



ESA News



October 2012
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ESA Meetings (selected)

- **20.11.2012**
ESA CIPR,
meeting
- **26-27.11.2012**
ESA Lobbying
Workshop;
Stanhope Hotel/
EP/ ESA Office
- **17.10.2012**
ESA SVO wic
Meeting
- **27.11.2012**
ESA WG
Biodiversity
Meeting
- **12.12.2012**
ESA SPO Section
Meeting

Dear Members,

the ESA 2012 Annual Meeting now lies behind us - and as usual, it was marked by a number of important developments that I would like to briefly come back on in this Newsletter.

Firstly, on the actual size and importance of the meeting: yes, the ISF Congress was held in Brazil; and yes, this usually leads to higher numbers of participants at the following ESA AM. But what we need to realise is that the ESA Annual Meeting 2010, also held in Brussels, attracted a good 550 participants – which at the time was a near record attendance. This year, more than 750 participants registered for our meeting! I think it is fair to say that this shows that we have firmly established the ESA AM as a ‘must go’ event in the calendar of seedsmen and seedswomen, not only in Europe but also in an increasing number of other countries. This is good news specifically for the trade, where the participation from Eastern Europe, the Americas and other countries continues to grow, which makes the exchange of information and trade opportunities even more interesting. Whether or not we can sustain this growth in the coming year when we will meet in Warsaw, Poland, remains to be seen. And we are now coming back to all who were present with a very short questionnaire to inquire about the experience, the service, the quality and their preferences for 2014 ff., we certainly hope that based on this feedback, we will continue to prepare attractive Annual Meetings for you.

One of the key subjects at this year’s Congress was ESTA, the European Seed Treatment Assurance. Following the successful conclusion of the project phase during which we (and here mainly the ESA Working Group Seed Treatment, led by Jan Willem Breukink and supported by our consultant Ruud Scheffer) established a uniform European Standard for quality seed treatment, developed a guidance to help independent auditors in their verification of compliance of the seed treatment sites, a protected logo that shall make this compliance visible to all users and regulatory bodies and numerous other technical documents,... we now, finally, go live! ESTA is ready for implementation!

In this Newsletter, you will also find the job description and call for applications for the future Manager of ESTA. May I kindly ask you for your support in our search for the right person to take over this important task. ESTA’s success depends on our dedication, our continued collaboration and on experience and expertise. I hope that the search will result in the right contribution to this quest.

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External Meetings (selected)

- **06.11.2012**
**ETP Executive
Committee**
Brussels (BE)
- **07.11.2012**
UFS AGM
Paris (FR)
- **Conference EPP**
Budapest (HU)
- **26.-27.2012**
**ESA Lobbying
Training Workshop**
Brussels (BE)
- **04.-05.12.2012**
**CPVO - Annual
meeting with Exami-
nation Offices**
Angers (FR)
- **06.12.2012**
**CPVO DUS Expert
Meeting**
Angers (FR)

Another important aspect of the Congress surely was the General Assembly with the keynote speeches of Gerd Sonnleitner, President of the European farmers union COPA, and Sir David Baulcombe, well-known scientist and author and Professor at Cambridge University. “What do farmers need” and “what does society expect” were the questions the two addressed; and I think both speeches as well as the resulting discussion clearly showed the growing difficulty for our sector to bring the two together and behind our own positions and ideas.

