



ESA Section Maize (SMA)

Guidelines for the organisation of VCU testing of Maize in Europe

ESA is the voice of the European seed industry, representing the interests of those active in research, breeding, production and marketing of seeds of agricultural, horticultural and ornamental plant species. The ESA Section on Maize (SMA) represents more specifically the European Maize breeders involved in research, plant breeding, production and marketing of maize.

1. Legal framework

- Council Directive 2002/53 - Directive on the Common Catalogue of varieties of agricultural species

According to Directive 2002/53 maize varieties can only be placed on the market when these varieties are included in the Common Catalogue. The Common Catalogue is compiled on the basis of the national catalogues of the EU Member States. According to article 4.1 a variety must be of satisfactory Value for Cultivation and Use (VCU). Article 5.4 defines the general principle of VCU testing.

- Commission Directive 2003/90 - Directive setting out implementing measures for the purpose of Article 7 of Council Directive 2002/53 as regards characteristics to be covered as a minimum by the examination and the minimum conditions for examining certain varieties of agricultural plant species.

According to Annex III of this Directive VCU testing should include Yield, Resistance to harmful organisms, behaviour with respect to factors in the physical environment and Quality characteristics.

2. Minimum standards for VCU testing for the purpose of National Listing

The ESA Section on Maize (SMA) is clearly in favour to maintain the existing obligatory system in the European Union of VCU testing for National Listing purposes as a prerequisite for the mounting up to the Common Catalogue and considers that the VCU testing in the EU Member States should be or organized in such a way to include the following key principles as minimum standards:

- There should be no prerequisite regarding the entry to National List trials. (No requirement of obligatory preliminary trials etc.)

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- VCU Testing for national listing purposes is the responsibility of official authorities but can be supported by private companies in supplying testing facilities and testing data. (See the table in Annex 1)
- Testing should be reliable and cost effective.
- Testing should be limited to 2 growing cycles / 2 years.
- There should be no restriction to the number of varieties in trials.
- A decision to add a variety to a national list in a MS should be based on minimum criteria for Cultivation and Use. (negative selection only).
- The criteria for decision should be harmonised within the EU.
- National Authorities are urged to use also data from trial sites outside their country in the respective testing zone (As described in Annex 2) in addition to data from testing sites in their own country regarding the decision for National Listing in their country

3. VCU testing for the purpose of Recommendation

The ESA SMA section agrees that Recommendation trials are needed after a variety has been added to a National List in a MS and consequently to the European catalogue.

Main arguments are:

- Improved hybrids of different breeding companies are compared to assist farmers and distributors in their choice.
- Added value for breeders, farmers and distributors, provided the trials are organised in a way that all parties are interested to participate.

The following key principles are identified:

- Recommendation trials should be the responsibility of breeders, farmers and distributors. (stakeholders) (See the table in Annex 1)
- All stakeholders should participate in the organization and the costs of the trials.
- Recommendation trials should be organised in homogenous zones in relation to climate, cultivation and markets which are not necessarily restricted to national borders (As described in Annex 2).
- Recommendation trials should be reliable and cost effective.
- Recommendation trials should be open for all varieties listed in the respective MS or zone but also to varieties listed on the Common Catalogue.
- There should be no limitations to the number of varieties in the trials other than the cost of trials.
- Recommendation trials should integrate VCU testing data from National Listing tests in order to make use of all available testing data.

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4. Use of data of Recommendation Trials

Data of Recommendation trials can be used in different ways depending on situation in the different MS and or testing zones at present. These results can either be used to set up some kind of Recommended List (for example UK, Holland) or just be presented in a neutral way allowing the farmer to make his choice. (for example: Farmers Union Trials in Denmark)

The working group recommends leaving the decision regarding the use of data of VCU testing of Recommendation Trials to the stakeholders in the respective MS / testing zone.

5. Organisation of VCU testing of Maize

National Authorities in EU Member States, ESA SMA Members and other stakeholders are called upon to use these guidelines in order to revise the respective VCU testing systems to achieve the desired improvements. ESA is offering its expertise to National Authorities and stakeholders in relation to the possible revision of VCU testing systems

ESA Mission Statement

ESA is the voice of the European seed industry, representing the interests of those active in research, breeding, production and marketing of seeds of agricultural, horticultural and ornamental plant species.

Plants from seed are the origin of all food, provide innovative and environmentally friendly industrial products and beautify our landscape.

ESA's mission is to work for:

- ◆ effective protection of intellectual property rights relating to plants and seeds;
- ◆ fair and proportionate regulation of the European seed industry;
- ◆ freedom of choice for customers (farmers, growers, industry, consumers) in supplying seeds as a result of innovative, diverse technologies and production methods

Annex 1 - Table

	National Listing	Responsibility
Year 1 Year 2	- DUS - VCU	Public domain Support by private sector - data - trials
Year 3	Recommendation trials	All stakeholders

Annex 2

