



ORGANIC
PLANT BREEDING

Promoting Organic Plant Breeding in Europe

Project Newsletter November 2017



Editorial

Dear Reader,

We invite you to join our networking activities and share with us your experiences and expertise on organic plant breeding and the use organic plant varieties. With our project, we hope to contribute to the important work of an international and diverse network of breeders, farmers, gardeners, scientists and organic food chain operators who are involved in the development of varieties suitable for organic farming and communicate their work to the wider audience.

With great pleasure we share with you the 2nd newsletter of the project *Promoting Organic Plant Breeding in Europe*. This second edition will present a review of the project's main activities in the first half year of 2017 as well as the next planned activities.

Yours sincerely,
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Content:
Editorial

Revision of the EU Organic Regulation.
Information about the project '*Promoting Organic Plant Breeding in Europe*'.
Project Activities in the first half of 2017.
Future Activities of the project '*Promoting Organic Plant Breeding in Europe*'.
Our Project is now on Social Media!
Other news about the organic plant breeding sector.

EU Policy

Revision of the EU Organic Regulation

On 28 June 2017, a provisional political agreement was reached between the three European Institutions (Council, Commission and Parliament) regarding the revision of the EU Organic Regulation. The current text still bears major problems; especially article 20 is subject to controversial discussions. In the current version, the law would oblige organic enterprises to notify and investigate all – even irrelevant – suspicions of contamination, which may put an extra administrative burden especially on organic processors without providing more safety for consumers.

A positive outcome of the new text may be the pilot project for the registration of organically bred varieties. The technical consistency check as well as the work on implementing rules will bring more clarity on final impacts on the organic sector.

However, the formal approval of the text in the Council of agriculture Ministers and in the EU Parliament will not happen before autumn. Demeter, together with BÖLW and IFOAM EU, tries to reach improvements in the text. The new EU organic regulation will most probably apply from 1 July 2020 on. Several deadlines for derogations are set in the regulation, such as for the use of conventional seed. A progress report on the availability of seed, animals and protein feed in organic quality is planned for 2025 and will have an impact on the actual date when derogations will end.

Please follow further developments on www.ifoam-eu.org.

Project '*Promoting Organic Plant Breeding in Europe*'

The project '*Promoting Organic Plant Breeding in Europe*' was initiated by the Demeter-International e.V. EU Liaison Office in Brussels at the beginning of 2016. The project aims to contribute to broadening the uptake of organic varieties in the organic sector and to stimulate organic plant breeding in Europe.

To promote the development and use of organic varieties on a European scale, this project provides a platform for networking and discussion among organic plant breeders and stakeholders. In the context of this project the EU Liaison Office is organizing a series of events which cover several topics concerning organic plant breeding. Activities also include communication activities such as a website providing basic information about the need for organic varieties and a set of factsheets for different target audiences.

Project Activities in the first half of 2017

Experts' workshop "Business models for organic plant Breeding"

As part of the POPOB project, the Demeter-International e.V. EU Liaison Office organized the workshop "Business models for organic plant breeding - chances and challenges" which took place on the 22nd- 23rd of June in Echzell (Germany).

The aim of the workshop was to exchange experiences and discuss about approaches to build successful networks and business models for organic plant breeding as well as to increase the use of organic plant varieties on organic farms. It was well attended by breeders, representatives of organic plant breeding and seed initiatives, farm advisors, organic farmers, representatives of seed production companies, scientists and other interested stakeholders from 12 countries (Austria, Belgium, Germany, Greece, The Netherlands, Slovenia, Switzerland, Portugal, UK, US and Argentina).

The workshop was organized in cooperation with [Bingenheimer Saatgut AG](#) and [Kultursaat e.V.](#) and was supported by the [IFOAM EU Group](#).



Please click [here](#) to download the report of the workshop.

The LIVESEED Project & the involvement of Demeter- International e.V.



LIVESEED is an EU project which is funded under the Horizon 2020 (EU Research & Innovation programme) and it is coordinated by the IFOAM EU Group. This project aims to improve the performance and competitiveness of the organic sector by boosting organic seed and plant breeding efforts.

