



Report on National Workshop in Italy

Organic seeds in Italy: problems and perspectives

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

Dissemination level: Public

Publication Date: 17 February 2020

Authors: Livia Ortolani, Matteo Pettiti, Riccardo Bocci (Rete Semi Rurali)

Local partners involved in the organisation of the workshop and the revision of the report: Piergiacomo Bianchi (CREA-DC)

WP Leader: Freya Schaefer (FiBL-DE)



LIVESEED is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 under grant agreement No 727230 and by the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) under contract number 17.00090. The information provided reflects the views of the authors. The Research Executive Agency or the SERI are not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.



Overview of the workshop

This report presents the results of a national level workshop held in Florence on the 19th of September 2019, under the Horizon 2020 funded LIVESEED project¹. The overall aim of LIVESEED is to boost the production and use of organic seed across Europe. This report was prepared as part of Work Package 01 of the project titled ‘Regulation & policy framework regarding production, use and transparency of organic seed’. The Workshop was co-organised by Rete Semi Rurali, who is partner of LIVESEED and the Italian Council for Research in Agriculture – Defence and Certification section (CREA – DC) who is responsible for the national project BioSeme-SIB. The project BioSeme-SIB have the aim of giving to the Italian Ministry of Agriculture the technical and scientific support on the application of the DM 15130 of the 24th February 2017 for the use of organic seeds.

This workshop was a follow-up of a national visit to Italy that took place in September 2018 and aimed at better understanding the bottlenecks and possible improvements regarding the production and the use of organic seeds in Italy for the LIVESEED partners. The main outcomes of the visit were summarized in a country report².

From a National perspective the workshop is part of a long-term wider process of interaction between Rete Semi Rurali, CREA DC and the Organic Agriculture Office of the Italian Ministry of Agriculture on the issue of organic seeds and derogations. In February 2019 the new Italian Database on Organic Seeds was officially put in action. After some months of functioning the workshop was the opportunity to invite stakeholders to evaluate the new operational rules and to consider problems and perspectives related to organic seeds in the new EU Regulation on Organic Farming.

The national workshop gathered more than 60 people representing different stakeholders from Italy involved in the production and use of organic seed, including the Ministry of Agriculture, seed companies, the associations of organic farmers or breeders, local seed networks, and associations of seed savers.

During the first part of the workshop, the institutions presented their vision of the organic seed issue, starting from the European context and moving to the Italian situation. In particular the goals of the first part of the workshop were:

- To give to all stakeholders of the Organic Sector an update on the functioning of the new Italian database on organic seed availability.
- To give an update on the Italian situation on organic seeds
- To present to local stakeholders the European context and debate on this issue
- To update the Italian organic sector on future European regulation
- To collect comments, problems and suggestions on the new database from Italian Institutions
- To identify future common lines of action.

During the second part of the workshop, there was a space for intervention from the floor with the goal to stimulate an open discussion on:

- Technical problems on the use of National Database on Organic Seeds

¹ Liveesed.eu

² The country report is available in [[en](#)].



- How to facilitate the access and use of the system from farmers and other stakeholders?
- How to assure an optimal coordination between seed companies and certification bodies on the issue of derogation and organic seeds.
- Comments and discussion on heterogeneous material.
- Indication of future line of actions at national level.

The next section of the report will present the Italian database on organic seeds and the data collected on the first months of its use. The following section will present the action points identified by the stakeholders during the meeting.



1. Organic seeds in Italy: problems and perspectives

The BIOSEME-SIB project

The Ministry of Agriculture recognised the need to work on the issue of organic seeds and in particular have funded this specific project to have technical support for the application of the measures of the D.M. 15130 for the use of organic seeds. In particular the project has had the aim to facilitate the transition from the old CREA-DC database to the new online database based on the SIB database.

The transition process was supported by the active participation of stakeholders from the seed sector and the farmers associations. In particular, the stakeholders active in this discussion are: Assosementi, Asseme, Rete Semi Rurali, MIVA, COAMS, CIVI-Italia, CREA-VE, Associazione regionale materiale di moltiplicazione della vite del Friuli Venezia Giulia.

Within the project a technical expert group was defined to support the process of transition from the old to the new online database. This group met 5 times between May 2018 and July 2019.

Database on Organic Seeds and management of derogation

The management of the derogation in Italy involve a variety of institutions and stakeholders, which have been presented in the National workshop to make clear to all participants how the system works, with particular emphasis on the functioning of the database.

