

# International Conference

North/ South exchange on experiences on seed laws

Presentation of the outcomes of the European Project FSO

Farmers' forum with farmers involved in the field trials



*FarmSeed Opportunities*

**14 - 15 October 2009**

**Marseille**

**Lycée Agricole d'Aix Valabre  
Chemin du moulin du fort  
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Farm Seed Opportunities (FSO), a specific targeted research project in the FP6 European programme (2007-2009), was conceived to support the implementation of seed regulations on conservation varieties (directive 98/95/EC and new directive 2008/62/EC for agricultural species).

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## **Farm Seed Opportunities ([www.farmseed.net](http://www.farmseed.net))**

Even though Farm Seed Opportunities (FSO) aims mainly at responding to the needs of European policy makers, the overall objective of the Farm Seed Opportunities project (FSO) is to contribute to on farm conservation, improvement and management of agricultural biodiversity. The partnership of FSO includes research institutions, farmers' seed networks and organic farmers' associations from 6 European countries.

FSO has been developing coherent definitions of the different kinds of varieties cultivated in farm fields following a survey and evaluation of practices at the national level. It has also significantly contributed to the recognition of the role of farmers in conserving diversity through the use of landraces and the breeding of new varieties. FSO has taken into account Participatory Plant Breeding (PPB) experiences for organic or low-input agriculture, with the goal of proposing regulation scenarios that recognise and encourage on farm varietal innovation and selection.

One important aim of FSO is to describe the varieties bred on farm and to analyse the mechanisms (farmers' practices, natural selection) that drive the evolution and adaptation of these varieties. Thus, integrating scientific competencies and farmers' knowledge about varieties and seeds, field trials have been performed to get data over three years (2007 to 2009) by growing successive generations of various varieties of wheat, maize, spinach and beans in a European network (Italy, France, the Netherlands) on organic or low-input farms.

Our research will also focus on the potentiality for niche markets for products of local varieties (e.g geographical indications, private label or certification), the development of a seed quality standard more suitable to local varieties and the expectations of different stakeholders. FSO will address information to the society at large to answer to its demand for local products, to safeguard agricultural biodiversity and to stimulate its involvement in decision making.

### **What is the purpose of the conference?**

The FSO project will draft a set of possible legal strategies for on farm plant breeding in Europe, taking into account the need to enlarge the seeds legislation (certification and marketing rules, property rights). Given that most interesting on farm breeding strategies have been developed in the South and that these countries are adopting new seed laws by following the rules of Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), it is important that the FSO partners share their views with experts, scientists and farmers from the South.

The conference will aim at:

1. Validating the results of the FSO research program;
2. Promoting exchanges amongst stakeholders;
3. Outlining a set of legal strategies for a sustainable and efficient use of agricultural biodiversity, taking into account all benefits shared globally.