



PRESS RELEASE

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ESA is the voice of the European seed industry, representing those active in research, breeding, production and marketing of seeds of agricultural and ornamental plant species. It represents 37 national seed associations (and with that more than 1000 seed businesses in the EU, most of them SMEs) and 55 direct company members.

ESA's mission is to work for fair and proportionate regulation of the European seed industry, freedom of choice for customers in supplying seeds as a result of innovative, diverse technologies and production methods and for effective protection of intellectual property rights relating to plants and seed.

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EU Plant Health Conference shows need for more cooperation of public and private sector

Increasing global trade and movement of plant material must be met by a stronger cooperation of companies and authorities and differentiated approaches for special products such as seed

With the evaluation of the EU's current legal framework for plant health at midterm, the European Commission invited private sector stakeholders such as farmers, traders and seed industry together with representatives of EU Member States' plant health authorities for a presentation of the findings by the evaluator and for a discussion on the next steps of the evaluation process. The conference was attended by some 150 representatives and demonstrated the high level of interest from both public and private sector in the evaluation exercise.

"It was a very useful and good conference" Garlich v. Essen, Secretary General of ESA European Seed Association expressed his appreciation of the meeting underlining the intensive exchange of views and technical information and the good preparation of discussions by Commission and evaluator.

At the conference, the Chairman of ESA's Working Group on Plant Health, Gerard Meijerink presented the seed industry's specificity and its requirements for a modernisation of the EU's plant health system.

"All plant production starts with the seed. Without healthy seed, there is no healthy plant production. We therefore see ourselves as a key partner of EU and national authorities for a future plant health policy."

With increasing globalisation and international trade and budget constraints in the public sector, ESA as well as representatives of agricultural trade and farmers confirmed the readiness of industry to take over more responsibility and tasks in the area of plant health; but industry also underlined that a change of approach to policy and governance was required in this respect: "We are ready and able to contribute more - more expertise, more experience and more resources.", von Essen confirmed for the seed sector. "But if industry and authorities are to be partners, we also request a more cooperative governance of this policy area."

Here, Gerard Meijerink pointed to the well established practices and positive experience of such shared responsibilities in the area of seed certification and quality control where already today, many tasks are performed by the industry itself under supervision of public authorities. "Seed industry has proven to be a reliable and professional partner of authorities in this area and together we have been able to become more efficient and reduce costs. We should apply the same principles to a new plant health regime", Meijerink stated and underlined the seed industry's commitment to a successful revision to the legislation.