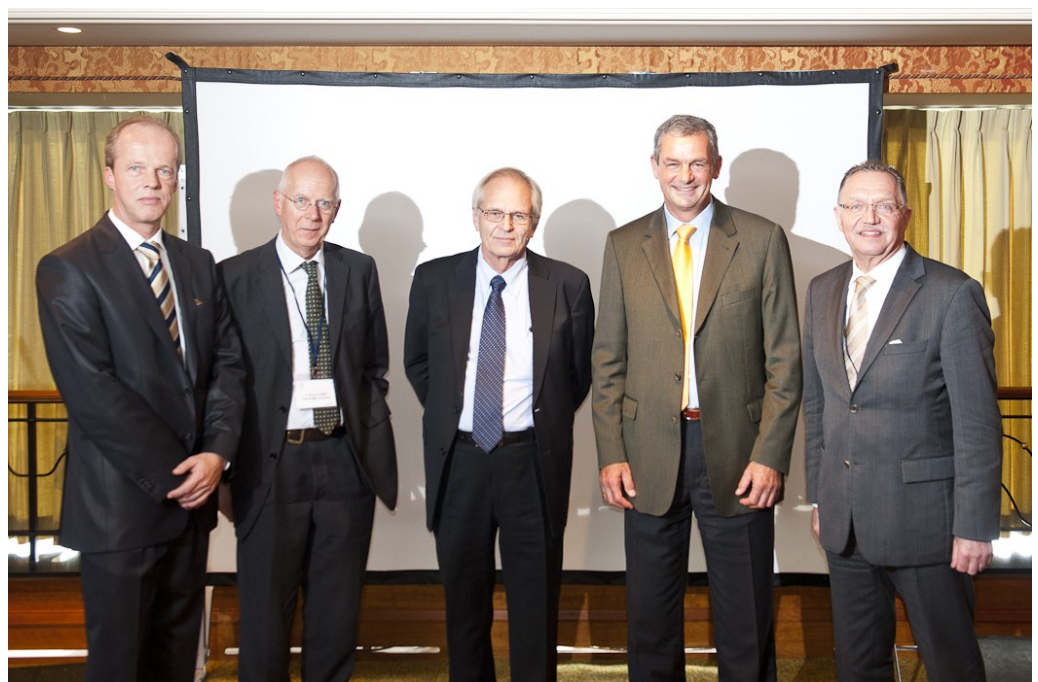
This challenge of outreach and communication towards an often sceptic, often uninformed public is one of key subjects. Not only have we improved and added to our respective activities, e.g. with the use of the new social media, not least during the Congress; we will also address it again in our discussions with national associations as well as individual company experts on the revision of the regulatory framework for variety listing, seed marketing and plant health.

When this revision will actually start is now, following the resignation of Commissioner Dalli and before the formal taking of office of his successor, a little difficult to predict. Still, we remain convinced that the final proposals should be before Parliament and Council of Ministers very early in 2013 in order to assure that a final agreement can be reached within a single reading and in time before the next election of the European Parliament in 2014.

Last, but definitely not least important, our General Assembly elected and confirmed the new ESA Board which will now take responsibility for guiding the association over the coming three years. There is a lot of continuity – but we also have quite a few new members on the Board which will further increase its representativeness. For more information on the new ESA Board, please also check our updated website.

With kind regards,

Garlich von Essen , Secretary General





EU implementing the Nagoya Protocol

On October 4, 2012 the European Commission adopted a proposal for a regulation implementing the Nagoya protocol in the EU. The Nagoya Protocol has two pillars, one is laying down rules on access to genetic resources and the other sets provisions of user compliance. The EU in its proposal however decided not to regulate access to genetic resources on the EU level but only propose rules on user compliance which means rules to check whether users accessed the genetic resources in compliance with the rules applicable in the providing country. The EU proposal is available at the following link: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/biodiversity/international/abs/pdf/PROPOSAL_FOR_A_REGULATION_EN.pdf

On October 23, 2012 DG Environment of the Commission held an informal information session for Member States and stakeholders where a general presentation was given on the work behind the proposal and its basic features and which was followed by a number of questions from the floor. The information session provided useful clarification on several topics nevertheless the ESA working group on biodiversity is going to compile a list of sector-specific questions which ESA is going to transmit to DG Environment and ask for a personal meeting to obtain further clarification. (SzCs)

UPOV CAJ – October 29, 2012 Geneva

The Committee of Legal and Administrative affairs of UPOV met on October 29 in Geneva. The meeting lasted only half a day and focused this time more on administrative than legal matters. One of the most important topics discussed was the development and launching of new features of the PLUTO variety denomination database (<http://www.upov.int/pluto/en/>). One of these important new features is a denomination similarity search function which is now available and will definitely provide a valuable tool for breeders as well as national PVP offices.

