



ESA NEWSLETTER

August 2010

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ESA Meetings (selected)

- **01.09.2010**
CRLA Meeting
- **02.09.2010**
SFG WG
Monitoring
Meeting
- **07.09.2010**
SVOWic Lead
Persons
Conference Call
- **08.09.2010**
WGB Meeting
- **09.09.2010**
Board Meeting
- **10.09.2010**
SFG Board
Meeting
- **13.09.2010**
SVOWic IP
Conference Call
- **14.09.2010**
SOF WG GLS CC
Conference Call

Dear Members,

while the summer seems to be over in many parts of Europe (and certainly in Belgium...), much harvesting still needs to be done in many countries and on many important crops, specifically winter wheat. Torrid rainfalls with more than 50 and sometimes more than 100 ml of perspiration within 24h have left fields so soaked that often even after longer dry periods farmers could not even get their machinery onto the fields. Whether or not this is really due to climate change is apparently anybody's bet guess rather than a matter of scientific certainty; but it seems that Europe needs to get used to more weather extremes than in the past and that flooding as well as scorching heat become much more common phenomena. And it certainly has brought the subject of climate change back on the political agenda from which (after a frosty winter) it had a bit disappeared over the past months. As usual, once the EU tanker gets moving, it seems difficult to steer it back to port. 'Mainstreaming' is one of the important policy principles of our times, meaning that an issue needs to be addressed not only at all possible levels and using all available instruments – but also where a more or less unrelated subject is discussed or decided upon. So 'think climate change' like 'think biodiversity' are principal policy conditions that the EU wants to see taken into account in all policy areas and wherever links can be established.

For seed, some of these links have always been well established. Of course, climate influences the performance of varieties, disease pressure and thus the importance of resistances etc.. And that biodiversity is important for plant breeding has been a chorus line for all seed industry representatives for many years. But now the industry is asked to contribute, demonstrate and improve rather than to simply state importance or effect. We are asked to do something, to strengthen and conserve biodiversity, to help combating climate change, to improve the environment – and still to safeguard sustainable agriculture and safe food production. Concretely, the revision of the EU's seed marketing and plant health legislation have put both subjects at the heart of the considerations for a modernisation. While clearly, neither these nor other important challenges can be met by a single industry alone, for the seed sector, this presents an opportunity as well as some foreseeable problems!

For us, leaner, faster and cheaper systems for variety registration and for phytosanitary requirements is the main goal. Society (and with that politicians) concentrate on new requirements such as improved nitrogen and water efficiency, better resistances and fewer or lower use of plant protection products and stronger assurance of food safety. At the same time, 'classical' criteria of importance to breeders and our customers, the farmers and growers, as e.g. yield, are put to the sideline of considerations. But this also provides opportunities! It is a possibility to interact with a wider public that usually is at best uninformed about plant breeding and seed production and actually more often outright sceptic or negative about its contribution to societal goals. Changing this negative image and appreciation will not be easy. And it will require a strong and continuous effort in our communication and outreach to decision makers, interested parties and the public with tailor made information on a variety of subjects. This challenge and how best to approach it has been discussed in a number of bodies over the past weeks and will also be on the agenda of the ESA Board at its upcoming September meeting. I certainly hope that we will be able to take the first important steps on this road to a better image of the plant breeding industry in the coming months.

With best regards, yours

Garlich v. Essen, Secretary General



External meetings

(selected)

- **08.09.2010**
UFS Mais Section
Assembly
Pau (F)
- **14.09.2010**
European
Parliament lunch
meeting on Green
Biotech (Liberal
Group)
Brussels (BE)
- **17.09.2010**
Plantum Annual
Meeting
Flevoland (NL)

Meeting with new Ukrainian Seed Association in Kiev

On 17./18. August 2010, the Secretary General met with the newly established Ukrainian Seed Association in Kiev to present ESA and to discuss the possibilities for a future cooperation and membership.

