



Country Report for Romania

Work Package: WP01 - Regulation & policy framework regarding production, use, and transparency of organic seed

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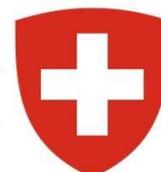
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About the report

This report has been produced in the framework of the Horizon 2020-funded project LIVESEED.¹ The main aim of LIVESEED is to boost the production and use of organic seeds and plant breeding for organic agriculture across Europe. It is co-ordinated by IFOAM EU, and its scientific coordinator is FiBL-CH.

Work Package 01 of LIVESEED explores EU Member States in terms of their implementation and best practices connected to the EU Organic Regulations, in the contexts of national regulatory and policy frameworks, specifically regarding the production, use, and transparency of organic seed.

As part of this Work Package, Bionext, FiBL-DE and IFOAM EU visited selected countries during 2017-2018, where the organic seed production is low, to understand their bottlenecks and possibilities for improvements regarding the production and the use of organic seeds at the national level. During the visits, several stakeholder groups were interviewed (competent authorities, seed database managers, seed companies, research institutions, organic farmers, seed associations, organic certifiers, etc) in each country.

The main outcomes of the visits were summarized in country reports presenting the status quo for that given Member State. The reports' findings then were disseminated among a wide range of national stakeholders in 2019 and discussed during workshops to define viable next steps to improve the status quo in each country. The Workshop for Romania took place on 19th June 2019 in Fundulea and was co-organised by the LIVESEED partner National Agricultural Research and Development (NARDI).

This country report is recommended for national policymakers, and all stakeholders involved in the production and use of organic seed: national authorities, farmers, certifiers, producers, retailers, plant breeders, seed authorities, and the general public.

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¹ <http://liveseed.eu>



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Implementation of the regulation on organic seed in Romania

Findings from the national visit to Romania, 12-15th March 2018

1. General information

In 2017, there were 7,908 organic farmers in Romania covering 1,77% (258,471 ha) of the agricultural land area. From this area 19,61% is permanent grassland, 71,53% is covered with arable crops and 5,09 % are permanent crops (Source: The World of Organic Agriculture – Statistics & Emerging Trends 2019).

2. Production and use of organic seed

Farmers are the main producers of organic (and conventional) seed in Romania. There are over four thousand farmers registered as seed producer and above one hundred of them are organic farmers. To be authorised as a seed producer, farmers must know the seed regulation in force and pass an exam with the local seed authorities. When a farmer is registered as a seed producer, the field is inspected, the seed quality is tested, and their seed is certified. The seed companies that sell organic seed on the Romanian market are predominantly international companies.

Many organic farmers in Romania re-use their own seed. This farm saved seed is accepted as organic seed, so no derogation is needed for this.

3. Implementation of the EU regulation: the database and derogation policy

The organic department from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is responsible for the Romanian organic seed database. The database is a PDF file on the Ministry's website. There is a separate list for seed mixtures. This list is currently empty.

There are 41 counties in Romania, and in every county one person is responsible for all organic issues, including the rules on organic seed. To offer your seed on the database you must prove that you are an authorised seed producer or supplier and your seed must be certified organic. Seed suppliers must submit all documents on paper to the county level agricultural authority. The Ministry uploads all information to the online database as soon as a change in the seed offer has been communicated. For seed mixtures a special form must be used. Foreign companies that want to enter the database need a branch (legal basis) in Romania and the company must register at the county level. Their seed must be certified as organic by a Romanian certifier.

The certifiers are responsible for granting the derogations. Farmers must request a derogation three months before cultivation. To receive a derogation, they must prove that there is no organic seed available from the variety they want to use. To prove this, they have to ask 2 or 3 (depending on their certifier) seed suppliers for organic seed. If those suppliers declare on paper that they cannot deliver it, the farmer will get a derogation. There is no general derogation list.

4. Policy measures to increase production and use of organic seed

From 2015 to 2018, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development funded a research project aiming to develop organic seed production for the main arable crops. The project included several field trials and organic seed production at NARDI Fundulea and at experimental stations in Pitești, Valu lui Traian (Constanța) and Șimnic (Dolj).



