



# ESA News



Dear Members,

**January 2013**  
**ESA\_13.0060**

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what a start! That's what immediately comes to my mind when thinking about the first 4 weeks of the new year 2013. Normally, the first fortnight of January is still quite calm as Commission staff and MEPs return from their Christmas vacations - but this year has been very different:

As you will read in this newsletter –and have been informed on various earlier occasions- ESA together with ECPA and COPA, supported the establishing of the first elaborate and detailed socio-economic study on the value of neonicotinoid seed treatments for Europe's agri-food sector and society at large. The study was finalised between Christmas and New Years and together with the Humboldt Forum for Agriculture we organised a number of presentations, first in Brussels on January 14<sup>th</sup> –you can read more about this in this Newsletter- and then in numerous capitals of EU Member States. We were, and still are, impressed by the study, by its level of detail and the sound economic modelling and assessment. And we were surprised just how important the technology really had become for Europe over the past decade. A 'game changer' is the expression used in the study; and when one looks at the figures, I think it is a very fitting one.

But then, only two days later, EFSA published its (re-)evaluation of three neonicotinoid seed treatment and their possible impact on bee health –and within just a few hours, the whole debate changed entirely. ESA has always supported EFSA's independence and its status of reference authority for scientific assessment in Europe. Honestly, it is hard to continue this support if one looks at the shortcomings of this evaluation. Practical monitoring data and years of field experience have been disregarded; instead, data gaps were identified – but these gaps are based on an evaluation guideline that has not even a legal status today, not to mention that it didn't exist at the time when the applications were filed. It is also unclear from the report whether such data gaps must automatically be considered as practical risks. At least, the report doesn't provide clear proof of respective effects. What it does is to confirm that these products are insecticides and that these insecticides kill insects. Bees are insects. Under certain conditions, bees may thus be killed. That is exactly why risk assessment is followed by risk management, to assure that unwanted effects do not occur under practical conditions of use. This is where the EFSA report fails to take all relevant information into account - with the effect that we have moved from a balanced debate on risk mitigation to a fundamentalist request for risk exclusion – by banning these highly important products from our crop protection toolbox instead of recognising the measures implemented by crop protection and seed industry as well as by farmers over the past years.

It is a pity that this request has gotten political support from the Commission and such a ban is now proposed for numerous crops, e.g. oilseed rape, maize and sunflower with effect of July 2013, and a re-evaluation of the products in 2 years will be required to discuss (partial) re-authorisation.

Still, it is also a chance for us to prove that ESTA does make a difference! ESTA can assure the necessary quality of seed treatment. It can assure the important information of users. And it can be the balanced approach that takes account of our socio-economic needs of effective crop protection as well as our desire to prevent unwanted effects on pollinators and the environment.

Because we truly believe in ESTA and because this will be one of the preconditions for any re-authorisation of defined seed treatment applications, we have to and we will continue with its implementation and will continue our work on extending it to all crops and all crop protection products used for seed treatment. We will prove our strong commitment to effective crop protection **and** to pollinator safety to legislators, to NGOs, to the media and to the interested public. One element of this proof will be the appointment of the dedicated ESTA Manager as new addition to the ESA team. It will be my pleasure to inform you on the result of the selection shortly. For sure, there is a lot of hard work waiting!

With best regards, yours

Garlich von Essen, Secretary General



## **INTERNAL MEETINGS**

**(selected)**

- **04.02.2013**  
**ESA CRLA WG Biotech**
- **11.02.2013**  
**ESA SVOwic IP**  
**Conference call**
- **11.02.2013**  
**ESA SOF WG DUS**  
**Conference call**
- **12.02.2013**  
**ESA CRLA WGB**
- **13.02.2013**  
**ESA CRLA WGRI**
- **21.02.2013**  
**ESA Board WG STAT**
- **25.02.2013**  
**ESA CIPR**
- **26.02.2013**  
**ESA WG COMM**

## **ESA “patent database” is under way**

As it was already announced in the November issue of the ESA Newsletter, practical and technical work on the setting up of the ESA database providing information on the patent status of plant varieties commercialized in Europe has started.

### **On the database:**

Early January the Secretariat came to an agreement with the IT company which is going to work on the development of the database which – according to the first discussions and plans – is going to be a powerful and very interesting tool for breeders. The database will allow the breeder to check whether a particular plant variety is covered by a patent in Europe. Search will be possible not only on the basis of variety denomination but also on the basis of crop, patent number or keyword which may figure in the title of a patent. All in all, the database will allow the breeder to make a more informed choice when selecting varieties for a breeding program.

