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EU Seed Law: Rights of Conservation Organisations Still Unclear

European Union Risks Sacrificing Diverse Agriculture

Schiltern, Vienna, Brussels (OTS) – An important political trilogue meeting on the new EU seed legislation took place in Brussels yesterday. The outcome is worrying: the EU risks driving a diverse, climate-resilient agriculture into a dead end. The free exchange of seed to preserve crop diversity could soon come to an end. Instead, farmers and consumers may face restrictions and excessive bureaucracy. "The EU must not repeat the mistakes of the failed 2014 reform by sidelining the diverse nature of seed production and farming in the Union. We need diversity for innovation and resilience just as much as for tasty, healthy food," stresses Paul Grabenberger, seed law expert at the Austrian seed organisation ARCHE NOAH.

According to the legislative proposal, seed companies would be allowed to pass on unlimited quantities of seed or other plant reproductive material for the purposes of breeding or research. However, conservation organisations and farmers would be required to fulfil strict requirements, even when sharing small quantities – a clear case of discrimination!

"The seed industry has pushed through its interests. But we need a seed law that creates a fair framework for all actors and preserves the diversity of varieties and species for future generations," says Paul Grabenberger.

Negotiations between the European Parliament, the Commission, and the Agriculture and Fisheries Council are continuing intensively, with the aim of reaching an agreement on the final text by June.

"In the coming weeks, the right of farmers to exchange seed and planting material among themselves must be safeguarded. Regional restrictions on this practice, which has proven itself over thousands of years, would be unacceptable.", says Paul Grabenberger.

"Local seed producers and conservation organisations must not be crushed by administrative burdens," says Paul Grabenberger of ARCHE NOAH. "The European Parliament, and in particular its rapporteur Herbert Dorfmann (EPP), hold the key to whether agricultural innovation for diversity will remain possible in the future – or whether diversity in Europe will be quietly banned," Grabenberger concludes.

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