

# How to access organic seeds in Hungary

## Problems

Seeds are the foundation of farming. Therefore, organic production should start with organic seed. In Hungary, as in the whole European Union, organic production is regulated by EC regulation 834/2007, which states that organic producers should use seeds or other propagation material that are produced under organic farming conditions if they are available. However, getting a derogation for the use of conventional untreated seeds is still major practice and hampers the development of the organic seed market<sup>1</sup>. There are currently some Hungarian seed companies that can produce organic cereal seeds, but only on demand. On the other hand, there are no Hungarian seed companies that produce organic seeds for vegetables. With the revision of the organic regulation, it is foreseen that the use of organic seed will become obligatory without exception. To avoid any seed shortage, the organic seed supply chain needs to be established.

## Solutions

### Database

The organic seed database (<http://portal.nebih.gov.hu/oko-vetomag>) is a tool where farmers can look for organic seeds available on the national market. At the moment, the Hungarian national organic seed database does not exploit its full potential, as there are only a few entries. To increase the transparency of available seed, seed companies need to be regularly encouraged to enter their supply of organic seed and farmers should use the database to get in contact with suppliers.

### National seed companies

There are a number of Hungarian seed producing companies who are certified and willing to produce organic seeds, but only on explicit demand. Therefore, self-organisation of farmers, or their organisation through market actors (such as crop purchasing companies) would help to create a stable demand for organic certified seeds. Clear commitment of the farmers to use organic seed will encourage local seed companies to invest in organic seed businesses.

### International seed companies

For the vegetable sector it is now quite easy to find international seed companies that offer a broad range of organic seeds via on-line marketing. Therefore, organic vegetable farmers ensure their seed supply mostly from international organic seed companies, or they buy untreated conventional seeds of Hungarian varieties.

### Farm-saved seeds

Farm-saved seeds are commonly used by organic cereal farmers (>90%) in order to reduce input costs and to use material that is better adapted to local conditions. However, the quality management of farm-saved seeds often poses a major risk. Hence, training courses, visits to best practice examples, technical leaflets, videos or any other educational and training material would be essential to build farmers' capacity of producing high quality organic farm-saved seeds.

### Practical recommendations

- Organic variety trials combined with farmer field days can showcase farmers the advantages of using organic multiplied seeds of varieties adapted to organic conditions.
- You can establish organic variety trials, maybe in network with other farmers and get in touch with seed suppliers to negotiate on organic seed production.
- A working group on organic seed that involves all actors in the sector can facilitate strategic planning and harmonise actions in favour of organic seed use and domestic organic seed production.
- Farmer trainings and capacity building in producing high quality seed will further improve the availability of organic seed.
- Finally, policy incentives can encourage farmers to use organic seed and support seed companies produce organic seed.

### Further information

1. [ECO-PB Workshop report \(2013\)](#) on the upcoming changes in seed regulation at the EU level and across different EU countries.
2. [A Seed Saving Guide for Gardeners and Farmers \(2010\)](#), Organic Seed Alliance

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