

19.3.24

Press release

Environment/Agriculture/Seeds/Economy/EU

## **Seed law reform: EU Agriculture Committee fends off attack on diversity**

*Over 100,000 signatures already on petition in favour of diversity*

**Brussels, Vienna, Schiltern - An important step for seed diversity: This morning, following the Environment Committee, the Agriculture Committee in the EU Parliament also voted clearly in favour of seed diversity in Europe. "The Agriculture Committee, which is the lead committee, is committed to ensuring that the preservation of diversity remains possible and that its dissemination by regional producers remains feasible. Today's vote brings significant improvements to the EU Commission's proposal," says Magdalena Prieler, seed law expert at ARCHE NOAH, summarising today's results. In their voting behaviour, the MEPs followed the proposals of rapporteur Herbert Dorfmann of the EPP and thus corrected the EU Commission's anti-diversity legislative proposal in key points.**

With this vote, the implementation of an essential ARCHE NOAH demand is in sight: There is now hope that active conservation organisations such as ARCHE NOAH or public gene banks will be allowed to pass on seeds in small quantities outside the scope of the seed law to farmers and hobby gardeners in the future. The Agriculture Committee has also spoken out in favour of allowing farmers to sell their own seeds and plant reproductive material, albeit with some restrictions. This would make it much easier to pass on traditional seed and strengthen the human right of farmers to their own seed. Problematic is, however, that the proposals put forward to curb patents on conventional breeding did not find a majority - the problem therefore remains unresolved. Unreasonable bureaucratic requirements for small seed companies were also not revised. The plenary and agriculture ministers must make improvements here.

"The Agriculture Committee has set clear and, in our view, very positive guidelines for further parliamentary work: diversity must be excluded from the scope of the new seed law and consistently promoted," says Magdalena Prieler from ARCHE NOAH.

The EU Agriculture Committee's vote today is based on the "Food and Biodiversity Package" presented by the EU Commission in July 2023. With the new regulation of seed law, the EU Commission intends to adapt the outdated seed law to the objectives of the European "Green Deal". However, its legislative proposal fails to meet its own requirements in many areas. "The agriculture ministers and the EU Parliament plenary must change course! We need more diversity in our fields and on our plates to counteract the climate and biodiversity crisis and to produce flavourful, healthy food! The votes in the Environment Committee and the Agriculture Committee are important steps in the right direction," says Prieler. Next hurdle: The vote in the parliamentary plenary on 24 or 25 April 2024.

The European petition "Raise your forks", which was launched by numerous organisations in the seed movement, has now surpassed the 100,000 signature mark. Supporters from all over Europe are calling on the EU Parliament and agriculture ministers to revise the proposal for seed legislation. They are calling for legislation that enables the legal transfer of diverse seeds, promotes crop diversity, respects farmers' rights and creates the basis for a sustainable, resilient and diverse food system.

Parallel to the votes at parliamentary level, the Council of Agriculture Ministers is negotiating amendments to the proposed legislation. Austria already played a central role in rejecting the attack on seed diversity in 2013. "Agriculture Minister Norbert Totschnig must now urgently put Austria in a pioneering role for

diversity. Totschnig must demand the farmers' right to seeds and protect crop diversity from over-regulation and patents," summarises Magdalena Prieler.

**To the petition:** [www.raiseourforks.org](http://www.raiseourforks.org)

**Queries:**

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