As decided, the database will be part of the ESA website, meaning that it will exclusively be available from there. Nevertheless, it will be a public database available not only for ESA members but for everybody. Terms of availability will be communicated later on.

### **On the time-table:**

The first prototype of the database will be delivered to the ESA Secretariat by mid-February and will be presented to and discussed with the ESA CIPR which is the leading group of the project in the end of February. The ESA WG Communication will also be involved and will work on the communication and promotion aspects of the database. Later on, in March an updated version will be presented to the ESA Board which will be followed by the launch of a one-month pilot-phase (from mid-April until mid-May) where a selected number of pilot-users will test the database. A wider demonstration of the database is planned for the end of May. It will be finally launched on July 1, 2013.

Last, you may all recall that one of the points of the ESA IP position adopted in 2011 calls for more transparency regarding the patent status of varieties. ESA committed itself to provide a tool which creates such transparency: the database. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that the information that is going to be provided by the database has to come from the patent holders themselves. This implies that the success of the project highly depends on the commitment of all ESA members! (SzCs)

## **CPVO WG Legislative Matters – Paris, January 14-15, 2013**

The third meeting of the CPVO WG on legislative matters took place on January 14-15 in Paris. This time the meeting lasted two full days as at the last meeting it was decided to dedicate one entire day exclusively to the difficult discussion on the EDV concept. Therefore, on the first day a number of EDV experts from UK, France, the Netherlands and Belgium joined the WG to provide further insights to technical details of the EDV concept. On behalf of ESA, besides the permanent member of the CPVO WG, Sz. Csörgő, B. Scholte also took part in the EDV discussion.

On the second day the WG continued its discussion on the topics already considered at previous meetings: enforcement, provisional protection, strengthening the scope of the breeder's right by extending it to products directly obtained from harvested material. To this list of topics, some further elements have been added, such as a possibility of a protection symbol for PVP, the scope of protection of hybrids via the protection of their parents and exhaustion. On these matters the discussion has just started and will certainly continue in next meetings. The group will continue its work in May 2013.

For further information please contact the ESA Secretariat. (SzCs)



## **EXTERNAL MEETINGS**

### **(selected)**

- **05.02.2013**  
**COCERAL FFC Coalition Meeting**
- **07.02.2013**  
**CMSSA Seminar Seeds and Seedlings (Prague)**
- **19.02.2013**  
**TURKTED General Assembly (Ankara)**
- **19.02.2013**  
**AMSEM General Assembly (Bucharest)**
- **19-20.02.2013**  
**“Salon du Végétal”, Angers (France)**
- **20.02.2013**  
**Workshop on Sustainable Biofuels and ILUC (European Parliament, Brussels)**
- **27.02.2013**  
**Seed Association of Ukraine’s International conference (Kiev)**

## **AGS Preparatory meeting January 18**

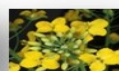
On January 18 the preparatory meeting of the Advisory Group on Seeds (AGS) took place in Brussels. The meeting was chaired by Mr Michael Gohn (AGS Chairman) and was attended by representatives from Copa-Cogeca, some NGO’s and the Commission. ESA was represented by P.Lesigne (Monsanto), G. van Straalen (Innoseeds), JP Judson and B.Scholte. The meeting was organised to prepare the agenda of the annual meeting of the AGS scheduled for on March 8. The participants first addressed the follow up of the meeting of last year and agreed that there was an urgent need to contact the Commission to maintain the legal base for the collection of production statistics. A letter on this topic was sent by the AGS Chairman to the Director-General in DG AGRI. The participants agreed to place the following items on the agenda of the March meeting:

1. Elections chair and vice chairs
2. Market (input expected from DG AGRI)
3. Evaluation legal framework (input expected from DG SANCO)
  - a. PRM (package) update
  - b. Opinion DG AGRI on PRM package
  - c. Revision Annexes Potato SMD
5. Genetic resources (and innovation) (input expected from DG AGRI)
6. GMO update (input expected from DG SANCO)
7. Plant Protection Products (input expected from DG SANCO)
8. Import/Export issues (input expected from DG TRADE)
  - a. Turkey
  - b. Ukraine
9. CAP post 2013 reform: (Input expected from DG AGRI)
  - a. State of play
  - b. Coupled subsidies on seeds.

