

ESA priorities 2011 - proposal for decision

At its fall meeting, the Board regularly decides on the priorities for the association for the coming year to be presented to the General Assembly in October.

These priorities are published in a small flyer that is made available to ESA Members and also sent to decision makers in European Parliament, Commission, Council and Member States as well as to selected third parties.

For 2010, the following priorities have been set by the Board:

- A strong organisation

ESA is a growing association, attracting more and diverse membership from European seed industry and beyond. The full integration of Europe's seed industry in a single organisation, specifically the integration of EESNET (Eastern European Seed Network) and its membership and of new associations and companies of further European countries is precondition for an effective representation of the industry's wide ranging interests. Such an effective representation requires strong structures, fair processes and an as intensive as efficient exchange between the ESA membership and the Brussels Secretariat. ESA will strive to further strengthen its respective capacities to this effect, with extended monitoring and scrutiny of policy developments, information and services to its Members, with continued investment in website tools and functions, including user friendly databases, and a special focus on outreach and advocacy to decision makers, interested parties and the wider public.

- Outreach and communication

As starting point for all agricultural production and thus food security and safety, plant breeding, variety development and seed marketing have traditionally been highly regulated activities, including product quality standards and phytosanitary requirements. Currently, the main body of the EU's seed related legislation is under review and soon Member States and European Parliament are going to discuss proposals for modernizations, not least with key stakeholders, but also with many other interested societal groups. ESA therefore will further intensify its outreach to national and European administrations, to politicians and other stakeholders, but also its communication to the interested public, to explain the specific needs of the European plant breeding industry and its importance for sustainable farming and a competitive European agri-food chain.

- Promoting innovation and sustainability

Science and technology are the main drivers of innovation in modern agriculture. With fundamental challenges such as massive population growth and climate change, the need for even more investment in breeding progress, in the performance of modern varieties, is essential. Already today, the plant breeding sector is amongst the industries with the highest R&D quotas. But this investment depends on a favourable regulatory environment and ultimately on the support of society as a whole. Promoting this support is a key undertaking of ESA and a precondition for the seed industry's ability to help Europe reach its policy goal of a sustainable, high quality agriculture that serves the needs of farms and growers as well as taking account of societal policy goals in the areas of public health, consumer and environmental protection and conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. ESA will work for the reinforcement of industry's research and development activities, e.g. via the next EU R&D framework programme, as well as for effective and efficient means for the protection and enforcement of its intellectual property rights as key elements of the societal support for the successful future of Europe's plant breeding and farming sector.