The UPOV meetings continue the whole week of October 29 and close with a symposium on November 2 on the benefits of the UPOV system form farmers and growers. The entire symposium will be recorded now for the first time and will be available for download from the UPOV website a few days later for those who wish to watch it. (SzCs)

Tackling biopiracy

On 25 July, the Development Committee of the European Parliament published a Draft Report on “development aspects of intellectual property rights on genetic resources: the impact on poverty reduction in developing countries”, which tackles in particular the issue of biopiracy. This Draft Report does not have any legal value: it is a political document, intended to highlight a specific issue and to call for action at European level. Ahead of the discussions in the European Parliament on the implementation of the Nagoya protocol, the ESA Secretariat considered it was useful to respond to this Draft Report. In particular, ESA considered that the specific framework governing access and benefit sharing for genetic resources for food and agriculture (the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture) was not sufficiently addressed. To counter this, ESA made contacts with several MEPs and political groups in order to put forward the ESA positions on intellectual property and on biodiversity. To that effect, ESA submitted proposals for amendments that were taken up by a number of MEPs. The Final Report will be voted in the Development Committee on 06 December 2012, and finally adopted in the Plenary session of January. (JP)





Plant Reproductive Material put on hold

The ESA Secretariat understood from the European Commission services that when Commissioner Dalli resigned, they were just about to launch the interservice consultation on the legislative package that includes the proposal for a Regulation on the marketing and production, with a view to marketing, of plant reproductive material. This legislative package, that revises the regulatory framework at European level for variety listing, seed marketing, plant health and official food & feed & seed controls, is the end-result of a series of studies and stakeholder consultations in the framework of the “Better Regulation” exercise. All the legislative proposals are ready, the question is: when will the final process be launched? It is very likely that the files will be put on hold until the new Commissioner is officially in place, which according to the current planning would be end of November. In the meantime, however, the ESA Secretariat has been actively engaged with the Commission. Thanks to the excellent work carried out by the ESA Working Group Better Regulation, ESA submitted a detailed article-by-article analysis of the draft Regulation, providing comments and suggestions for improvements to the Commission in the final elaboration of their proposals. (JP)

Visits to ESA Members

On October 5 the Secretariat visited Monsanto Vegetable Seeds in Bergschenhoek (Netherlands) together with Thomas Weber (DG SANCO). The visit was organised as an introduction to the vegetable seed industry to inform representatives of the Commission on the specificities of breeding, production and marketing of vegetable seeds. Philippe Lesigne and members of the Monsanto staff gave presentations on their company and these aspects focussing on vegetable seeds. The group visited the laboratories and greenhouses and enjoyed an introduction to breeding in pepper. Many thanks to the Monsanto team for organising this visit which is intended to help the Commission to better understanding the vegetable seed industry. (BS)

CPVO Meetings

On October 11/12 the CPVO DUS Experts had their annual meeting in Angers (France). In total 29 experts participated in the meeting representing 17 countries. In addition observers from Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina attended. ESA was represented by Jim Duncumb (Syngenta UK), Titus de Vries (Limagrain NL) and Bert Scholte. Several issues of importance were addressed:

- Barley

a. *Segregation of characteristics in three way hybrids.*

The interest in hybrid barley is increasing and the tendency is moving to three way hybrids. Due to the genetics certain characteristics in three way hybrids as for example aleuron colour segregate which currently is not taken into account in the DUS protocol. The experts agreed to improve the wording in the Technical Protocol to give more clarity to DUS examiners.





b. Uniformity threshold for male sterile lines (crosses) in 3W hybrids.

The Technical Protocol for barley currently contains a Uniformity threshold of 0.2 % with an acceptance probability of 95%. Practical experience was obtained in the past two years in applying a threshold of 0.5% which is more realistic for male sterile lines. The DUS experts decided to change the threshold to 0.5% and to revise the Technical Protocol, which is positive news for breeders of hybrid barley.

c. Possible additional characteristics and changes to existing characteristics

Several proposals were discussed regarding possible additional characteristics to be used in DUS testing. Underneath the proposals are listed which were maintained:

- Characteristic 21 - Median spikelet: length of glume and its relative to grain. The number of states of expression will be increased from 3 to 4. A drawing / explanation will be added to the Technical Protocol.

- Awn Grain: speculation of medium nerve with a scale from 1-4. To be added to the TP on proposal of France.

- Characteristic 26 - hairiness ventral furrow (absent / present) Denmark commented that sometimes there is a problem in observation of the state of absent as sometimes a few hairs in can be observed in the higher part; On proposal of Germany the explanation in the TP will be improved.

The Technical Protocol will be finalized and sent for adoption to the Administrative Council in the end of 2013 as the TP has just been revised this spring. It was agreed however to apply the Uniformity thresholds for hybrids already now as agreed upon and not to reject candidate varieties.