This was the second time that a preparatory meeting was organised in preparation of the annual meeting of the AGS. All participants agreed that having these preparatory meetings improved the effectiveness of the organisation of the AGS meeting in particular regarding the representation of the different experts from other DGs. (BS)

## **Meeting between ESA and PIN on seed potatoes in Radzikov (PL) -**

On January 23 the joined ESA SPO – PIN meeting on the Uniform EU classification scheme for seed potatoes took place in Radzikov (PL), the headquarters of Ihar. The meeting was chaired by Mrs Ewa Zimnoch-Guzowska. In total 18 persons attended the meeting representing the following companies: Agrico, Europlant, Granum, HZPC, HZ Zamar, Ihar, Lind, PMHZ Strzekecin, Rolnas and Solana. ESA was represented by Frank van der Werff (HZPC NL) and Bert Scholte.





## SEEDS IN THE MEDIA

**AGRA EUROPE: Pesticide ban would cost EU billions, report says (15.01.2013)**

An industry-funded study published today has found that a ban on neonicotinoid seed treatments would cost the EU economy up to €17 billion, put 50 000 jobs at risk and threaten sustainable food production.

The report by the Humboldt Forum for Food and Agriculture (HFFA), reviewing the socio-economic and environmental contribution of the seed treatment, ahead of an eagerly-awaited European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) assessment on whether the chemicals have a harmful impact on bees tomorrow. [...]

The purported link has been refuted by pesticide manufacturer Syngenta, pointing to significant bee population drops in areas where neonicotinoids had not been used. **The European Seed Association (ESA)** also today stressed that seed treatment is the "technology of choice for farmers and vegetable growers across Europe" and that it avoids both CO2 emissions and external land use. [...]

*The article is available on request from the ESA Secretariat.*

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**EURACTIV: Common pesticides a threat to bees, EU watchdog says (17.01.2013)**

Three widely-used pesticides made by Switzerland's Syngenta and Germany's Bayer pose an acute risk to honeybees, the European Union's food safety watchdog said on Wednesday

During the meeting presentations were given regarding the ESA proposal, the Commission Working document and the state of play of the discussion, the specificities of the market and potato production in Poland and the current situation regarding the Polish production of seed potatoes including the present standards.

The average production of seed potatoes in Poland in the past years is approximately 5000 hectares; 2500 ha of which are in Certified class A; 1400 in Certified class B.

In the discussion we have focussed on the proposed disease tolerance levels. We have also discussed the proposal that the production of certified seed potatoes will be limited to one field generation. A second generation in certified may only be produced from certified class A on the same holding.

Regarding disease tolerance levels it became clear that the proposed levels for black leg and virus are too restrictive for Polish conditions and very likely need to be changed. Regarding the proposal in relation to certified seed there was a difference of opinion. Some breeders indicated that the proposed scheme did not cause problems. Other breeding companies and producers insisted on having the possibility to market certified class A for further production to certified class B.

Overall the meeting took place in a friendly and constructive atmosphere. In consultation with the SPO Chairman the Secretariat will contact the Commission regarding the outcome of the meeting. (BS)

### New structure of "ESA News"

As some of you might have discovered already, ESA changed its structure for its "ESA News" format slightly. First of all, since our articles get longer which has a direct impact on the overall length, we included an index and page numbers for a better overview. Consequently we shifted the internal and external meetings to page 2 and 3. Secondly, and maybe most importantly: We included two new columns,

1. *Seeds in the Media*
2. *News from our Members.*

As ESA is currently in the process of establishing closer ties with Brussels based journalists, consequently we hope to be targeted more often by their various publications. "Seeds in the Media" will give you a monthly overview of our "press clippings", where applicable, or alternatively will present you related articles from stakeholders or interesting seed-related publications. Our second new column, "News from our Members" was set up to better visualize and place the news that come from YOU, our (association) members. Should mean: We'd like to receive YOUR input, preferably on a monthly basis, – whenever your association organizes an annual meeting, seminar, congress- or hire new staff for example. Simply, we'd like to "spread the word" (or better: your news) with our entire membership to enhance your visibility and at the same time adding a personal touch to the ESA News. We hope you enjoy these slight changes and find them useful. (KB).



(16 January)), but stopped short of linking them to bee colony collapse.

**Garlich von Essen, secretary-general of the European Seed Association (ESA)**, said of the EFSA report: "EFSA focusses on quite theoretical, potential risks to bees, and identifies a number of perceived data gaps. Yet, the requirements to generate such data did not exist upon the time of authorisation and are not even part of an agreed and published standard today."

ESA said in a statement that the information from other independent research was "largely disregarded". [...]

