



Conference: Seeds as Commons

Thursday, 19 October 2017

10 a.m. – 2.30 p.m.

Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia to the European Union

Rue Montoyer 47, 1000 Brussels

Hosted by the Member of the European Parliament

Maria Heubuch (The Greens/ EFA)

The fundamental basis of all our food is seed. Each grain of seed has a long history: Generations of farmers and breeders have contributed to crossing and selecting for suitable cultivated crops. In the past 50 years, breeding activities underwent major changes: Plant breeding is nowadays increasingly in the hands of multinational shareholder companies. Plant varieties are not any more freely accessible for everyone: They are often subject to plant variety rights and an increasing number of patentsⁱ. This profit-based seed system suppresses a wider diversity of breeding activities, which would be urgently needed to supply - not only organic - farmers with locally adapted plant varieties. The fact that small scale breeding activities often lack finances to support the necessary breeding facilities, forms an additional obstacle for a seed system with a broader basis.

You are warmly invited to the conference “Seeds as Commons” which presents an analysisⁱⁱ of the current seed system.

- ✿ A plant variety is a **cultural common**
- ✿ Through registration and protection it becomes a **legal good**
- ✿ On the counter of a seed seller only, it is an **economic good**

Alternative models to reconnect plant breeding with the society will be introduced, such as non-profit organic breeding initiatives and the OpenSourceSeedsⁱⁱⁱ initiative which aims to make seed a common good again. The panel of experts will discuss how to establish systems wherein organic plant breeding can best contribute to the availability of healthy food. Moreover, the improvement of agrobiodiversity, vital ecosystems services and resilience of our food system.

The conference invites policy makers, representatives of NGOs and other stakeholder associations to join the discussion.

Please click [here](#) to register!

ⁱ Plant variety rights (PVR), are rights granted to the breeder of a new variety of plant. They give the breeder exclusive control over the propagating material of a new variety for a number of years. The “breeder’s privilege” anyhow allows other breeders to make use of these varieties in their breeding work.

The use of patents in plant breeding are most controversial, as the intellectual property rights for patents go far beyond the rights granted with PVRs and even the breeders privilege does not apply. no-patents-on-seeds.org

ⁱⁱ The study “Saatgut Gemeingut” (Seeds as Commons) was published by Goetheanum – Section for Agriculture and Fonds für Kulturpflanzenentwicklung in January 2017. It shows the importance of seed as common good and explains how to develop seed sustainably and conserve it. The English translation of the study will be presented in this seminar, the German version can be found here: http://www.sektion-landwirtschaft.org/fileadmin/landwirtschaft/Saatgut_Gemeingut/saatgut_gemeingut_2_Auflage.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ www.opensourceseeds.org/en

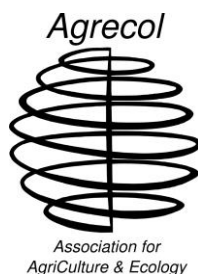
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