffee
09.30-09.35	Welcome and Opening – Jaroslaw Stalenga (IUNG-PIB)
09.35-09.50	Current situation of organic farming in Poland – key problems, organic seed legislation - Representative of the Department of Organic Farming in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
09.50-10.10	Some best practices and the aim of the LIVESEED workshop - Maaik Raaijmakers (Bionext)
10.10-10.15	Video on why farmers use organic seed
10.15-10.25	EU legal framework - Pauline Verrière (IFOAM EU)
10.25-10.40	Explanation of the EU Router Database - Freya Schäfer (FiBL-DE)
10.40-11.00	Discussion
11.00-11.20	Coffee break
11.20-12.20	Testimonials from other stakeholders on how to improve the availability of organic seeds in Poland: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dorota Metera (Certification body) • Marcin Moczulski (Seed company) • Krzysztof Jończyk (Research sector) • Mieczysław Babalski (Association of organic farmers) Each speaker has 5-7 min for presentation and then 5-7 min for discussion
12.20-12.30	Introduction to group work (IFOAM EU)
12.30-13.30	Lunch
13.30-16.00	Group work - 3 groups (Group leaders: Dorota Metera, Marcin Moczulski and Jarosław Stalenga) Topic 1. How to improve the organic seed database ? Topic 2. How to improve the production of organic seeds ? Topic 3. How to improve the use of organic seeds ? Summaries from working groups moderators Coffee break in the meantime
16.00-16.30	Plenary session Signing of the Seed Declaration, Conclusions and follow up



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Annex III. Participants of the Workshop

Agnes	Bruszik	IFOAM EU
Aleksandra	Lapuc	GIJHARS
Alina	Szyprowska	PLANTICO
Andrzej	Najewski	COBURU
Bartosz	Pytlak	MriRW
Daria	Senska	GIJHARS
Dorota	Metera	BioEkspert
Edward	Gacek	COBURU
Ewa	Sadowska	PIORIN
Freya	Schaefer	FiBL-DE
Joanna	Groszyk	PIORIN
Jacek	Malinowski	Enza Zaden Poland
Jakub Pawel	Cygan	AGROBIOTEST
Jaroslaw	Stalenga	IUNG-PIB
Jolanta	Marszalek	LEGUTKO
Justyna	Niziolek	DANKO
Katharina	Bruehl	FiBL-DE
Krzysztof	Jonczyk	IUNG-PIB
Maaïke	Raaijmakers	BIONEXT
Marcin	Moczulski	BEJO
Marta	Modzelan	GIJHARS
Marzena	Chrobot	LEGUTKO
Mieczyslaw	Babalski	EKOLAN
Pauline	Verrière	IFOAM EU
Piotr	Ochodzki	IHAR
Tomasz	Lenartowicz	COBURU
Roman	Warzecha	IHAR
Wieslaw	Podyma	
Wojciech	Haldas	Ministry of Agriculture



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Annex IV. Country Report



Country Report for Poland

Work Package: WP01 - Regulation & policy framework regarding production, use, and transparency of organic seed

Dissemination level: Public

Publication Date: 28 April 2019

Authors: Maaike Raaijmakers (Bionext, Netherlands)

Local partner involved in the visit and the revision of the report: Jaroslaw Stalenga (IUNG)

WP Leader: Freya Schaefer (FiBL-DE)



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About the report

This report has been produced in the framework of the Horizon 2020-funded project LIVESEED.³ The main aim of LIVESEED is to boost the production and use of organic seeds and plant breeding for organic agriculture across Europe. It is co-ordinated by IFOAM EU, and its scientific coordinator is FiBL-CH.

Work Package 01 of LIVESEED explores EU Member States in terms of their implementation and best practices connected to the EU Organic Regulations, in the contexts of national regulatory and policy frameworks, specifically regarding the production, use, and transparency of organic seed.

As part of this Work Package, Bionext, FiBL-DE and IFOAM EU visited selected countries during 2017-2018, where the organic seed production is low, to understand their bottlenecks and possibilities for improvements regarding the production and the use of organic seeds at the national level. During the visits, several stakeholder groups were interviewed (competent authorities, seed database managers, seed companies, research institutions, organic farmers, seed associations, organic certifiers, etc) in each country.

The main outcomes of the visits were summarized in country reports presenting the status quo for that given Member State. The reports' findings then were disseminated among a wide range of national stakeholders in 2019 and discussed during workshops to define viable next steps to improve the status quo in each country. The Workshop for Poland took place on 13th May 2019, in Warsaw, and was co-organised by the Polish LIVESEED project partner, the Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation (IUNG).

This country report is recommended for national policymakers, and all stakeholders involved in the production and use of organic seed: national authorities, farmers, certifiers, producers, retailers, seed authorities, researchers and the civil society in general.

For further information concerning this report, please contact:

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Bionext is the Dutch chain organization for organic agriculture and food.