- Oilseed rape

- ESA position on DUS testing of Oilseed rape. I presented the revised ESA position which was well appreciated by the DUS experts.

- The experts discussed the obligation to test A lines in MSL system (the so-called grandmother lines) according to CPVO protocol both in the framework of application of C lines and hybrids. It appeared that this is not the case in certain Member States (UK). So far this issue has not been addressed within ESA, The SOF DUS Working Group will be asked to analyse the situation and to prepare a recommendation for the SOF section.

- Sunflower

- The experts re-discussed the issue of DUS testing of modified varieties. I have presented the recently adopted ESA position on a short track procedure which is in-line with the CPVO approach.

- Endophyte R&D project in grasses

The CPVO informed that the project description and budget were finalized and the CPVO R&D Advisory Group is being consulted for their opinion regarding possible co-financing. It is expected that the consultation process will be finalized shortly after which the CPVO President will decide on the possible co-financing of the project. On behalf of ESA I have stressed the importance of the project to clarify the possible effect of endophytes on the variety description. Therefore we hope for a positive decision of the CPVO President in order to be able to start soon.





- Flax

The DUS experts decided to revise the recently adopted CPVO Technical Protocol for flax to bring it in line with the revised UPOV Technical Guideline. The most important changes are:

- to revise the number of plants to 1000 plants in two repetitions of which 40 need to be examined according to the UPOV TG.

- the notion of long stem and short stem varieties will be replaced by Fiber types and Oil types as used in the UPOV TG

- Flower: corollas heart; absent / present. To be reintroduced in the CPVO TP

- Characteristic 6: exclusion of white colored varieties to be deleted.

- Characteristic 10: to add a state of expression 3: violet

The CPVO will revise the Technical Protocol on the basis of the discussion to be re-discussed in the CPVO DUS expert meeting next year.

- Hemp

The CPVO Technical Protocol for Hemp was finalized and will be put forward for adoption to AC in November this year.

Overall the meeting went quite well and several of the points made by ESA were taken over, demonstrating the importance to participate in these discussions. (BS)

The Flax industry meets in Brussels

On October 18 the first International Flax congress took place in Brussels. Some 250 participants attended the event representing flax breeders, producers but also the fibre producers. It was the first time that also the companies using those fibres were invited which resulted in the participation of a large group of delegates from especially Asian countries. The event demonstrated the existence of an active international industry around a relative small but beautiful crop as Flax. (BS)

New social media activities during the Annual meeting

In addition to our usual communication activities (upload of all presentations and documents on the ESA Website, flyer with ESA'S priorities 2013 to be presented at the General Assembly etc.) this year ESA made use of its newly introduced social media activities – while the ESA Congress was happening!

We uploaded congress pictures on Facebook (which you can view under www.facebook.com/euroseeds) and managed to attract many supporters during those few days.

We also made extensive use of Twitter (https://twitter.com/ESA_euroseeds) and were directly commenting on most of the horizontal items presented during the section meetings. In total we send out over 40 tweets (!) during these 3 days, particularly during the sections meeting and also the open part of the General Assembly and also here sparked the interest of many new followers.

Many thanks to all of those who contributed to this success and we are motivated to keep up those important social media tools that will again be introduced during our lobbying workshop on the 26/27 November in Brussels (KB)





Farewell speech of outgoing ESA President Christoph Amberger

Dear friends from the Seed Industry,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is today that my term as ESA President comes to an end and I hand over my duties to Gerard Backx.

I know and I support that it is much more important what happens in the future than what has happened in the past. Thus it is more about him and the outlook for his presidency which needs your support.

What helps for the future is success of the past because it proves that there are possibilities, options that we can explore and realize to have a good future for our industry and our companies.

But before I come to what we have reached I would also like to address where we had no or only little progress. These are, and it has been for many years now, the rules on how to deal with GMO's and coexistence in Europe. We have no threshold for GMO's in conventional seed nor do we have a definition of what is a zero level for adventitious presence and what standardized technical protocol we can use.

As well I must admit that we have expected more from the dialogue on Farm Saved Seed that the CPVO organized to move this issue in Europe ahead. This concerns the way of getting information on the use of farm saved seed, the definition of a farmers holding and the definition of a small farmer.

