

The obligation to use organic seed – farmers' awareness

Problems

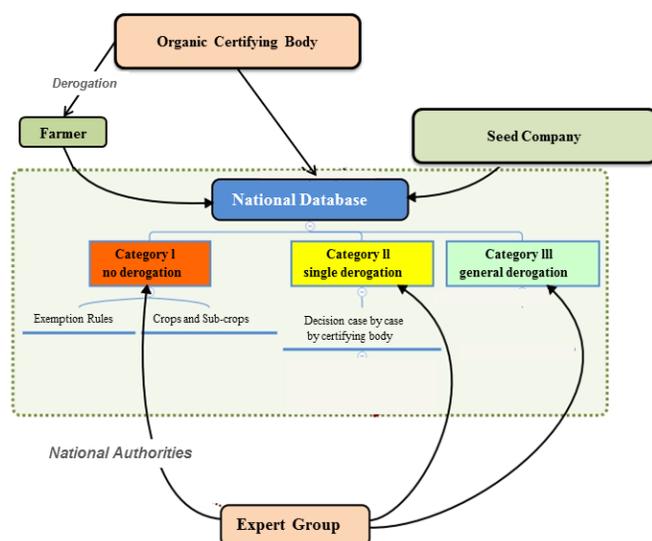
According to European organic regulations, organic farmers must use organic seed when available. The availability and specific rules for derogations differ per member state. In the Netherlands, farmers converting to organic farming are often not aware of these rules. This causes a relatively high number of deviations during control visits by the certifier.

Solutions

Biodatabase: In the Netherlands, the availability of organic seed and vegetative propagating material can be found on the Biodatabase¹ managed by the Naktuinbouw. Seed suppliers must inform the Naktuinbouw about changes in their offer.

National Annex: The Netherlands is one of the countries that implemented a National Annex listing crops and sub-crops for which sufficient organic seed is available in their territory and thus no derogation is granted. Based on seed availability per crop, crops are put on category I. (no derogation), II. (derogation possible) or III. (general derogation). Expert groups, consisting of seed suppliers and farmers, advise the government each year on the category classification²

Derogations: Farmers that want to use conventional seed or vegetative propagating material must request a derogation at the national certifier Skal³. The reasons for derogation and additional rules for vegetative propagating material can be found on the national organic seed



Schematic overview of the regulating system on organic seed use in the Netherlands

Practical recommendations

- The certifier should explain the national rules for organic seed use to farmers in conversion
- The national organic seed database should be well known and easily found by organic farmers

Further information

1. National organic seed database, including National Annex: www.biodatabase.nl/en
2. Bionext on the National Annex project: <https://bionext.nl/thema-s/biodiversiteit/annex/>
3. Skal (Dutch organic certifier) on the use of organic seed: www.skal.nl/certificeren/teelt-van-gewassen/voorwaarden/biologisch-uitgangsmateriaal

Authors: Niels Heining & Maaïke Raaijmakers (Bionext)

Contact: raaijmakers@bionext.nl

Publisher: ÖMKi Hungarian Research Institute of Organic Agriculture

Date: May 2020

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.

Social Media: Facebook [[LIVESEED](https://www.facebook.com/LIVESEED)] & Twitter [[@LIVESEEDeu](https://twitter.com/LIVESEEDeu)]

