



PRESS RELEASE

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EU Green Week: Biodiversity – our lifeline

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ESA is the voice of the European seed industry, representing those active in research, breeding, production and marketing of seeds of agricultural and ornamental plant species. It represents 32 national seed associations (and with that more than 1000 seed businesses in the EU, most of them SMEs) and 41 direct company members.

ESA's mission is to work for fair and proportionate regulation of the European seed industry, freedom of choice for customers in supplying seeds as a result of innovative, diverse technologies and production methods and for effective protection of intellectual property rights relating to plants and seed.

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With 2010 being the International Year of Biodiversity also the “EU Green Week” organised by the European Commission focussed on the topic of biodiversity. According to Janez Potočnik, Commissioner for the Environment, one of the often quoted reasons of Europe’s failure to meet the 2010 target of halting biodiversity loss, is the “lack of awareness of the scale of the challenge”. One of the main aims of this year’s Green Week event was therefore to raise this awareness. During the four days of the conference many interesting sessions took place addressing issues related to the current state of biodiversity; related EU policies including the functioning of the Natura 2000 network; benefits of biodiversity enjoyed by mankind and the economic importance of ecosystem services; possible solutions to react to biodiversity loss and ways to ensure biodiversity conservation. Besides these thematic sessions a permanent exhibition offered a possibility to get acquainted with the activities of different biodiversity-related organisations.

For ESA, the most interesting session was the one addressing the link between biodiversity to food security where the importance of agro-biodiversity as well as the influence of the plant breeding and seed industry on it were raised. In that context also the positive role the FAO IT PGRFA and the sMTA play in the sustainable use of plant genetic resources and in food security was underlined. At the same time, it also became -once again- clear that there is a general lack of knowledge and thus appreciation of the role of the plant breeding sector in the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources. To address this lack of awareness, ESA has prepared a short publication entitled ‘Plant breeding and biodiversity’ intended to give a comprehensive overview on the importance of genetic diversity for the plant breeding and seed industry as well as on the efforts, projects and actions related to sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity which our sector is engaged in. This publication is available from the ESA Secretariat as well as for download from the ESA website (www.euroseeds.org) and will also be sent to representatives of the European Commission, the European Parliament, Member States and other relevant bodies.