The new Ukrainian seed organisation comprises representatives from international as well as Ukrainian companies and has a strong focus on improving and strengthening the ties of its members and the country with the EU and beyond. Following a presentation of ESA's organisational structure, its membership and way of working as well as the current legislative developments (which will not only effect the EU itself but also import and export requirements and standards), an extensive discussion was held on specific areas of future cooperation and common interest, like e.g. Ukrainian import rules for R&D material and seed for trialing, phytosanitary requirements etc..

It was agreed to work for a speedy integration of the Ukrainian Seed Association into ESA and to further discuss the specific needs and areas of interest of the Ukrainian association in a subsequent meeting. (vE)

European Commission's DG SANCO splits up responsibilities for GMOs and Plant Health

With effect of September 1st, the European Commission's Directorate General for Public Health and Consumer Protection (SANCO) has split up its Unit for Plant Health which so far held all responsibility for seed marketing legislation, plant health (phytosanitary legislation) and GMOs. While one Unit will now work on seed marketing and plant health rules, a new separate Unit will solely deal with questions related to GMOs. This new Unit will now also take over responsibility for coexistence measures, an issue that was so far was under the responsibility of the Directorate General for Agriculture. The move is a follow up to the the attempt to pool responsibilities for plant biotech which in the past were scattered over a number of DGs.

Earlier, SANCO already took over responsibility for the main biotech legislation from DG Environment, a shift that was welcomed by industry but sharply criticised by environmentalists. It is also consistent with the new approach of the Commission to GM authorisations and use where the current proposal for a renationalisation of authorisations was accompanied by a revised guideline on Coexistence.

As regards the seed marketing and plant health Unit, the decision to form a separate Unit is seen as a possibility to disentangle these more technical regulatory issues from the politically more problematic biotech questions and with that to give them a higher and more distinct profile within the Commission's structure. (vE)



ESA updates its website and adds new functions to improve user friendliness and content

The ESA website and specifically the 'Members Area' of the site have been overhauled over the summer and are now available to the membership.

On the one hand, after a number of years of use, several technical and programming changes were simply needed to bring the site to a new technology standard and with that make it compatible with newer hardware and software versions. In other words: a good part of what has been done is hidden in servers and programmes and doesn't meet the eye of the user.

But the other part -and main reason- for the overhaul was to take account of some specific wishes of the ESA Membership and to equip the site to play a stronger role in our internal and external communication activities. ESA's Members had been asked in a questionnaire to indicate their appreciation of the site and to point to possibilities for improvements; here, the main suggestions that were received centred around a facilitation of finding and printing of documents on the Members Area. With more frequent meetings and more documents to be looked at, Members wished to see an option to better select documents for printing and speed up the process of finding these on the site.

This is not least due to a change of approach of the Secretariat (equally due to suggestions from Members) to provide shorter introduction documents and include references to more detailed background material that is available on the site. With that, preparation for meetings has been improved while at the same time, a complete database for background research is not only available but also easier useable for Members due to a new 'search' function that helps to trace documents by the numbers indicated in the introductory files.

Numerous other additions like a better and more consistent navigation system and set up of the structure, the possibility to add photo galleries (e.g. from the Annual Meeting or ESA Seminars and Conferences), rss feeds and many more have been added. Also, some of the information had been updated (e.g. the ESA Structure) or will still be updated in the months to come.

As in the past, ESA Members will be informed by e-mail each time new sections are added or have been updated and new information is available. A more specific explanatory information file is available in the Newsletter Section as well and can be accessed under the link [ESA_10.0802](#).

We hope you will find the new features useful and helpful in your daily work and use of our site! (vE)

External meetings

(continued)

- **23.09.2010**
SANCO
Stakeholder
Dialogue Group
Meeting tbc
Brussels (BE)
- **23.09.2010**
General Assembly
of Hungarian Seed
Association
(H)
- **28.09.2010**
EU Plant Health
Conference
Brussels (BE)

Next ESA Newsletter to be published on 04.10.2010