<http://bit.ly/YDJxDA>

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#### **SEED WORLD: Top 10 Stories in 2012 (17.01.2013)**

7. GM-Free Europe: Myth Versus Reality. **ESA's Garlich von Essen** discusses policy, public perception and the issues at the heart of the European GM debate. "Huge amounts of feed and food products produced from genetically modified plants in other parts of the world are shipped to the EU daily, fed to its cattle, pigs and poultry, and are—directly or indirectly—part of our everyday diet ... This is largely hidden behind traceability and labeling rules that are designed to prevent, rather than ensure, consumer understanding."—**Garlich von Essen**

To assess the full article, visit

<http://bit.ly/VuRV4t>

### **UC Davis European Plant Breeding Academy Class 3 is open for registration—class size limited**

The UC Davis Plant Breeding Academy is a premium professional certificate program offered in the USA, Europe and Asia which so far has been attended by 114 breeders from over 50 organizations representing 26 countries. In 2011 ESA established an "Outstanding Student Award" while Bayer CropScience awarded one full scholarship to a student in the second class.

The 2013 class will maintain the core curriculum delivered in the previous classes and add modules to address the most recent development in plant breeding theory and practice, including an expanded section on molecular marker use, genome selection, non-replicated designs and GxE, using marker and pedigrees for prediction of breeding value. The format of the program allows the UC Davis plant Breeding Academy to move the sessions to different countries and expose the participants to variety of crops and environments.

Employers appreciate the opportunity to provide their valued employees advanced training without disrupting their full-time employment. Participants attend six 6-day sessions over approximately two years. The instructors are internationally recognized experts in plant breeding and seed technology.



**"Outstanding Student Award" established by ESA during AM 2011 in Budapest**

**Gent, BE:** October 21-26, 2013

**Angers, FR :** March 3-8, 2014,

**Gatersleben, DE :** June 23-28, 2014,

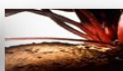
**Enkhuizen, NL:** October 6-11, 2014

**Almeria/Barcelona, SP:** March 2-7, 2015

**Davis, USA :** June 22-27, 2015

A discount is available for registrations before March 31, 2013.

For more information visit <http://pba.ucdavis.edu> or contact [Joy Patterson](#). (KB)



## NEWS FROM ESA MEMBERS

UFS (Union Française des Semenciers) attended the SIVAL, the trade show event for all plant professionals organized on 15 - 17 January 2013 in Angers (France) by the Angers Expo Congrès. A joint UFS – AIB (Anti-Infringement Bureau) press release was issued right after the event to foster the attention on the importance of preventing piracy and counterfeiting of protected vegetable varieties and protecting innovations as a way to profitably continuing research and allowing breeders to receive their right compensation.

More information on the SIVAL is available on

[www.sival-angers.com](http://www.sival-angers.com)

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In their latest Newsletter, **Plantum** (the Dutch Seed Association) highlighted the importance for the seed sector of the [new Regulation on Access and Benefit Sharing \(ABS\)](#) proposed by the European Commission in October 2012. It establishes due diligence obligations for all EU users of genetic resources who have to prove they have obtained them in a legitimate way in accordance with the access and benefit sharing legislation. This piece of legislation will enable the EU to ratify the Nagoya Protocol in 2014. Member States should also set up a control mechanism to verify users have effectively set up the mentioned due diligence system. Plantum supports the idea that this control system should be as minimal as possible and should avoid unnecessary costs.

As regards the legislative process,

## COMPASS Study on socio-economic value of neonicotinoid seed treatment—Launch in Brussels

On 14 January ESA participated in the launch of the so-called COMPASS Study highlighting the socio-economic, technological and environmental value of neonicotinoid seed treatment in the European Union. Published by the Berlin-based think tank “Humboldt Forum for Food and Agriculture” (HFFA), the study was supported by ESA, COPA (EU farmers union) and the European Crop Protection Association (ECPA) and financed by Bayer Crop Sciences as well as Syngenta. Conducted in late 2012, the review is based on data collected at country level from a broad base of industry experts, practitioners and farmers. The launch, moderated by Frances Edmonds, was followed by a high level discussion on the findings and conclusions on the effects of a ban of Neonicotinoid seed and sparked the interest of representatives from the European institutions, the media and related stakeholders.

The two key speakers, Prof. Harald von Witzke (President of the HFFA) and Thomas Hahn (study author) emphasized that neonicotinoid seed treatment contributes more than €2 billion annually to commodity crop revenues and reduces production



costs by €1 billion across the EU. The true annual economic benefit of neonicotinoids to the grower, when compared to not using pesticides at all, is over €4 billion. Commenting on the release of the report, ESA's Secretary General Garlich von Essen said: “Seed treatment is the technology of choice for the seed industry and for farmers and vegetable growers across Europe. It allows targeted crop protection with minimal quantities of pesticides, saves labour, time and energy, and avoids CO2 emissions and external land use. This new report shows just how crucial neonicotinoid seed treatments are for the competitiveness of the agri-food chain and what is at stake for our economy and the environment.” (KB).

