

European citizens must stand up for diversity on our plates!

European Court of Justice judgement is no big step for diversity

Brussels, 12 July 2012 – Today, the European Court of Justice published its judgementⁱ concerning the use of rare variety seeds and declared that the EU's seed marketing laws are valid and appropriate.

"This judgement is no good news for all those who want a wide diversity of colourful and tasty tomatoes and peppers on their plates", commented Dorota Metera, Vice President of the IFOAM EU Groupⁱⁱ. "The EU seed legislation still handicaps the marketing of traditional varieties that could be grown on European fields and favours homogeneity and large scale breeding. The European Court of Justice has failed to respond to the concerns of seed savers across the EU. Consumers and farmers must now reclaim ownership of our food: We call on European citizens to speak out for EU laws that favour diversity on our plates, healthy food for all and diverse landscapesⁱⁱⁱ!"

"A diversity of domestic plants is the basis for our long-term food security. Climate change, emerging plant pests or even new allergies may require us in the future to use plant varieties that we do not necessarily consider important today, due to their specific genetic characteristics", adds Antje Kölling, policy manager of IFOAM EU Group. "The FAO estimates that 75 percent of domestic plant varieties globally have been lost in the last 100 years^{iv}. This trend must be urgently be reversed."

The EU is currently revising its seed marketing legislation - it must finally facilitate market access for traditional varieties and farm bred varieties. Moreover, the EU needs to set a framework for the marketing of open-pollinating varieties with a broader intra-varietal genetic diversity that are professionally bred. These are varieties with increased resilience to changing environmental conditions, which many organic farmers and farmers producing special qualities want to use and which all farmers may need in the future to address specific local conditions.

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ⁱSummary of the judgment in Case C-59/11, Association Kokopelli v Graines Baumaux SA:

<http://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2012-07/cp120097en.pdf>

Full text:

<http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=125002&pageIndex=0&doclang=en&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=18938>

The recommendation by the general advocate had pointed out before that the current seed marketing legislation contradicts certain European policy objectives:

<http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?docid=118143&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&cid=354849>

ⁱⁱ The IFOAM EU Group is the European working level within the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements. It brings together more than 250 organisations, associations and enterprises from all EU-27, EFTA and candidate countries. IFOAM's goal is the worldwide adoption of ecologically, socially and economically sound systems that are based on the principles of Organic Agriculture.

ⁱⁱⁱ Send a picture, join the good food march: <http://www.goodfoodmarch.eu/home.html>

^{iv} 75% of plant varieties in use got lost in past century:

<http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/004/V1430E/V1430E04.htm>



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