To increase the availability and choice of organic seed, LIVESEED will (i) harmonize the implementation of legislative requirements and develop an EU-wide router database tool for

seed suppliers, (ii) develop improved cultivar testing systems, organic seed health and quality strategies, best practices for organic seed multiplication, and new variety testing protocols for the registration of cultivars for the organic sector, (iii) develop novel breeding concepts, selection tools, and genetic resources, (iv) explore plant-microbe interactions, (v) initiate new breeding networks to close major gaps for legumes, cereals, vegetables, fruit trees and fodder crops, (vi) identify bottlenecks in the organic seed market, (vii) develop business and governance models for breeding and seed production, (viii) engage stakeholder groups for knowledge exchange, practical training, and capacity building, and (ix) provide recommendations based on synthesis of LIVESEED outcomes.

The innovative multi-actor and -action research approach ('learning by doing') of this project ensures a broad and fast implementation of the project outputs across Europe. The LIVESEED consortium represents a multidisciplinary European partnership involving 48 organisations (35 partners + 13 third linked parties) and >30 stakeholders from 16 EU countries and Switzerland, including researchers, breeders, seed producers, organic associations and retailers. Demeter-International e.V. as a third-party linked to IFOAM EU is part of this consortium.

Combining scientific and practical knowledge will enable the consortium to generate innovative solutions adapted to the needs of end-users for different pedo-climatic and socio-economic contexts.

The main outcome will be an improved breeding efficiency and a greater choice and uptake of organic seed derived from resilient cultivars to optimize organic and low-input agriculture and strengthen sustainable food production in Europe.

What role will Demeter-International play?

All tasks involve several partners; therefore networking, coordination and cooperation will be an important issue in the project. Demeter-International will have a role in the following tasks:

- Analysing the status quo and determinants of current use and production of organic seed
- Improving the implementation of regulation on organic seed to stimulate its production and use
- Developing novel breeding concepts and modern strategies for organic and low-external input farming systems from trait-based to system based strategies
- Identifying the values associated with organic seed use and breeding in organic supply chains
- Analysing consumer attitudes towards new breeding techniques
- Developing a communication strategy and tools for an efficient outreach

Tasks will be carried out for Demeter-International e.V. by Antje Kölling and Lina Lasithiotaki.

For more information about the LIVESEED project: www.liveseed.eu

Future Activities of the project *Promoting Organic Plant Breeding in Europe*.

Project Activities in 2018.

The next planned activities of the project Promoting Organic Plant Breeding in Europe will be to organize:

- An experts' workshop to take place in Portugal in cooperation with [Sementes Vivas](#).
- Public conference in Brussels presenting the results of the project to civil society and to the EU decision makers

Our Project is now online!

We are happy to announce that our project website is ready! You can find the latest updates about the project on the website: <http://organic-plant-breeding.org/>

You can also find us on Twitter! Follow us on [OrganicPlantBreeding](#) and stay informed about the latest updates of the sector of organic plant breeding. Don't forget to use the hashtag **#organicplantbreeding**.

Other news about the organic plant breeding sector

DIVERSIFOOD Workshop: Enabling Crop Biodiversity on the Market

On the 27th of November the workshop "Enabling Crop Biodiversity on the Market" will take place in Brussels. The workshop is organised by Louis Bolk Institute (www.louisbolk.org), BioForum Flanders (www.bioforumvlaanderen.be) and ARCHE NOAH (www.arche-noah.at), funded by the DIVERSIFOOD project (www.diversifood.eu), hosted by the European Committee of the Regions (cor.europa.eu).

Statements and Objectives of the workshop:

- Genetic erosion of cultivated species is a threat to future agriculture and food security.
- Genetic resources need to be marketable as seeds, plants, food, feed or processed products to ensure sustainable conservation.
- Biodiversity conservation needs a multi-actor approach in which farmers are the central actors.
- Official procedures and the respective legal environments can be bottlenecks to crop biodiversity.
- Together with participants from Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands we are offering a chance to develop ways to make environments more diversity-friendly.

For more information please click [here](#).