### Additional dates and venues:

Tuesday 15th January Berlin (Germany)

Wednesday 16th January London (United Kingdom)

Thursday 17th January Warsaw (Poland)

Tuesday 22nd January Madrid (Spain)

Tuesday 22nd January Utrecht (Netherlands)





the Regulation will be discussed in the European Parliament in the course of the coming months. A draft report from the Parliament is expected for April with a vote sometime in June/July 2013.

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On 27 February the **Seed Association of Ukraine** is organising the first International Conference in Kiev on "Prospects of Ukraine's seed branch development as a part of integration processes of world economy" in partnership with ESA, the ISF and the US – Ukraine Business Council. The main objective will be to determine the current state of the investment process in the country, its peculiarity and to suggest ways to optimize it. Registrations

<http://www.ukrseeds.org.ua/en>

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**ALTIUS** is organising the Annual Plant Variety Seminar on 15 March 2013 in Brussels in order to discuss recent developments about IP protection for plants such as plant breeding and experimental use exemption in Belgian patent law and the state of affairs in farm saved seed. To register please click [here](#).

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The **Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO)** will participate in "[Salon du Végétal](#)" organized by the Horticultural Regional Office of Pays de la Loire from 19-21 February 2013 in Angers (France). During the three-day event CPVO will share a stand with GEVES: Hall Grand Palais Stand E131. For questions or discussion contact CPVO between 8:30 a.m. and 7.00 p.m there or via appointment [denecheau@cpvo.europa.eu](mailto:denecheau@cpvo.europa.eu) until 15 February.

## CAP Reform

MEPs in the AGRI Committee voted on CAP Reform package on 23 & 24 January, paving the way for the full endorsement of the CAP Reform package in the plenary session of the European Parliament on 12 March. One of the main proposals of the European Commission was to offer new environment protection rules that would make 30% of national budgets for direct payments conditional upon compliance with mandatory greening measures. In its vote, the AGRI Committee has made a positive contribution to the debate by introducing a level of flexibility (e.g. to reflect the size of the farm), particularly with regard crop diversification and maintenance of permanent grassland. ESA has been particularly active on this last point. There were many misconceptions on the definition of permanent grassland as well as the diversity of grasslands and farming practices associated with the renewal of permanent grassland across the EU. At a later stage, the European Commission will be developing secondary legislation that will further specify measures farmers may take to renew their permanent grassland. On 18 January, ESA organised a meeting with DG Agriculture in order to further explain that it is crucial for farmers to renew their permanent grassland. ESA will develop recommendations towards the European Commission on those measures. (J-PJ)

## Update on Plant Reproductive Material

On 17 January, ESA attended the meeting of the Advisory Group to the Food Chain where DG SANCO gave an update on the legislative package. This was a first occasion to hear what points other stakeholder groups are making. There were no principle comments against the COM proposals by other stakeholders (rather points for clarification), apart from the forestry representatives who clearly stated they were strongly against being part of the package. What has become clear is that there are discussions between the Commission services in DG Agriculture and in DG SANCO, which have delayed the final presentation of the package. The main remaining points of concern, then, regarding the file on Plant Reproductive Material are: the inclusion of forest reproductive material and the restricted marketing possibilities for conservation varieties. The SANCO and AGRI Commissioners met on 24 January to find an agreement on these points. In view of this meeting, ESA has made several contacts with DG AGRI in order to clarify this point and explain why conservation varieties should also comply with a minimum set of requirements, namely: identity and plant health. First reactions from this meeting show that there has been a positive outcome, but there is still no definite timeline for the publication of these proposals. (JPJ)

## European Innovation Partnership

ESA was invited to take part in the Steering Board of the European Innovation Partnership on agricultural productivity and sustainability and the Secretariat attended a preparatory meeting of the Steering Board on 15 January. This meeting enabled to further clarify the concept of the EIP, which is intended as a network facility to better coordinate research activity and farming needs. This network facility will have an office in Brussels with dedicated staff. What became clear was that the instrument will build upon funding coming from the Rural Development programmes of the CAP and from Horizon 2020. The intention is to combine the two and merge projects under "thematic networks" that will focus on specific issues, such as plant genetic resources where ESA will be particularly active. The role of the Steering Board is to establish a Strategic Implementation Plan that will advise the European Commission and Member States on which key areas need to be covered by the EIP, and what would be the most effective mechanisms to make the EIP a successful tool. The Steering Board will hold its first meeting on 21 February. (J-P J)

**The next ESA Newsletter will be published on 28.02.2013**