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Visit our website: liveseed.eu, and our social media: Facebook and Twitter: LIVESEEDeu

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³ <http://liveseed.eu>



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Implementation of the regulation on organic seed in Poland

Findings from the national visit to Poland, 11-13 June 2018

1. General information

In 2017, there were 20,257 organic farmers in Poland covering 3,4 % (=495,000 hectare) of the agricultural land area. From this area 25,6 % is permanent grassland, 67,8 % is covered with arable crops and 6,6 % are permanent crops. *Source: Reports published by IJHARS in 2016-2018.*

2. Production and use of organic seed

Currently, there are around 60 organic seed producers in Poland, mainly farmers. The seed companies that are selling organic seed on the Polish market are predominantly foreign companies, e.g. Bejo and Vilmorin producing vegetables seeds. The Polish seed company Torseed started to produce organic seeds in 2004, when Poland entered the European Union, but stopped after several years because they found no market for their seeds.

The Polish organic seed database is an excel file with more than 600 varieties of different crops from more than 40 different suppliers. At least five suppliers offer vegetable seeds, the other suppliers offer seeds of forage and arable crops or vegetative planting material for fruit production.

From crops that are outside the scope of the EU Directive on seed marketing, e.g. millet, there are no additional requirements for seed producers, therefore every organic farmer can produce this seed and offer it on the database. There is also a separate list for seeds from farms being in conversion to organic farming. In 2018, three farmers offered seeds on this list.

There is a low use of certified seed in Poland. It is estimated that only 15% of the farmers use certified seed. Most farmers, both conventional and organic, re-use their own seed or buy uncertified seed. The use of farm saved seed is accepted as organic seed. Selling uncertified seed is illegal but buying is not. If a farmer uses farm saved seed from a protected variety, he is obliged to pay the so-called agricultural exemption fee to the breeder. However, farmers with less than 10 ha of agricultural land are exempt from this fee.

3. Implementation of the EU regulation: the database and derogation policy

The State Plant Health and Seed Inspection Service (PIORIN) is responsible for the management of the organic seed database. The database is updated once a month.

The Voivodeship Plant Health and Seed Inspection Services (in total 16) are responsible for granting the derogations. There is no general derogation list so if an organic farmer wants to use a variety for which no organic seed is available, they always need a derogation. When a Polish organic farmer asks for a derogation to use a certain variety, the regional authority checks if there are similar varieties available in the organic seed database. If this is the case the farmer does not get a derogation.

Within each voivodeship, the person considering the application for a derogation, compares the features of the requested variety with the varieties in the organic seed database on the basis of descriptions of varieties developed by COBORU (Research Centre for Cultivar Testing) and with a list of varieties recommended for the particular voivodeship. These COBORU lists for each voivodeship



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are updated each year. If the farmer disagrees with the decision from the regional authority, he can submit an appeal. The regional authority will send this appeal to the national seed authority, where the case is reconsidered.

Agricultural advisors support farmers to prepare the derogation request. The whole process is carried out on paper. All voivodeships send every 4 months a summary of the data on derogations to the seed authority in Warsaw. The seed authority gathers the information from the 16 regional offices, then they send it to the Department of Organic Farming of the Ministry of Agriculture, which then sends it to Brussels.

4. Policy measures to increase production and use of organic seed

To increase the production and use of organic seed from varieties that are suitable for organic farming, a network of organic field trials has been established (see point 5).

5. Breeding research and field trials

In order to establish a list of varieties recommended for organic production, the Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation - State Research Institute (IUNG-PIB) has developed a network of organic field trials in cooperation with COBORU. In 2018, organic field trials started for some winter (rye, wheat, triticale) and spring cereals (barley, oat, wheat). In the future, they expect to include grain legumes.

For vegetable crops, the Research Institute of Horticulture in Skierniewice has set up organic field trials. In addition, the seed company Bejo organizes demonstration fields in organic farms.

6. Obstacles and opportunities

There is no market demand for organic seeds and there is no economic incentive to produce organic seed for the Polish market. There is also a lack of trust between organic farmers and seed companies. Most farmers do not see the added value of buying certified seed in general, let alone buying (more expensive) organic seed. Except for the price, they see little difference between untreated conventional and organic seed, when it is the same variety.

Many registered farmers are not farming themselves. They only collect the subsidies as a landowner and let someone else do the work for them. Farmers are not proactive either to sell their organic products. They often sell their products on the conventional market. Therefore, the ambition to use organic or certified seed is low.

Most of the Polish organic vegetable products are processed and exported. Around 95% of the organic processing is in foreign hands. These companies tell farmers what varieties they should use, and they also deliver the seeds. The buyers of the organic products are not interested in organic seed, so the use of organic seed is not rewarded.

An opportunity is the fact that some farmers use organic seed out of principle. The Association of Organic Farmers EKOŁAN multiplies seeds from old (gene bank) varieties organically, which are exchanged among the members. The farmers produce cereals like spelt, einkorn and emmer, and process them into pasta or flakes. Around 70% of the products are sold directly to consumers, mainly in Poland.



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7. Recommendations from the stakeholders

- The derogation policy should be changed. If this would be stricter, Torseed would start again with the production of organic seeds.
- Training on organic seed production for farmers producing their own seed should be offered by the state advisors or seed authorities.
- Make sure that there is more offer of organic seed from varieties that are asked by the processing industry.

8. More information

Polish seed database:

<http://piorin.gov.pl/rolnictwo-ekologiczne/wykaz-materialu-ekologicznego/>



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