

Who is Who? - Saving & Developing Seeds in Germany

Who is saving the diversity of cultivated plants and/or fighting for peasant rights of saving seeds in your country? Who is involved in GMO-free seed production? Are there new groups or networks that are setting up?

The following overview tries to characterise initiatives and organisations concerning: Saving the diversity for cultivated plants (Conservation), Fighting for peasant rights of saving seeds (peasant rights), propagating GE-free seeds (GE-free seeds), Breeding, Lobbying for GE-free seeds (Lobbying), Public relations/education (PR), and Network of initiatives (Network).

- ABDP, Association of bio-dynamic plant breeders: Conservation, GE-free seeds, Breeding. <http://www.abdp.org/>
- Bingenheimer Saatgut AG: GE-free seeds, PR, Kooperation with Kultursaat e.V. <http://www.oekoseeds.de/>
- BUKO Campaign against Biopiracy: Peasant rights, PR. <http://www.biopiraterie.de>
- Dreschflegel GbRmbH / e.V. / Schaugarten: Conservation, Peasant rights, GE-free seeds, Breeding, PR. <http://www.dreschflegel-saatgut.de/index.php>
- IGN, Initiative against reproduction fees: Peasant rights, GE-free seeds, Lobbying. <http://www.ig-nachbau.de/>
- IG Saatgut, Initiative for GE-free Breeding: Conservation, GE-free seeds, Lobbying, PR, Network (of Austrian, Switzerland and German initiatives). <http://www.gentechnikfreie-saat.de/>
- KERN, Network of German conservations initiatives: Conservation, Network. Contact via VERN.
- Kultursaat e.V., Breeding for Quality: Conservation, GE-free seeds, OP varieties for market gardeners. <http://www.kultursaat.org/>
- Pomologenverein, Pomology Association: Conservation, PR. <http://www.pomologenverein.de/>
- SAN, Seeds Action Network: conservation & utilization strategies for PGR + trad. knowledge in Europe + global South; advocacy on legislation + socio-economics of plant breeding incl. IPR, resistance to agro-GE; agroco@gmail.com
- SOS, Save our Seeds : GE-free seeds, Lobbying, PR. <http://www.saveourseeds.org/>
- VEN, Association for the Conservation of Cultivated Plants: Conservation, GE-free seeds, PR. <http://www.nutzpflanzenvielfalt.de/>
- VERN, Association vor the Conservations and Recultivation of Cultivated Plants in Brandenburg e.V.: Conservation, GE-free seeds, Breeding, PR. <http://www.vern.de/>

Please give some examples for using cultivated biodiversity. How do you see the importance of peasant, local or traditional varieties for agriculture and vegetable gardening?

Many peasant, local or traditional varieties have been abandoned to a large extend. Otherwise conservations organisations are doing an important work in protecting the use and know-how of biodiversity. But the market is strongly uniform in using about 15 main vegetable corps, which are represented by only a few varieties.

Which are the main (legal) obstacles that constrain you? How can you avoid them?

Missing implementation of directive 98/95/EC

As long as the directive 98/95/EC is not implemented, farmers' seeds, traditional, local and "conservation" varieties are not allowed to be commercialised. In order to get a licence a variety has to be "distinct, uniform, stable" and needs "a value of cultivation and use" like any conventional variety. Getting a licence is very often too expensive. Furthermore biodiversity does not need to be uniform at all but should be distinct and identifiable. Seeds of traditional, local or new varieties that have no licence cannot be sold. Initiatives that are providing them can only get money for non-profit purpose. The recent proposition of the standing committee of DG Sanco (Health and Consumer directorate) for agricultural corps would not improve the situation. It would restrict the marketing regarding to the region of origin and to the quantities to be marketed.

Reproduction fee

Since UPOV 1991 the seed regulations have tightened breeder's rights. Farmers became obliged to pay a reproduction fee. In order to make farmers pay, seed industries in Germany in cooperation with the German Farmers Union (DBV) have established an institution that is called "Saatgut Treuhand". This institution has to explore the farmers who are using seeds from their yields to sow. They even brought farmers to court if they had refused answering. There are recently strong efforts to change the law and oblige conditioners to hand out any information about the seeds that they are cleaning.

Law on Gene technology

The existing law (GENTG) does allow GE-cultivation and field testing which is bad enough. The government intends to change it and promote GE-culture even more, especially GE-research. The release of GE-wheat and GE-peas at Gatersleben shows to which extent: it risks to contaminate the accessions of the gene bank. The gene bank of the Leibniz Institute of Plant Genetics and Crop Plant Research was used to be an important partner for all those who want to conserve and use ancient varieties. But it is no longer fulfilling its mission of conserving bio-diversity for the general public. Instead it has started to collaborate with big biotechnical companies like BASF.

Which are the public gene banks in your country? What is the cooperation with them like? Do the gene banks have public access? How do they assure GMO-free quality?

- Gene bank of the IPK (Institute on Plant Genetics and Crop Plant Research) at Gatersleben (branch offices Groß-Lüsewitz and Malchow) <http://www.ipk-gatersleben.de/Internet/Forschung/Genbank>
- Fruit Trees: BAZ (Federal Centre for Breeding Research on Cultivated Plants), Institute of Fruit Breeding at Dresden-Pillnitz <http://www.bafz.de/baz2006V4/index.php?id=104>
- Grape Vine: BAZ, Institute of Grapevine Breeding Geilweilerhof <http://www.bafz.de/baz2006V4/index.php?id=319>
- Hop: LfL (Bavarian Regional agency on Agriculture), Institute for Crop cultivation and breeding <http://www.lfl.bayern.de/ipz/hopfen/>
- Tobacco: LAB (Regional agency on Agriculture, Baden-Wuerttemberg)

What are the perspectives of public gene banks for the future in your country?

See report about IPK Gatersleben