

24.4.24

Press release

Environment/Agriculture/Seeds/EU

## **Vote on EU seed law: Industry attack on diversity largely defeated**

*EU Parliament votes in favour of farmers' right to seeds - but fails to strengthen the preservation of local and traditional varieties*

**Schilttern, Vienna, Strasbourg - Today, 24 April 2024, the plenary of the EU Parliament in Strasbourg voted on the new EU seed law. ARCHE NOAH takes a mixed view of the decision on new rules for the production and marketing of seeds and other plant propagating material. Despite aggressive lobbying by the seed industry and its lobby group Euroseeds in recent days, a majority of MEPs supported the constructive proposal of the Agriculture Committee in almost all points. "With today's decision, the European Parliament has recognised that seed diversity is vital for our farmers," says Magdalena Prieler, seed expert at ARCHE NOAH.**

The European Parliament's decision safeguards the age-old tradition and the right of farmers to exchange small quantities of their own propagating material with each other for free or for monetary compensation - a practice that has been practised for generations and strengthens resilience and independence in agriculture. The resolution also grants farmers continued access to traditional varieties such as the old tomato variety Rotes Herz, the Steinfelder Tellerlinse, Laaer Zwiebel and Laufener Landweizen. It also frees them, as well as conservation initiatives, from new bureaucratic regulations. All these points in the report by Herbert Dorfmann, the rapporteur in the responsible Committee on Agriculture, were strongly opposed by the seed industry. Nevertheless, they were ultimately supported by the Social Democrats, the Greens and the Left, as well as parts of the European People's Party and the liberal Renew Group.

However, the industry lobby has prevailed on one point that is essential for saving traditional and local varieties. The transfer of endangered varieties for the purpose of their conservation should have been exempted from the scope of seed law. This possibility has now been severely restricted. Only established conservation organisations are now allowed to make use of this exception. "Many actors in Europe contribute to saving the diversity of varieties, including local seed producers, individual farmers, but also public initiatives such as seed libraries," says Prieler. "Today's decision failed to create a clear legal framework for this work which is so important to society as whole. This is disappointing and unacceptable." The industry claimed this exemption would lead to "uncontrolled parallel markets". In reality, it was about the transfer of very small quantities, for example 500 grams of vegetable seed per year. "The industry used scaremongering and false arguments to persuade MEPs to reject the recommendation of the specialist committee. Diversification and variety on the field are the most effective tools we have to mitigate the negative effects of the climate crisis in agriculture, such as extreme weather conditions or new diseases and pests."

ARCHE NOAH and other seed initiatives from all over Europe have contacted MEPs in recent days to inform them about the threat to diversity and to demand farmers' right to seeds. "We would like to thank our supporters who have made this campaign possible and all those who have sent seed packets to the EU Parliament or called MEPs themselves in the last few days and weeks," says Prieler.

This work will continue after today's vote. The decision now forms the basis for the European Parliament's negotiations in the triilogue with the EU Commission and the Council of Agriculture Ministers on the final legislative text. Negotiations are not expected to begin until the end of 2024. A progress report by the Belgian Council Presidency and a discussion by the EU Agriculture Ministers is planned for the last Council meeting before the summer break, on 24 and 25 June 2024. "We call on the Council of EU Agriculture Ministers to resist the pressure from the seed industry. We need a secure basis for a sustainable, resilient and diverse food system," says Magdalena Prieler from ARCHE NOAH. "Agriculture Ministers must actively ensure that local varieties, regional cuisine and farmers' right to seeds are not jeopardised by global corporations."

**Queries:**

ARCHE NOAH, Society for the Conservation and Propagation of Cultivated Plant Diversity

Axel Grunt

Head of Communication

+43 680 2379245

axel.grunt@arche-noah.at

Magdalena Prieler (in Strasbourg)

Seed Policy Officer

+43 676 7750132

magdalena.prieler@arche-noah.at

**Picture service:**

Download at [www.arche-noah.at/presse-medien/pressefotos](http://www.arche-noah.at/presse-medien/pressefotos)

Enquiries to [presse@arche-noah.at](mailto:presse@arche-noah.at)