

International Federation
of Organic Agriculture Movements
EU Regional Group

MEP Paolo De Castro

Chairman of the AGRI Committee in the European Parliament

MEP Sergio Silvestris

AGRI Committee Rapporteur for the S&PRM law

Brussels, 11 December 2013

Parliament must stand up for S&PRM law that favours diversity

Dear Mr. de Castro,

Dear Mr. Silvestris,

We understood that members of the large political groups S&D and EPP in the AGRI committee of the European Parliament call to reject the Commission proposal on the production and making available on the market of seed and plant reproductive material (S&PRM law, COM 2013/262). IFOAM EU believes that the simple rejection of the Commission proposal is not the right approach - the European Parliament would therewith abdicate from its responsibility as co-legislator on this important issue. The EP must either propose amendments to fundamentally improve the Commission proposal, or if it rejects the proposal it must provide a clear message to the Commission on how to improve the legislation.

The European Parliament must work for constructive approaches that results in a seed legislation that allows different actors to place their seed on the market without disproportionate burden and that enables farmers to buy seed for their specific needs. Currently, for example, organic farmers suffer from a lack of appropriate varieties for low input/organic agriculture mainly because the existing framework legislation sets restrictive rules for the registration of varieties which prevents less uniform varieties from being marketed. Furthermore, the Parliament must ensure that the laws deliver on the objectives the European Union has committed to - conserving biodiversity, halting the erosion of genetic resources and guaranteeing farmers have access to genetic resources¹. These objectives cannot be reached if - after the Commission has proposed legislation with significant flaws - the Parliament neglects its duty to legislate and fails to provide a clear message on what needs to be improved.

The European Parliament must engage in the process and send a strong message to the Commission to propose an S&PRM legislation that ensures:

- The exchange and sale of S&PRM by farmers, gardeners, private persons, gene banks, networks and initiatives active in the conservation of agro-biodiversity must be taken **out of the scope** of the legislation in order not to discourage the important work these actors perform for future generations. The conservation of genetic resources, biodiversity and the cultural heritage associated therewith

¹ Objectives formulated in the EU Biodiversity strategy towards 2020, EU vision for biodiversity towards 2050, The international Convention on Biological Diversity and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

needs a diversity of many actors, any requirements for certification or registration would put disproportionate bureaucratic burden on their shoulders.

- **Simplified registration** is available on the basis of an officially recognised description of a frequency of characteristics **for old and new open pollinated varieties and populations** with a broader intra-varietal genetic basis. This includes landraces, conservation varieties, multicomponent varieties, population crosses between open pollinated populations or open pollinated varieties with high level of heterogeneity, and composite cross populations. This simplified registration must allow for S&PRM to be produced and marketed without geographical and quantitative restrictions.
- **Adapted rules** for the official testing and registration of open pollinated varieties targeted at specific uses such as **organic and low input farming**. This would include making the examination of value for cultivation and/or use voluntary; adapting testing conditions to the expected use of the variety; using criteria for distinctiveness, uniformity and stability, which are adapted to open pollinated varieties and varieties produced for organic farming; and reducing examined characteristics to agronomic relevant traits.
- **Transparency of breeding methods used** and any intellectual property rights in the description of varieties in the variety register to ensure the freedom of choice for breeders and farmers to choose varieties that are not obtained by - for example - the use of molecular biological laboratory techniques such as protoplast fusion.

We trust that you will seriously consider our recommendations in the ongoing discussions and IFOAM EU remains at your disposal to answer further questions.

Yours sincerely



Marco Schlüter
Director