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At the NARDI research centre there are ongoing organic comparative field trials for arable field crops (wheat, barley, triticale, oat, millet, buckwheat, maize, peas, lentils, lupine, soybean, camelina, sunflower), forage crops (alfalfa, trifolium, grasses) and medicinal crops (coriander, Phacelia, *Crambe tataria*). NARDI Fundulea also participates in breeding research in the LIVESEED project and in the European project 'Eco-Breed' with wheat and soybean. Romania is member of the Danube soya initiative. This is mainly a conventional initiative for the production of non-GMO soya, but they also organise field trials on organic farms.

5. Obstacles and opportunities

One obstacle is the fact that the current seed database is not functional. Most organic seed that is on the market is sold directly to farmers and not offered on the database. Therefore, the database is not used by farmers. The certification bodies do not rely on the organic seed database either. They ask the farmers for additional prove to show that organic seed from a specific variety is not available.

The database is also difficult to access for seed suppliers. The deadline for putting seed on the database does not match with the process of seed cleaning and registration. Seed producers know only after this deadline how much organic seed there will be available for sale.

Many farmers produce organic to receive more European subsidies. They do not sell their products on the organic market and they are not interested in organic seeds.

Farmers can also easily circumvent the use of organic seed. They just ask for a variety for which no organic seed is available. Sometimes farmers even invent variety names when asking for a derogation.

An organic farmer mentioned that his organic products were decertified due to the fact that the certifier found residues of chemicals in his seed. He used untreated conventional seed for which he received a derogation. According to one of the certifiers it is sometimes questionable if the conventional seeds that are used are really untreated. The question is how to check this, since untreated conventional seeds may also contain residues.

Although there is not enough organic seed available for any crop to fulfil the demand, it is quite easy for farmers to access organic cereal seed. For crops with many hybrids like maize, sunflower and rape seed, the seed access is more difficult. Big seed companies that produce hybrids are not interested in producing for the small organic market; they see no market for organic seed in Romania.

Vegetables are a niche which is weakly developed in Romania. Therefore, there are no organic seeds from suitable varieties available. In cases where the farmer produces organic products under contract, the buyer of the product usually decides what varieties are used and they also deliver the seeds.

According to one seed company the problem for organic farmers is not the lack of good genetics (varieties), but the farm management and the preparation of the soil. Many farmers have not learned how to manage a farm.

An opportunity is the fact that there are many skilled organic farmers in Romania that are registered as seed producer, e.g. in the Tulcea region which has the largest area of organic farming. This is due to the fact that the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve is located nearby. Only organic farming is allowed in this Natura 2000 area. In this region, a cooperative of large farmers is aiming to become self-sufficient in their organic seed production. They have their own seed cleaning factory and sell the cleaned seeds directly to their members.



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6. Recommendations from the stakeholders

- Create incentives for seed producers and farmers to make organic seed more attractive.
- Research institutes that have a production part are potential producers of organic seed.
- Create a market for organic seed; increase the demand. If there is a demand, more companies will offer organic seed.
- Find the right crops to grow organic in Romania and then invest in adapted varieties. Focus on specific crops e.g. soy seeds.
- The production of seeds should be closer to the demands of consumers; it is important to select suitable organic cultivars and breed new ones.
- Romanian people are looking for quality food even if they are poor. This is a cultural aspect and an opportunity for organic farmers and producers.
- Reduce the administrative burden; some seed producers work organic but are not certified, because it is a very bureaucratic process.
- Create an expert group on organic seed.
- Subsidise the use of organic seeds.
- Currently most organic farmers export their products. Creating a market here will help to create a market for organic seeds.
- Make it easier for seed suppliers to remove seed offers from the database or to enter new seeds; currently this is very complicated.
- Education and practical trainings about organic farming and breeding are needed.

7. More information

Romanian seed database:

<https://www.madr.ro/agricultura-ecologica/baza-de-date-seminte-sii-ae.html>

Derogation reports:

<https://www.madr.ro/agricultura-ecologica/baza-de-date-seminte-ecologice.html>

National legislation for organic farming:

<https://www.madr.ro/agricultura-ecologica/legislatie-nationala-ae.html>

Research:

http://www.incda-fundulea.ro/index_en.html

<http://www.donausoja.org/en/home/>

Database of seed producers http://date.incs.bvl.ro/agenti/agenti_public.aspx



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