The Italian National Decree n. 15130, 24th February 2017 ask for the institution of a database of seeds (and material of vegetative multiplication) obtained with the organic methods and include the rules for the use of seeds (or material of vegetative multiplication) not obtained with organic production method. The main aim of the database is to register and verify the commercial availability of seeds and vegetative multiplication material obtained from organic production. The Italian organic seed database uses a traffic light approach with three different lists of varieties.

The *Red List* include species and commercial categories of a specie available in sufficient quantity on the national market, for which there is not possibility to ask for a derogation.

The *Green list* include species and commercial categories of a specie unavailable on the national market for which it is given annually a general derogation.

The *Yellow list* include all varieties of species not included in the other lists, for which, if necessary, it is possible to use the database to verify the commercial availability and the possibility to ask for a derogation.

The potential users of the database are organic certified farms, seed and nursery companies, companies selling prepackaged products, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Certification bodies and the Region and Province administration with the duty of supervising the work of the certification bodies.

The **Italian Ministry of Agriculture** (MIPAAF) is the competent authority (ex art. 45 R889) that has the duty of compile and update the red and green list before the 30 of September and that give the derogation to farmers. A **group of experts** exists (ex art. 3.4 DM 15130) to support MIPAAF for the compilation and update of the red and green list and to organise the commercial groups for the identification of equivalent varieties. The expert group consists of 12 people (3 from the Ministry, 3



from the Regional administrations, and 6 from the civil society) and had a total of 12 meetings in the last year, between the 30 May 2018 and 30 July 2019.

The **Italian Council of Agricultural Research for Defence and Certification** (CREA-DC) is acting as support to the group of experts. The **seed suppliers** have the role to insert and update the availability of organic seeds and eventually modify the lists.

The Certification Bodies:

- Verify the effective existence of the conditions that have determined the concession of the derogation and the presence in the hand of the operators of the documents required to prove the motivation of the derogation concession registered by the system.
- Verify that the species and the varieties on the field correspond to the one indicated in the derogation requirement.
- Communicate to the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Regions and Autonomous Provinces the use of derogation from the operators in the case of species and varieties in the green list.

The **seed companies** that want to commercialize organic seeds through the database on the national market should register on the database and include and update continuously the information on seed availability as for art 51, part. 1 and 2, Reg. (CE) n. 889/2008.

The **organic certified farms**, registered on the system, can ask the permit to use non organic seeds or vegetative multiplication material for the species not included in the green list, through the database.

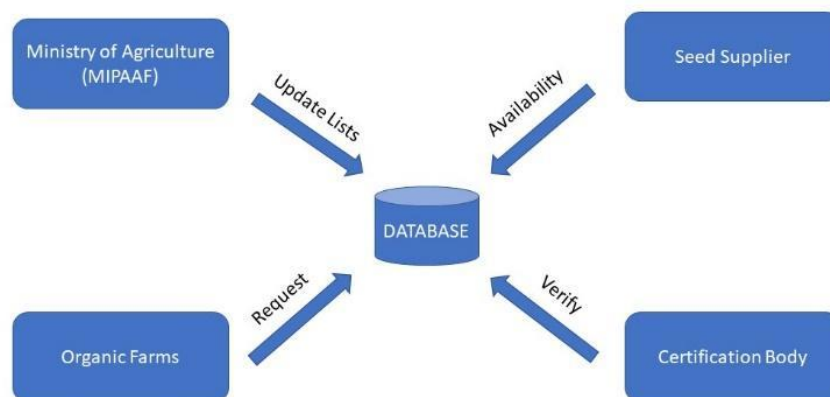


Fig. 1 - Italian Database on Organic Seeds

Data on Derogation trends in Italy

The use of the online database in the first months already shows to be an useful tool not only to manage derogation but also to monitor and understand the trends of derogation in Italy. This is a key issue in term of policy definition and action needed. In this section the report will present the data emerged in the first semester of the database functioning, that were presented during the National Workshop.

The traffic light approach to the list of varieties was applied in Italy starting from 2019 and the table below illustrate the state of the art till the national workshop date.




		1 February 2019 (681 species)	24 July 2019 (712 species)	17 september 2019 (723 species)
	N. species in the red list	0	0	0
	N. species in the green list	477	514	519
	N.species in the yellow list	204	198	204

Table 1. Number of species in each list of the traffic light system

With the aim of managing the lists, 14 different commercial groups have been identified for Tomato, Carrots, Peas, Beans, hemp, Barley, Mais, Sunflower, Rice, Linen, sugar beet, soybean, soft wheat, vine.

Specific case studies are conducted to consider the inclusion in the red list for some arable crops. The availability of data allow the expert groups to identify for which crops is important to set up experimental activities with the aim of developing varieties suitable for organic farming.

