

Organic seed from community seed banks

Problems

Organic growers often buy hybrids or commercial seeds, bred for intensive industrial agriculture, which are usually not suitable for organic and local growing conditions. Alternatively, they grow their own seeds, or they get seeds from neighbours. These seeds usually do not cover all crop and market needs, are of limited quantity and often of low quality .

Solutions

Community participatory selection

Good quality organically bred, locally suitable seeds are needed, that are compatible with organic standards and certification. Community seed banks safeguard landraces or heirloom varieties, farmers selections and obsolete varieties grown by farmers at local level. Participatory organic breeding is a tool for valorising agrobiodiversity in a sustainable way where farmers have the primary role and can benefit acting as custodians. Good seed, from best selected local traditional varieties means better quality products for consumers, more effective farming and low cost of production.



Figure 1. Seed school (Photo: Aegilops)

Practical recommendations

- Agronomists can help and train farmers and community seed banks how to select their own best varieties and produce high quality seed.
- Farmers can benefit from being members of community seed banks contributing with selection and seed production.
- Participatory organic breeding can help farmers meet market needs and should involve other food chain actors (consumers, processors, retailers, chefs).
- Produced seed should meet also organic quality seed standards.
- Organic seed production initiatives can contribute to sustainability of community seed banks in local level .



Figure 2: On farm tomato evaluation (Photo: Aegilops)

Key message: Organic thrives when agrobiodiversity is let to evolve

Further information

1. AEGILOPS Seed Schools: <http://www.aegilops.gr/>
2. Biodiversity International : **Community seed banks: concept and practice** Facilitator handbook
https://www.bioversityinternational.org/fileadmin/user_upload/CSB_Vernooy_2017.pdf

Authors: Kostas Koutis, Christina Vakali (AEG)

Contact: info@aegilops.gr

Publisher: ÖMKi Hungarian Research Institute of Organic Agriculture

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LIVESEED: Boosting organic seed and plant breeding across Europe. LIVESEED is based on the concept that cultivars adapted to organic systems are key for realising the full potential of organic agriculture in Europe. Research project 2017-2021.

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