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# ARCHE NOAH: EU Facing a De-Facto Ban on New Conservation Varieties

*EU Parliament Must Defend Local Crop Breeding Across Europe*

**Schiltern/Brussels – Far-reaching missteps are looming in the trilogue negotiations on the new EU seed law. According to the current course taken by the agriculture ministers, the development of newly or recently locally bred varieties of grain, potatoes, and other staple foods could be prohibited. Regional production restrictions are also being discussed. "*In the final trilogue negotiations on April 21, 2026, Brussels must take the complex reality of saving and developing seeds in Europe seriously,*" says Paul Grabenberger, seed law expert at ARCHE NOAH in Brussels.**

"*Conservation varieties safeguard genetic diversity and make agricultural systems more resilient to the climate crisis and to new diseases",* explains Paul Grabenberger. "*Conservation varieties enable farmers and breeders to innovate and adapt regionally – exactly what European agriculture urgently needs. However, by splitting conservation varieties into a new category of newly bred local varieties, the Council's approach risks marginalising the very seeds that underpin resilience, innovation and diversity in European agriculture. Now it is up to the EU Parliament to prevent impractical regulations.*" It must also be ensured that varieties can be produced not only in their region of origin, but also wherever they are relevant to farmers.

Originally, the new EU seed legislation was intended to bring more transparency and simplified procedures. This goal is in danger of being missed. Many small, professional seed companies offer a great variety of species in very small quantities. Their work in creating diverse seeds adapted to regional conditions is threatened by excessive reporting requirements.

A look at Switzerland shows how future-proof conservation varieties are developed: not in the laboratory, but in the field. The reddish-purple winter wheat "Rote Zora" is a prime example of successful practice-oriented breeding and has gained broad acceptance among bakers. If this type of breeding is banned in Europe, consumers will lose as well. Bread made from newly bred local varieties would disappear, and diversity itself would become a criterion for exclusion.

Banning the development of newly bred local varieties of grains and potatoes harms everyone in Europe. These experimental, practice-based breeding spaces provide essential knowledge, genetic resources and a key driver of innovation, from which the market benefits in the long term. "*Undermining this part of our agricultural foundation weakens the entire innovation system",* emphasizes Paul Grabenberger. "*In light of heatwaves, torrential rain and new pests, regionally adapted, evolving grain varieties are a crucial resource.*"

A previous attempt to reform EU seed legislation already failed in 2014, due to overregulation and the disproportionate burden it placed on small-scale farms and organizations. Today, a similar outcome is once again looming. "*The European Parliament – and in particular its rapporteur, Herbert Dorfmann – now holds the responsibility to decide whether agricultural innovation will remain possible in the future, or whether diversity in Europe will be effectively regulated out,*" concludes Paul Grabenberger of ARCHE NOAH.

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