The online Database on organic seeds has been available to register seed availability since the 1st of January 2019 and to request for derogation since the 1st of February 2019. The table 2 show the trend in the number of derogation in Italy in 2019. In 2018 a total of 93.052 derogation have been asked for organic seeds in Italy and only in January 2019 the number of derogation requests was 13.730.

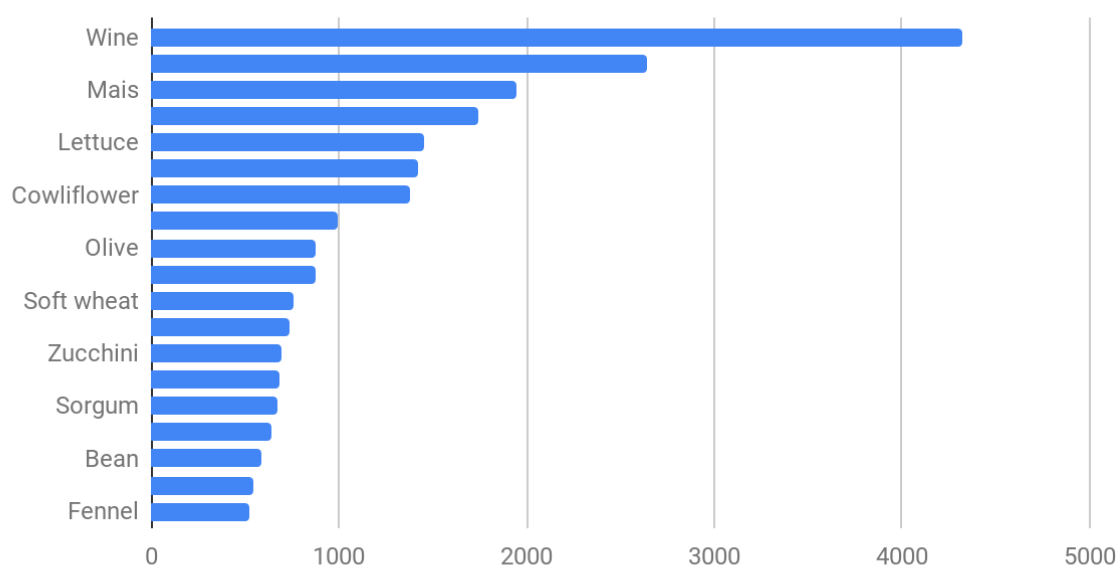


	Total Derogation	Total seed availability	Total Varieties in the records
19 March 2019	9.908	540	58.930
17 April 2019	16.761	609	62.780
11 June 2019	25.691	751	63.588
24 July 2019	31.698	779	64.330
29 July 2019	32.256	790	64.330
13 September 2019	37.774	934	64.373

Table 2 - Trend in derogation and seed availability registration in 2019 in Italy.

Around 20 crops have had more than 500 derogation requests, including vine, tomato, mais, soybean et others.

Fig.2 Species with more than 500 requests of derogation



The other relevant data collected in the database, that need to be combined with the one of derogation for a complete interpretation are related to seed availability. The table below shows the number of species and varieties included in the database in term of seed availability.



Crop	Number of species in the database	Number of varieties in the database
Tree crops	16	133
Herbs and drug plants	15	31
Cereals	10	35
Forage	13	40
Oleaginous and Fiber plants	4	14
Flowers and ornamental plants	2	2
Vegetables	57	618
Potatoes	1	6
Wine	1	60
TOTAL	119	939

Critical points of the database and corrective actions

Some critical points have been identified while the database was adopted and specific corrective actions have been put in place.

1. the lack of varieties in the records that would make impossible the demand for derogation. Corrective action was put in place: increasing the synchronization with the national registry of varieties and the one in the registry of other EU Countries.
2. Errors and confusion between registering seed availability and requesting derogation. Corrective action: graphic separation between the two action and inclusion of functionality to disable the possibility to write as seed producer.

There are continuous activities to improve the functioning of the database. In particular there is a focus on the development of specific functions for the vine propagation material.

Action points identified during the LIVESEED National Workshop

The National Workshop of the LIVESEED project was included in a long term discussion process that exists in Italy between the Ministry of Agriculture and the stakeholders of the organic sector, including Rete Semi Rurali to find solutions for the development of the organic seed sector in the country. Due to the ongoing discussion between the institutions and the stakeholders, it was not opportune to develop a “seed declaration” as a formal document, but the workshop was an important opportunity to reflect on the functioning of the new database and on the data emerging from the use of the database, presented in this report.



The afternoon session focused on an open discussion with the stakeholders of the Italian Organic Farming sector and some clear action points emerged from the discussion.

