

Plant reproductive material law: Increase production to feed or ruin the world?

Productivity as a cornerstone

The European Plant Reproductive Material law has been created in the post-WWII and decolonisation context. During times of food shortages, the need to increase productivity has been implemented as the cornerstone of this legislation. However, other objectives that go beyond productivity (like suitability for sustainable low input agriculture, or culinary, nutritional and aesthetic qualities) have emerged over the decades but have never been sufficiently integrated to this legislation.

- **Organic agriculture:** recent studies show that varieties bred and used under the conditions of organic agriculture may generate productivity equal to conventional varieties used under intensive conditions¹. However, the proposal does not offer a satisfactory solution for them.

Increasing productivity: a real need?

By defining the need to increase productivity as the major goal of this legislation, the proposal not only fails to solve the problems of the existing system, but also refuses to tackle the real problems of our modern western societies such as obesity and food waste. More communication between the different Units in DG SANCO would be useful! Regarding the global hunger problem, a massive export of seeds (another goal of this legislation) will ruin local economies and increase dependency on humanitarian aid. This tendency will be increased through the export of this legislation, as intended by Chapter VI of the proposal, thereby serving the interests of the seed industry by increasing their global market shares.

- **Obesity:** 12% of the adult population in the EU is obese, 52% considered overweight. Obesity is responsible for 2-8% of the health costs in the European region². For these reasons, DG SANCO has launched a strategy on these health issues³.
- **Food waste:** 90 million tons of food are annually wasted in Europe⁴. Solving this problem should come as a first priority.
- **Feed the world:** This legislation is often reasoned with the need of “feeding the world”. But, as also the last UNCTAD report⁵ proves: Hunger is not a matter of productivity, but of poverty and lack of access to food.
- **Concentration process:** The global seed market is undergoing constant concentration processes, increasing users’ dependency from few multinationals who bought the local companies⁶.

- ✓ **The Solution:** Biodiversity shall be the rule, not the exception. This legislation shall not be mandatory for open pollinated seeds. Provisions of Chap.VI (art.43 to 46) shall not be synonym to drama in developing countries.

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¹ <http://66.147.244.123/~rodalein/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/FSTbookletFINAL.pdf>

² <http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/noncommunicable-diseases/obesity>

³ http://ec.europa.eu/health/newsletter/114/focus_newsletter_en.htm

⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/sustainability/>

⁵ <http://unctad.org/en/pages/PublicationWebflyer.aspx?publicationid=666>

⁶ <https://www.msu.edu/~howardp/seedindustry.html>