

Let's liberate diversity!

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Farmers and activists protest against new EU-regulation for seeds. A call for action and alternatives.

Against the background of an upcoming regulation on EU level, which is likely to expand corporate control over seeds, the "first link" in the food chain, initiatives and organisations that save and exchange seeds prepare for a European-wide campaign "Sowing the future – Harvesting diversity". The 5th seminar of European Seed Initiatives from 25th till 27th March 2010 in Graz, Austria will be a central place of discussion and of planning activities to defend farmers' rights over seeds and agricultural biodiversity.

"Better Regulation" for the Seeds?

Widely unnoticed by the public, the EU commission began to revise EU legislation on the marketing of seeds in 2008. The revision is to come into force in 2010 and will be obligatory for all European member states. With the aim of "Better Regulation" it wants to reduce bureaucracy in seed legislation and to standardize the law.

Seed marketing in the EU is at present regulated by 12 directives which are implemented differently in each EU country. Private companies were mandated to evaluate the current legislation under the supervision of "Arcadia", a consulting company which has often worked for the GMO industry.

It is not only for this reason European farmers and groups concerned with agricultural biodiversity raised the alarm. The negotiations on the new European seed legislation are taking place behind closed doors, among representatives of the seed industry and EU bureaucrats. A previous directive by the EU of 2008 on "conservation varieties" for grain and potatoes, which was meant to regulate the marketing of old land races and most organic varieties, turned out to erect excessive bureaucratic hurdles for their registration. As a result, many regionally adapted but small-scale seed varieties, which form an alternative to the industrial seed business, are in danger of literally becoming "illegalised".

This is in the interest of those parts of the European and international seed businesses, that aim at wiping out all non-corporate forms of plant breeding and seed distribution. If they succeed, not only organic farmers and breeders suffer from it, but our food security and future ability to develop towards more sustainable ways of food production are at stake.

Sowing the Future - Harvesting Diversity

The current regulatory ambitions of the EU make up the main topic for the 5th Seminar of European Seed Initiatives from 25th till 27th March 2010 in Graz, Austria. The increasing monopolisation of seed and agriculture patents (see also Stop "Monsantosizing" food, seeds & animals!) will also be addressed.

Under the Banner "Let's liberate diversity!" the seed initiatives oppose the growing power of the corporate seed industry and support the right of farmers to save and exchange seeds. The preservation and development of GMO-free, regionally adapted seed varieties by farmers and peasants world-wide are the basis of food sovereignty and an agriculture independent from fossil fuels and chemical fertilizers. In a 2010 European-wide campaign seed initiatives and parts of La Via Campesina push for these alternatives and demand from the EU commission to encourage rather than suppress crop diversity.

Visit the web sites of the European-wide seed campaign (www.saatgutkampagne.org) and the Seminar in Graz (www.liberate-diversity-graz2010.org) for more information or get involved. You can also support the campaign by gathering signatures. Also A SEED (it's all in the name!) is planning some activities on this issue

<http://www.liberate-diversity-graz2010.org>

<http://www.saatgutkampagne.org>