In general feeling was that the debate should widen its focus, moving from derogations to a more positive discussion on seed availability. The organic sector agreed that this new database is available and can be used as a tool to allow the organic community to collaborate in improving its functions allowing to have clear data on seed availability.

Moving the debate in this direction, Italy should focus on the need of investments in research and innovation to develop varieties suitable for organic farming. Seed companies ask for planning to support investments on seed production, farmers organizations ask for research before planning.

The main overall action identified by the participants is the need to have an **institutional action plan for organic seeds** that allow to integrate different actions needed in this field.

In particular the following actions have been identified during the workshop:

- The Ministry asked the stakeholders support for the discussion of delegates acts of the 848/2018 organic regulation.
- The organic sector stakeholders committed to work together to improve the database while using it.
- Two main actions have been identified at the moment to improve the system:
 - The work of the expert group should be improved and allow to include some species on the red list.
 - Specific experiments to facilitate the registration of new varieties suitable for organic farming should be set up at national level and with the support of public fundings.

This national report is an internal working document, aimed at national policymakers, and all stakeholders involved in the production and use of organic seed: national authorities, farmers, certifiers, producers, retailers, plant breeders and seed authorities in Italy.

For further information concerning this report, please contact:

Rete Semi Rurali: Livia Ortolani livia.ortolani@semirurali.net



ANNEX 1 - PROGRAMME

Programma

Il workshop ha l'obiettivo di valutare il funzionamento del database sulle sementi per l'agricoltura biologica, entrato in vigore a febbraio 2019, e dare un aggiornamento sul nuovo regolamento bio con riferimento al materiale eterogeneo. L'incontro è rivolto agli operatori del settore e alle istituzioni per discutere dello stato dell'arte sulle sementi biologiche in Italia e valutare problemi e prospettive in relazione al nuovo database e al nuovo regolamento sul biologico che entrerà in vigore nel 2021.

10.00 - 10.30 Registrazione partecipanti

10.30 - 10.40 Pio Federico Roversi (CREA-DC), Saluti istituzionali

10.40 - 10.50 Paolo Torrelli (MIPAAFT), Il quadro istituzionale sulle sementi biologiche

10.50 - 12.10 Il contesto europeo

Il progetto LIVESEED e introduzione alla giornata, Riccardo Bocci (Rete Semi Rurali)

L'importanza del database sementi biologiche per l'agricoltura bio, Freya Schäfer (FiBL-DE)

Il ruolo del gruppo degli esperti, Laurens Nuijten (Bionext)

12.10 - 13.00 La situazione italiana

La Banca Dati Sementi Biologiche italiana: stato dell'arte, Antonella Donniacuo (CREA-DC)

Il Materiale di Propagazione biologico eterogeneo: a che punto siamo?, Pier Giacomo Bianchi (CREA-DC)

13.00 - 14.00 Pranzo presso CREA-DC

14.00 - 16.00 Sessione pomeridiana

Discussione tra i partecipanti per la condivisione delle problematiche relative all'uso del database sementi biologiche italiano e identificazione delle priorità di azione per il miglioramento del processo.

Interventi programmati: Alberto Lipparini (Assosementi), Antonio Lo Fiego (Arcoiris)

Come raggiungere la sede dell'incontro

In autobus

Linea 36: capolinea Stazione Santa Maria Novella, scendere al capolinea fermata Cascine del Riccio. Scesi dal bus prendere la direzione di sinistra fiancheggiando la casa e dopo pochi metri all'incrocio svoltare a destra. Sulla sinistra troverete il n. civico 12/a di via di Lanciola con le indicazioni della sede del CREA-DC.

Linea 41: capolinea piazza Ferrucci, scendere alla fermata Cascine del Riccio.

Per informazioni <http://www.ataf.net/>

In auto

Presso la sede è presente un parcheggio gratuito per le auto.

Uscita Al casello Firenze Impruneta, alla rotonda prendere la terza uscita e immettersi su via Cassia in direzione centro, dopo circa 1 km in Piazza N. Acciaiuoli svoltare a destra e procedere su via Gherardo Silvani per circa 1 km, alla piccola rotonda prendere la prima uscita e procedere su via Silvani per circa 300 m e svoltare a destra al primo incrocio (stazione Tamoil) su via Cave di Monteripaldi, procedere per 600 m e superare il cantiere e svoltare a destra su via del Ponte a lozzi; dopo pochi metri al primo incrocio svoltare a destra su via di Lanciola, alla vostra sinistra troverete il cancello del civico 12/a.

Confermare partecipazione a
livia.ortolani@semirurali.net

