



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 32 national seed associations (and with that more than 1000 seed businesses in the EU, most of them SMEs) and 42 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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Towards a new Plant Health Law for Europe

Strengthening public awareness and involvement of stakeholder will be crucial for future improvement of EU policy on plant health

The European Commission, represented by Commissioner John Dalli, and the Belgian EU Presidency, represented by Minister Sabine Laruelle, hosted a Conference on the future of the EU's legislation on plant health on 28. September on Brussels. The Conference marked the end of the first step of the evaluation of the existing legislation and presented the conclusions as well as options and recommendations for a future revision.

In his opening address, Commissioner Dalli underlined the main objective of EU plant health legislation, the protection of the safety of food derived from plants and to secure the health and quality status of crops in all Member States by regulating the trade of plants and plant products within the EU as well as imports from the rest of the world in accordance with international plant health standards and obligations. Both, Commissioner and Minister Laruelle stressed the importance of this policy and the fact that in view of climate change and increasing world trade, more will need to be done in the future. At the same time, both pointed to the limited resources available and to the importance to involve all capacities on European and national level to achieve the objectives.

"We certainly welcome the acknowledgement of the Commission that the ideas for a new plant health law must not centre solely around proper classification of pests or appropriate control or eradication measures but that the stronger involvement of stakeholders in general and industry in particular will be instrumental for success", Garlich von Essen, Secretary General of ESA commented during the Conference. He specifically suggested the creation of a horizontal Advisory Group on Plant Health as well as Technical Expert Groups to support Commission and Member States in the implementation of phytosanitary measures. "We are looking for a modern legislation that is fit for purpose – and we are looking for a modern governance that involves stakeholders in all phases of policy development, decision making and implementation.", von Essen specified the wish of the seed industry.

The Chairman of the ESA Working Group on Plant Health, Gerard Meijerink, underlined the specificity of the sector and the high level of expertise and commitment to an efficient and effective plant health regime. "As an industry, we are ready and able to take on additional responsibilities. This could free resources in public administrations to address those issues that are specifically linked to the public good character of this issue, like e.g. the phytosanitary status of public green.", Meijerink stressed the usefulness of more public-private-partnership in this policy. "The seed industry has a proven track record in ensuring quality conditions for the sale of seeds and propagating material within the EU under official supervision. This is a recipe for success that we wish to see taken on for the plant health legislation."

The Commission invited public authorities and stakeholders to supply further input to the process in the coming weeks and months during which an Action Plan and, finally, a legislative proposal will be developed then will be placed before European Parliament and Member States for final discussion and decision.