Seeds & Heterogeneous Material in Organic Production
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Due to the specificities of low-input agriculture, organic producers need to have access to seeds of varieties that are a better fit for them, and that are therefore not necessarily uniform and stable. Such varieties have not been developed enough by the formal sector, and are not always available on the market due to strict registration requirements of the Plant Reproductive Material (PRM) marketing Directives. This is why organic breeding needs to be supported, and that a well-defined derogation from the restrictive PRM marketing Directives should be set up.

We welcome the European Parliament’s amendments to the Commission Proposal on organic breeding and seeds, but we would like to alert you on the potential negative effects of the derogation to the PRM marketing Directives in the currently proposed Article 10§2 (Compromise 8).

A STRICTER DEROGATION IS NEEDED : PRM MARKETING DIRECTIVES

The proposed wording of Article 10§2, point 3, creates a legal vacuum!

- The definition of heterogeneous material is not precise enough in the actual proposal, and calls for further regulation at the Member State level. The consequence will be a legal patchwork.
- Derogating to all the articles of the PRM Directives effectively suspends the whole marketing regime, i.e. the rules that guarantee consumer protection and transparent international movement of seeds in these texts. These will also need to be enacted at Member State level.

CONCLUSION: The derogation should concern only the few articles that regulate the general obligation of variety registration and the conditions pertaining to the procedure (Distinctness, Uniformity, Stability). It should maintain existing accountability rules for operators, as well as truthful labelling and transparency, especially for imports.

A WIDER DEROGATION IS NEEDED : ALLOWED MATERIAL

A derogation limited to heterogeneous material will not solve the issues faced by organic farmers!

- Farmers will face uncertainty as to the material they are allowed to use.
- Farmers will not have access to material that is not uniform enough to qualify for the registration tests set out in the PRM Directives, but not heterogeneous enough to qualify for the derogation.
- Farmers will not have access to material that is tailored for low-input cultivation and sustainable use, for instance targeting resilience, when it is not heterogeneous.

CONCLUSION: The strictly defined derogation should concern all plant reproductive material, and not be limited to heterogeneous material, allowing non strictly uniform and non strictly heterogeneous varieties in organic farms.

About ARCHE NOAH:
ARCHE NOAH (Noah’s Ark) is a seed savers association in Central Europe, founded in 1990, with today more than 14.000 members, who closely and actively follows the process of review of the PRM law and related issues. It is politically active in Austria and in Brussels. www.arche-noah.at

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