

EU Seed policy and legislation

Challenges for Producers, Consumers and Citizens:

"Who will own the seeds?"

European Agriculture and Consumer Policy Conference

Venue: Residence Palace – International Press Centre, Brussels

Conference date: 22nd January 2014

Conference languages: English, French and German



Organized by **Demeter International** in co-operation with:

Arche Noah, Brot-fuer-die-Welt, ECO - PB, Kultursaat e.V., Network Economy Group, Peliti, Réseau Semences Paysannes

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EU seed legislation - an obstacle for farmers, breeders, gardeners, citizens and biodiversity

On 6 May 2013, the European Commission presented a draft for a new regulation on the marketing of seeds [COM (2013) 262] for consultation within the European Parliament and the European Council. The new regulation is supposed to substitute 12 EU-directives, which means EU rules would in the future be implemented directly in the Member States. While the legislative draft opens some new opportunities for niche markets and heterogeneous material, it leaves the interpretation of these new possibilities to implementing rules that would be for decision by the EU administrations in later steps, and maintains as a mainstream concept standardised, highly uniform seed. Moreover, it opens the possibility for large seed companies to examine a new variety in their own premises - this privatization could result in a situation where public services for variety examination would be further reduced, due to the loss of their major clients and consequently large parts of their income.

Who owns the seed – multinationals, farmers, breeders or citizens?

This conference will address the question on how citizens and civil society who are interested that biodiversity is maintained in food production contribute to its realization. How can we establish societal, ethical and economic models that allow safeguarding biodiversity in seeds as a cultural heritage and respecting the ethics of life? Seeds in their natural expression are a part of the local environment and cannot automatically be spread over Europe like for instance technical commodities like iPhones. Communities who maintain local varieties and crop populations need a sovereignty to do so. Therefore they need freedom from disproportionate bureaucratic burden the EU legislation on seed marketing would pose on them.

A forum to discuss the future of seed for stakeholders and policy makers

This conference brings together stakeholders and policy makers to discuss the proposed EU legislation for the marketing of plant reproductive material to discuss fair seed access for the diversity of producers. Moreover, it provides a forum for breeders, farmers, consumers, development NGOs and other stakeholders to exchange ideas on future models for plant breeding and alternative ownership models for plant varieties and populations.

Preliminary Program

8:30 Registration

9:00 Opening and Welcoming

Andreas Biesantz (Demeter International, EU Liaison Office)

MEP Nikos Chrysogelos (The Greens/ EFA)

MEP Sergio Silvestris (Rapporteur for Seed Legislation, European Parliament,
Committee on Agriculture, tbc)

9.30 Keynote speech - Hannah Townsend (writer of the article "Save our Seeds")

Panel 1: The EU Seed law – Chances and Challenges

9.45 Päivi Mannerkorpi (European Commission, DG SANCO, Head of Sector Material for Plant Reproduction) 'Legal proposal on marketing plant reproductive material – new possibilities for more diversified production'

10.00 Antje Kölling (IFOAM EU Group, Brussels): "Current European legislation and its consequences for the organic seed sector"

Questions and Discussion

10.20 Gebhard Rossmanith (Bingenheimer Saatgut AG and Kultursaat e.V., Germany): "Revision of the EU seed legislation - Chances and Risks for organic breeding – e.g. development of biodynamic vegetable varieties"

10.30 Pierre Sultana (Arche Noah, Austria): "Current European legislation and its consequences for biodiversity"

10:40 Discussion

Moderation: Arie van den Brand (tbc), Groupe de Bruges

11.00 Coffee break

Panel 2: Commons: The wider picture

11.30 Silke Helfrich (Author, co-founder of the "Commons-Strategies-Group", ex head of Heinrich Böll Foundation Thuringia and Mexico City): "Commons vs. commodities – a new framework for seed handling"

11:45 Edith Lammerts van Bueren (Wageningen University, Louis Bolk Institute and ECO-PB, The Netherlands): "Seed Research and Development, state of the art, participatory research"

12.00 Discussion

Moderation: Arie van den Brand (tbc), Groupe de Bruges

12.45 Presenting the 4 working groups for the afternoon session

13.00 Lunch

14.00 Working groups 1-4

Working group 1: "EU Seed Legislation and its consequences for the organic seed sector and biodiversity"

Working group leaders: Antje Kölling (IFOAM EU Group), Rikos Thanopoulos (Peliti, Greece), Gebhard Rossmann (Bingernheimer Saatgut A.G., Kultursaat e.V.)

Working group 2: "Economic aspects and needs for the organic seed sector – especially for smaller organizations, farmers and individuals", with inputs on the threats of African seed law harmonization by Million Belay (Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) and Stig Tanzmann (Brot-fur-die-Welt)

Working group leader: René Groenen (Kultursaat eV, the Netherlands) Amadeus Zschunke (Sativa Rheinau AG, Switzerland)

Working group 3: "Seeds as a common and property rights"

Working group leaders: Stefan Doeblin (Network Economy Group) and Silke Helfrich (author, co-founder of the "Commons-Strategies-Group", ex head of Heinrich Böll Foundation Thuringia and Mexico City), with inputs from Frédéric Thomas (author) "Seeds: An History of Politics" and Susanne Gura (Verein zur Erhaltung der Nutzpflanzenvielfalt e. V., Germany) "The role of protected and non-protected material in the proposed seed marketing legislation".

Working group 4: "Citizens' and farmers' participation"

Working group leaders: Véronique Chable (INRA, France), Andreas Biesantz (Demeter Int. and ELIANT), Carsten Berg (Expert for European Citizens' Initiatives), Ueli Hurter (Head of the Biodynamic Section at the Goetheanum, Switzerland and organizer of "Sowing the future")

16.00 Coffee break

16.30 Plenary: Presentation of working group results including intervention from Guy Kastler (Réseau Semences Paysannes, France), open discussion and main conclusions

Moderation: Arie van den Brand (tbc), Groupe de Bruges

17.30 Final keynote speech of MEP Martin Häusling (The Greens/EFA)

17.50 Closing the conference: Andreas Biesantz (Demeter International)

18:00 End of conference