



Conference invitation

Organic Plant Breeding in Europe: Seed for future food systems

29th November 2018, Brussels

Time: from 9.30 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Venue: Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia to the European Union, Rue Montoyer 47, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium

Conference languages: English and German

Please register [here](#)

Contact: assistant.eu@demeter.net

Follow the discussion on twitter: #organicplantbreeding

Why organic plant breeding?

Tasty bread, delicious vegetables, fruit with high vitamin content – this is what you expect and usually get if you buy organic. The fundamental basis of all these products is seed. And each grain of seed has a long history: Generations of farmers and breeders have left their traces in the genome of vegetable and cereals.

Organic farmers today grow both, traditional varieties and “modern industrial” varieties. Traditional varieties offer a wide range of taste and biodiversity but are often not suited for producing larger quantities. “Modern industrial” varieties are bred to perform best with artificial fertilizers and pesticides– but not under organic farming conditions.

Numerous initiatives in Europe have started to develop “modern” varieties for organic farming. An IFOAM standard for organic plant breeding exists since 2014. But organic plant breeding is not yet mainstream.

What's this conference about?

The conference will give an overview of successes of organic plant breeding till now, it will explore perspectives for the sector and will also discuss challenges and ways to overcome obstacles to the further development of organic plant breeding. It is the final event of the three-year project ‘Promoting Organic Plant Breeding in Europe’ (2016-2018). The projects’ results will be presented, focusing on best practice examples among European initiatives and strategies to make organic breeding a successful business. Political recommendations that would enable greater uptake of organic plant breeding and organic varieties will be discussed.

Also, the conference aims to explore the chances organic plant breeding offers to produce high quality food, increase biodiversity on our fields and increase climate change resilience of farming systems.

The project behind

The project ‘Promoting Organic Plant Breeding in Europe’ was initiated by the Demeter International e.V. EU Liaison Office in Brussels in January 2016. Organic plant breeding provides organic farmers with varieties which are adjusted to the low-input production system of organic agriculture. Increased organic plant breeding and cultivation will enhance the availability of regionally adapted varieties, agro-biodiversity, sustainable agriculture and environment protection.

While several breeding initiatives already work on a professional scale and have found financial support, most still lack financial stability. There are still European regions without organic breeding initiatives, mostly in the Mediterranean countries, and consequently there is lack of organic varieties suitable for these regions.

Aiming to promote the development and use of organic varieties on a European scale, the project ‘Promoting Organic Plant Breeding in Europe’ provides a platform for networking and discussion among organic plant breeders and stakeholders.

The event will be hosted by **MEP Maria Heubuch** (The Greens/EFA)

Conference Agenda

09:30 Registration & coffee

10:00 Welcome by Andreas Biesantz (Demeter-International e.V.)

10:10 Opening speech by MEP Maria Heubuch

10:30 ‘Promoting Organic Plant Breeding in Europe’ - Project presentation

Overview on main results and activities of the project ‘Promoting Organic Plant Breeding in Europe’ by Antje Kölling (Demeter Germany) and Andreas Biesantz

11:00 Panel 1: Financing and business models for organic plant breeding

- **Johannes Wirz** (Institute for Contextual Science, Goetheanum, Switzerland)
- **Stefan Doeblin** (Sementes Vivas, Portugal)
- **Maximilian Herstatt** (Belgium)
- **NN (tbc)** (LIVESEED, a Horizon 2020 project)

Within the scope of the project, two events (“*Who pays for the seed*” on 25 May 2016 and “*Seed as Commons*” on 19 October 2017 – both in Brussels) and a master thesis (“*Economic analysis of different seed value chains for organic carrot production - A multiple case study analysis*”) have centred around the basics of financing organic plant breeding. The authors of the study “*Seed as Commons*” and the master thesis present their insights. The two expert workshops “*Business models for organic plant breeding – chances and challenges*” (22-23 June 2017 in Echzell, Germany) and “*Let’s get real – how to build up your organic plant breeding business*” (16-18 May 2018 in Idanha-a-Nova, Portugal) have discussed concrete models on how to make an organic breeding initiative or company economically viable. The outcomes of the events will be presented and discussed.

12.15 Lunch

13.00 Panel 2: The role of farmers, consumers, traders and retailers in organic breeding

- **René Groenen** (De Beersche Hoeve, The Netherlands)
- **David Price** (Seed Cooperative, UK),
- **NN (tbc)** (Estafette Odin, The Netherlands)
- **NN (tbc)** (Breeder, Dottenfelderhof)

Moderation: **Lina Lasithiotaki** (Demeter-International e.V.)

The workshop “*Traders, Retailers and Consumers: What is their role in Organic Plant Breeding?*” (2 December 2016 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands) which took place in the scope of this project addressed the essential role of the wider food chain. Also, the trademark “*Bioverita*” which has been developed to label products from varieties resulting from organic plant breeding had been discussed in this workshop – the results and interesting outlooks on how the food chain and consumers could get involved will be discussed here. Q&A.

14.00 Panel 3: Policy aspects and strategies for promoting organic plant breeding in Europe

Introduction and moderation: **MEP Martin Häusling** (The Greens/EFA)

- **Alexander Gerber** (vice-president of Demeter-International e.V.)
- **Blanche Margarinos-Rey** (Artemisia-Lawyers, France)
- **NN (tbc)** (European Commission)
- **NN (tbc)** (IFOAM EU Group)

15.00 Coffee break

15.15 Conference conclusions and suggestions

Presented by **Antje Kölling** (Demeter Germany)

15:30 Outlook on the future of organic seed systems: “System based breeding – the way forward for the basis of sustainable food systems”

Edith Lammerts van Bueren (emeritus professor OPB Louis Bolk Institute and Wageningen University, The Netherlands)

16:00 End of conference

Conference moderation: **Hans Martin Lorenzen** (The Greens/EFA)

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