

Slovenian autochthonous varieties in organic production

Doc. Dr. Mihaela Černe, scientific councillor

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?

In Slovenia, autochthonous varieties are spread in organic production. These varieties are adapted to climatic and other conditions and they have good yield even in unfavourable conditions.

At Agricultural Institute of Slovenia, 2 cv. of cabbage, 1 cv. of dwarf bean, 3 cv. of pole bean, 1 cv. of wheat, 14 cv. of potatoes, 12 cv. of grasses, and 3 cv. of clovers have been bred since 1980.

At Biotechnical Faculty, University of Ljubljana, 4 cv. of buckwheat, 1 cv. of winter rye, 1 cv. of onion, 3 cv. of maize and 1 cv. of *Helianthus tuberosus* were bred.

Institute for Hop and Brewery has bred 14 cv. of hops.

At other institutions, seed firms and schools, 1 cv of oil rape, 2 cv. of turnip cabbage, 2 cv. of turnip, 6 cv. of chicory, 2 cv. of shallot, 2 cv. of onion, 2 cv. of garlic, 1 cv. of cabbage, 1 cv. of Brussels sprout, 1 cv. of pepper, 1 cv. of endive, 4 cv. of lettuce, 1 cv. of parsnip, 4 cv. of dwarf bean, 4 cv. of pole bean, 4 cv. of radish, 1 cv. of spinach, and 4 cv. of corn salad were bred.

All these varieties were included in the Slovenian Variety List and could be bought in seed shops. Many bred varieties have the name of the place from which the landraces originate, for example corn salad 'Ljubljanski', cabbage 'Ljubljansko zelje', lettuce 'Ljubljanska ledenka', garlic 'Ptujski', onion 'Ptujka', turnip 'Kranjska podolgovata' and 'Kranjska okrogla', pole bean 'Jabelski pisanec', 'Jabelski stročnik', cabbage 'Kranjsko okroglo', potato 'Pšata', 'Bistra', 'KIS Sora', grass 'Loka', and clover 'Poljanka'.

There are three gene banks in Slovenia:

at Agricultural Institute of Slovenia (vegetables, grasses, wheat, clovers),

at Biotechnical Faculty, University of Ljubljana (buckwheat, maize, wheat, aromatic and medicinal plants),

at Institute for Hop and Brewery in Žalec (hop, aromatic and medicinal plants).

In frame of the European project on biodiversity we had collected autochthonous cultivars of pole and dwarf bean, corn salad, tomato, wheat, maize, clover, which were produced by organic farmers.

At Demeter Slovenia and Union of Organic Farmers, the Section for Seed Promotion, we would like to keep in production as many as possible of our landraces that have been produced on farms for more than 50 to 100 years. Our landraces are our national and cultural heritage and, therefore, we have to take care not to lose them. Organic farmers produce the seeds and they exchange it with other farmers.

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?

The National List of Varieties for 2006 contains:

2 cv. of buck wheat	16 cv. of oil and fibre plants
4 cv. of oats	1 cv. of shallot
12 cv. of barley	2 cv. of onion
2 cv. of millet	2 cv. of cabbage
2 cv. of rye	1 cv. of pepper
41 cv. of wheat	2 cv. of oil squash
68 cv. of maize	1 cv. of carrot
31 cv. of potato	2 cv. of lettuce
26 cv. of grasses	1 cv. of tomato
15 cv. of legumes	3 cv. of dwarf bean
19 cv. of beet	6 cv. of pole bean
	2 cv. of corn salad

Landraces are not sold on the market; they are used only for the exchange between farmers or growers. The seed of landraces is produced by farmers or growers.

At the Organic Association we have tried to have GMO free regions, especially in the regions where organic production prevails.

The main points of the promotion of landrace production are the following:

- landraces are adapted to our growing conditions,
- they represent our national and cultural heritage,
- they are good for processing, for example cv. 'Ljubljansko' and 'Emona' cabbage gave very good sauerkraut,
- lettuce landrace has very hard heads and they bold later.

This year we have started to produce certified seed from landraces. Some producers are interested in having a larger area of this production, especially in the regions where GMO plants will not be grown. Some communities in Slovenia like to be declared for GMO free regions and in these regions landraces are produced.

On the List of Conservation Varieties we will include landraces from which seed will be produced.