



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 35 national seed associations (and with that more than 1000 seed businesses in the EU, most of them SMEs) and 43 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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European seed industry gathers in Brussels

More than 500 representatives of seed companies and national seed associations from Europe and beyond met in Brussels for the ESA 2010 Annual Meeting

Support for innovation and intellectual property protection at the centre of plant breeders' policy agenda

From 10 to 13 October, the ESA 2010 Annual Meeting took place in Brussels, Belgium, with a record attendance of almost 560 participants. During these days, next to the General Assembly, meetings of almost all specialised crops sections as well as of representatives of national seed associations were held. At almost all of these meetings, the EU's policies and regulatory options for supporting innovation in plant breeding were at the centre of attention and debate. Currently, the European Union is actively pursuing evaluations of numerous legal frameworks of importance to the seed sector, like e.g. the legislation on seed marketing, on phytosanitary requirements, on GMOs and, most recently, on the protection of intellectual property rights. In addition, the discussions on the follow-up of the current seventh framework programme for research and development have started and it has already become clear that stakeholder involvement such as the breeding sector's in the European Technology Platform 'Plants for the Future' will be decisive in shaping the new rules and instruments.

"This has been an extraordinarily successful Congress!", Garlich v. Essen, Secretary General of ESA European Seed Association, sums up the outcome of the meetings and points specifically to the further enlargement of the organisation which now includes new members from e.g. Switzerland and Croatia.

Next to important decisions regarding the institutional and financial strengthening of the association and a focus on outreach and advocacy towards third parties, he specifically points to the key aspects of promoting and protecting innovation: "For a competitive agri-food chain, an equally competitive plant breeding sector, both public and private, is a precondition. For this, we need societal support – and, of course, here the EU's funding programmes in the area of plant breeding and biotechnology can set important incentives; but we also need support for the proper protection and enforcement of breeders' intellectual property rights. Without, it will be difficult, if not impossible to sustain the level of investment and innovation needed to meet the grand challenges of food supply and environmental protection we have set ourselves as Europe."