What gives us reason for optimism is what we have achieved:

The unification of ESA and EESNET, which makes the European Seed industry speaking clearly with one voice

The quality assurance system ESTA for seed treatment, which defines good practice in seed treatment.

The implementation of the ESA IP position. This ended up becoming a good compromise between our members. It helps that Intellectual Property – the core of our business – is respected and protected in a way that we get a fair remuneration for what we develop. And what has been developed can be used by others for new inventions for the benefit of our customers and society

I think the rulings in the Broccoli and the Kokopelli case and what we see as first announcement of better regulation from the commission gives reasons for optimism: We are on the right way and in agreement with our customers and political decision making seems to support this.

I have tried to represent our industry and give my contributions in the best way I could. It was not only duty but also fun. I enjoyed working with our General Secretary and Secretariat. We have a well experienced Secretary General, who does an excellent job for our association. Our Secretariat consists of young, professional, hard-working people with a good understanding. All of them are likeable colleagues and I enjoyed being with them.





My gratitude goes also to the board members; I would like to thank them for their willingness to put industry interests above company interests for fair and constructive debates about how to find the best way for our industry.

I would like to thank the section chairs and especially the committee chairs and members for their time and talents invested in the best interest of our industry.

Last but not least I'd like to thank our main sponsor of this congress, Syngenta.

Dear friends from the seed industry:

You have made a good choice electing Gerard Backx as your new President. He has broad experience; he understands association work very well and is able to balance the different interests.

I am sure ESA and our industry will have a good development. Consumers need more food, farmers need innovative products and we are able to supply them.

Thank you for your trust and support, all the best to the European Seed Industry and to you as members of this great association!

Christoph Amberger





For your information and further circulation within your relevant network

ESA European Seed Association (www.euroseeds.org) is the European top level organisation of the plant breeding and seed production sector, representing more than 30 national seed associations and more than 70 direct company members.

ESA is strengthening its team with a

MANAGER

for its

EUROPEAN SEED TREATMENT ASSURANCE (ESTA™) scheme

to work at the ESA General Secretariat's office in Brussels, Belgium.

Job Description

The Manager ESTA will work as part of the ESA Policy Team and with ESA's members under the guidance of the Secretary General to whom he/she reports and will focus on the implementation and future development of the association's ESTA European Seed Treatment (Quality) Assurance scheme and support the relevant ESA Working Groups in the areas of seed treatment technologies and plant protection products.

This includes overall outreach, advocacy and lobbying related activities towards EU and national decision makers as well as collaboration with and coordination of related activities at the level of EU Member States.

More information on ESTA can be found on www.euroseeds.org/esta

Main tasks and responsibilities:

- Lead responsibility for implementation and further development of ESTA, in collaboration with the ESTA Board
- Manage relevant ESA Working Groups, including meeting preparation, minutes and follow-up, in close cooperation with the ESA membership
- Liaise closely with colleagues in national seed associations and company offices
- Develop and manage processes to ensure effective, coordinated implementation of ESTA, specifically in cooperation with relevant organisations on national levels
- Develop and maximise relations with key opinion formers and relevant decision-makers

Ascertain documentation and data management, also via the ESA and ESTA website, and assure regular control of accepted certifying bodies, certified treatment facilities etc. in line with the ESTA Standard





Profile:

- Academic degree in engineering or natural sciences (university or technical college) or equivalent, preferably specializing in quality management/quality assurance; with background in agriculture / plant breeding or similar

or

- Academic degree in agriculture or plant biology with knowledge of plant breeding; experience in seed marketing and sales and practical experience of quality management/quality assurance

- Expertise and practical experience with quality management, quality assurance concerning DIN/ISO 9001 or equivalent standards desirable
- High degree of cooperation, ability to work in a team and communicate as well as diplomacy
- Very good command of English, further languages an asset
- Good PC knowledge; experience with website CMS
- Readiness to travel
- Strong motivation to learn and perform; keen perception
- Structured and independent working as well as initiative and flexibility
- Analytical thinking and methodical approach
- Strong orientation towards membership satisfaction

Interested candidates should send their CV, highlighting the relevant experience to the job description, to:

secretariat@euroseeds.org and mark it with "Manager ESTA"

Application deadline: **02.12.2012**

Interviews will be held as of December 2012 and the selection shall be concluded by end of January 2013.

Expected starting date: asap

The next ESA Newsletter will be published on 30 November 2012

