

## **Food & Democracy, April 2009 - Minutes of Workshop C6: Diversity of Seeds and Breeding - Basis for GMO-free Food & Feed**

*Our seeds are an indispensable basis for GMO-free food and feed. How to maintain and develop existing varieties as well as breed new varieties will determine whether GMO-free seeds will be available for the long term. The cultivation of GMOs and a creeping threat of contamination jeopardize GMO-free seeds.*

The workshop aimed at presenting proactive, GM-free breeding approaches. It focussed on positive examples and alternatives to genetically modified seeds. The group discussed ways how to strengthen and promote GMO-free breeding and developing of GMO-free seeds.

### **The Agenda was:**

- (1) Input: GMO-free breeding: Approaches of Sativa Rheinau AG - The example: Breeding of sweet corn.
- (2) Input: On-farm conservation of GMO-free, traditional varieties - The concept of Red de Semillas and the importance of on-farm conservation for GMO-free breeding.

→ Both presentations are available (pdf) on: <http://www.gmo-free-regions.org/food-democracy-april-2009/workshops/workshop-c6.html>

### The following discussion focussed on two main topics:

a) The presentation of Red de Semillas made clear, that there is a need for preserving „old“/traditional varieties on farm. (Here, of course, we have to guarantee a GMO-free conservation.) In this context it will be necessary to promote the demand for local varieties and local products and to promote the seed exchange between farmers. Preserving traditional varieties is important firstly, because they are our heritage. Secondly, because they are the basis of breeding: Even if some of the old varieties are not suitable for modern agriculture they may have a certain characteristic (e.g. resistance, special taste), which could be useful for breeding new varieties.

b) The presentation of Sativa Rheinau AG emphasized, that there is a special need for organic, GMO-free breeding. What is organic breeding? It is breeding in the fields not in a laboratory. Why organic breeding? On the one hand organic farmers require varieties which are suitable for organic farming systems. On the other hand they need varieties which are suitable for the market and the consumer demand.

### The participants firstly thought about how to guarantee GMO-free organic breeding today and in the future:

- The goal must be: 0% contamination in the EU and worldwide.
- A strong regulation of GMO's and a support by government is needed in every country.
- There should be a guarantee for protection areas for breeding.
- Farmers, breeders, the GMO-free movement and politicians from all political parties should work together for GMO-free breeding and agriculture.

### Secondly the group discussed how to strengthen and promote GMO-free breeding:

- Breeding is interminable and expensive - how to finance organic breeding in a relatively small market? Seeds „for free“ is no possibility. New financing models are absolutely essential (e.g. „Fair breeding“). Also consumers and producers have to change their minds: If society wants 100%-organic food everybody has to pay for breeding.
- Farmers, breeders and consumers should work together and promote each other.
- Organic breeding should be part of academic studies and research.



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