

Let's Liberate Diversity IV

October 10-12, 2008

Italy

Ascoli Cartiere Papali

The forth European meeting will take place in the city of Ascoli, Marche region, Italy. It will be organised by the Italian Network "Semi Rurali" with the technical and political support of the European steering committee created in Halle, Germany in May 2007.

Foreword

Since Poitiers in 2005, a European coordination of networks working on peasants' seeds in different European countries was born. In 2006 the *Let's Liberate Diversity!* meeting took place in Spain organised by the Red de Semillas Network and in 2007 in Germany by the BUKO group against biopiracy. The continuity of these gatherings also involving participants from the Global South is extremely important for maintaining the coordination between countries and continuing the exchange of knowledge and know-how around the issue of seeds.

Why Italy?

In Italy the question of local seed varieties is quite well developed at the local level. Several regional governments (Tuscany, Marche, Umbria, Friuli Giulia, Lazio and Emilia Romagna) introduced laws that support conservation through the cultivation and the valorisation of these varieties. Moreover, since November 2007, the Italian Network -Rete Semi Rurali- was created and is today composed of 8 organisations (ARI, AIAB, Crocevia, Civiltà contadina, Consorzio della Quarantina, Archeologia arborea, CTPB et ASCI), which represent organic farmers, seed keepers and small non-certified family farmers.

It would be interesting, therefore, to share with participants from other countries the diversity of experiences in Italy and to have a joint reflection on the actions to be carried out at the local level together with public institutions.

Let's Liberate Diversity ! in Europe

In order to better understand the process, let's trace back the history of this movement, known today as *Let's Liberate Diversity !*

- European seminar *Let's Liberate Diversity !*, Poitiers (France), November 2005. Co-organised by CNDSF (Coordination Nationale pour la Défense des Semences Fermières) and the Réseau Semences Paysannes, this seminar held on November 25 – 26, 2005 gathered 150 representatives of agricultural organisations and NGOs from Europe and around the world with the objective to address the question of peasant farmers' rights to produce, select and exchange their seeds. Following this gathering, a strategic meeting on seeds, food and GMO-free regions took place in the European Parliament in February 2006.
- 2nd Seminar *Let's Liberate Diversity !*, Bullas (Spain), October 2006. This seminar organised by the Red de Semillas allowed taking a closer look at European legislative proposals on conservation varieties. After this seminar, a joint letter was sent to the European Commission demanding a more flexible legislation, which is better adapted to farmers' needs.
- 3rd seminar *Let's Liberate Diversity !* Halle (Germany), May 2007. A demonstration against the transgenic wheat of the Gatersleben genetic resources centre, located at the centre of Europe and in Eastern Germany, was held thanks to the work of BUKO, the Association for GM-free Seeds and the European Civic Forum. This seminar focused on the problem of genetic contamination affecting genetic resources. A European Coordination on Peasants' Seeds began to be formalised under the framework of a workshop.

The steering committee

Rete Semi Rurali (www.semirurali.net - Italy), Red de Semillas (www.redsemillas.info - Spain), Réseau Semences Paysannes (www.semencespaysannes.org - France), UK Food Group (UK), VEN and IG Saatgut

Project

(Germany), Ormansag Foundation (Hungary), Protect the Future and ESSRG (Hungary) are the main promoters of the seminar and they make up the organising committee. At the organising committee's meeting held in Rome on 3 November 3, 2007 the organisations present decided to hold the next European meeting in Ascoli and defined the main themes to be addressed at the gathering in Italy:

1) *Continue the debate on the collective rights to peasants' seeds;*

2) *Reflect and elaborate proposals on the valorisation of products originating from peasants' seeds: Which markets for products based on local biodiversity?*

Preparatory documents

At the Planet Diversity meeting held in Bonn last May 13, the RSP (France) and IG Saatgut (Germany) held an informal meeting on the main issues and developments of EU seed legislation upon the request of several participants at PD. Siegrid Herbst has the list of organisations present (Arche Noah from Austria, Pro Specie Rara from Switzerland, etc.).

At this meeting it was agreed upon that each organisation, which wishes to do so is invited to formulate by writing its vision of the ideal seed regulation based on what should result in its view from the revision process of the current EU regulation on seeds (Better Regulation). This input will facilitate the discussion on our convergences and differences and hopefully facilitate the drafting of certain joint or complementary positions.

In order to facilitate this work, the persons present at the meeting solicited an outline that may guide the drafting of such a proposal. Please find the suggested questionnaire below. Nevertheless, please feel free to adapt the outline suggested or ignore it all together may you think it is necessary. Following this format, however, is likely to facilitate subsequent discussions as it allows comparing ideas. You may propose completely new regulations and/or reforms for existing regulations.

In order to alleviate the task of translators, please do not exceed 2 pages and if possible, send the text in English and in French.

Marketing rules					
	for peasants' seeds reproduced on farm	for industrial seeds : hybrides F1, lines, cellular fusion , mutated plants, GMOs...	for conservation, traditional, local seed varieties	for varieties selected on the farm, with breeding methods accessible to the end user (the peasant farmer)	other...
a. free or obligation of identification: DUS, TAV (technological and agricultural value), origine, place of multiplication, selection method, bio-molecular identification...					
b. protection of markets, denominations of origin..?					
c. seed quality (varietal purity, germination, ...) and/or certification, self-certification					
d. sanitary rules					

Use and property rights (Individual, collective)					
	for peasants' seeds reproduced on farm	for industrial seeds : hybrides F1, lines, cellular fusion , mutated plants, GMOs...	for conservation, traditional, local seed varieties	for varieties selected on the farm, with breeding methods accessible to the end user (the peasant farmer)	other...
a. Copyleft seeds: humanity's common heritage					
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b. Intellectual Property Rights (IDP): patents, Plant Variety Certificates, private property rights applied to an invention and discovery . Identification (morphological description, molecular characterisation, origin, breeding methods ..), breeder's and farmer's privilege.					
c. Peasant farmers' rights (ITPGRFA): benefit-sharing, IDP and / or collective rights of use (conserve, use, exchange, sell and protection of biopiracy, genetic or sanitary contamination, appropriation of denomination...)					

Please forward your proposals on the list by the 15 of July, so we may have the time to prepare discussions at the next meeting in Italy (October 10-12, 2008).

Participants and organization

About 80 participants, including peasant farmers, citizens, agronomists, from Europe and the Global South are expected at the seminar. We plan to hold the meeting over 2.5 days with half a day spent visiting the fields (Friday 10, Saturday 11, Sunday 12), which will allow participants to discover the specificity of Italian agriculture and see various experiences on the valorisation of agricultural biodiversity.

The evenings will be reserved to thematic exchanges on bread and pasta-making, namely by highlighting experiences from different countries with the objective to foster exchanges between peasant farmers. In this respect we may refer to the network of peasant-bakers in France and the Italian peasant farmers who reconstructed short food chains in collaboration with artisan bakers and pasta-producers.

The seminar will be held at Cartiere Papali and the accommodation at Hotel Marche in the city centre of Ascoli.

Costs

Participation costs (including accommodation and meals) are 80€. Based on the funding we will manage to raise transportation costs may be reimbursed for some participants. In this respect priority will be given to participants from Central and Eastern Europe and the Global South.

In order to participate or request additional information, please send an electronic message to: info@semirurali.net. The deadline for the inscription is the 15 July 2008.

Additional information will be available shortly on the following website: www.semirurali.net.

Arrival and departure

We are organising a bus from Rome to Ascoli for the 9 of October to facilitate the arrival in Ascoli. You can book your flight or train ticket to and from Rome for the date of 9 and 12 of October (late afternoon).