



## 14th European Forum "Let's Liberate Diversity"

# Farm to Fork - Seed to Plate Regional Seeds and Varieties for the Future of our Food

## Conference 'Patents versus Biodiversity'

Lycée Technique Agricole Luxembourg  
1 Kréiwénkel, 9374 Gilsdorf

5 September 2025  
15:00 – 22:00

- 15:00 Opening of the 'Diversity Fair' with actors from different European countries and from Luxembourg
- 18:00 Opening remarks to the conference by Luxembourg's Minister of Agriculture Martine Hansen
- 18:10 Keynote speeches on the topics cultivated biodiversity, seed laws, seed health and farmers' rights
- 19:00 Round of experts from the field of plant breeding and seed production
- 19:50 Closing remarks
- 20:00 Vin d'honneur, finger food and live music



## **Further information**

The Diversity Fair brings together various actors and organisations from Luxembourg and various European countries from the fields of seed and plant production, education and research in the context of agroecology and agrobiodiversity.

The conference 'Patents versus Biodiversity' aims to provide information on the future of seeds and thus of food production. At a time when seeds are subject to increasing standardisation, centralisation and privatisation, arguments will be discussed that demonstrate the need to preserve regional variety diversity.

Speakers will give keynote speeches on various topics related to crop genetic diversity, regional seed systems, on-farm development practices, farmers' rights and seed laws. Experts from the field will report on their practical experience in the area of plant breeding and seed production, regional diversity, plant and seed health, agroecology, practical experience and economic aspects.

## **Keynote speeches**

### Riccardo Bocci

Riccardo Bocci is an Italian agricultural engineer, technical director of Rete Semi Rurali and board member of the European Coordination 'Let's Liberate Diversity'. He has participated in several European research projects and has written many scientific articles on crop diversity.

R. Bocci's presentation will focus on the relationship between plant diversity, regional seed systems and participatory plant breeding. Genetic diversity can only arise, be maintained and further developed in diversified regional systems. The value of traditional varieties lies not only in their role as a genetic resource for plant breeding, but also in their utilisation in the context of a 'living diversity' that is cultivated in the fields, passes through the hands of farmers and ultimately ends up on people's plates.

### Stephanie Klaedtke

Stephanie Klaedtke is a Luxembourgish doctor of agricultural sciences. She works as an officer for seed health and plant diversity at ITAB in Angers, France.

S. Klaedtke's keynote speech will address the question of the extent to which on-farm plant breeding and seed multiplication represent a perspective for agroecological food production that can simultaneously guarantee long-term crop security and food quality.

On-farm plant breeding and seed multiplication are based on ecosystemic interactions between plants and their environment as well as on continuous and progressive development and adaptation processes that strengthen the natural resilience of plants.

## Christophe Golay

Christophe Golay holds a PhD in International Relations (specialising in International Law) and is a Senior Research Fellow at the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights.

C. Golay's keynote speech refers to the right to food and the right to seeds of peasants as defined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants (UNDRIP). In a context in which international free trade agreements and seed laws are increasingly putting pressure on peasants' seed sovereignty, how can these two fundamental rights be protected?

## Magdalena Prieler

Magdalena Prieler is an Austrian social economist specialising in environmental issues and works as a policy advisor at Arche Noah in Schiltern, Austria.

M. Prieler's keynote speech describes the tensions between the market rules for seeds and the work of organisations, farmers and gardeners for crop diversity against the background of the planned legal reform for the marketing of seeds in the European Union. What legal regulations are necessary so that the many regional players can freely carry out their work for diversity in the public interest and for the sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture?

M. Prieler will also report on Noah's Ark's recent survey, which concluded that it is individual farmers and gardeners as well as micro- and nano-enterprises that make the greatest contribution to the conservation and development of traditional crop diversity.

## **Panel discussion with experts from the field**

### Hans-Joachim Bannier

Hans-Joachim Bannier is a German author, pomologist and funding partner of the German Fruit Genebank. He is recognised as a leading expert on old apple and sweet cherry varieties. H.-J. Bannier runs a small fruit farm in Bielefeld with around 400 different apple varieties ranging from varieties already grown in the Middle Ages to modern cultivars. On H.-J. Bannier's farm, no fungicides are sprayed, while fruit is currently one of the agricultural crops with the highest use of these products.

From a longstanding practical experience and observation H.J. Bannier concludes that genetic diversity of traditional fruit varieties, on-farm breeding and selection techniques and agroecological cultivation methods represent the best way for the future of fruit growing.

## Tijs Boelens

Tijs Boelens, a Belgian farmer, is one of the founders of the Groentelaar organic horticultural company and a pioneer in the grain network that works with old local grain varieties. He is also one of the leading members of the Farmers' Forum. For years, T. Boelens has been committed to sustainable agriculture that respects nature, biodiversity and the environment. He emphasises the importance of a common food strategy and calls on farmers and consumers to take responsibility for the food chain. By focussing on social and economic aspects, he wants to revitalise the agricultural sector in Flanders.

## Grietje Raaphorst

Grietje Raaphorst is a Dutch organic plant breeder who specialises in maize in her company Nordic Maize Breeding.

Nordic Maize Breeding aims to contribute to genetic diversity and a more sustainable and environmentally friendly agriculture that respects nature and the world's common resources. Important breeding goals are to reduce the dependence on chemical weed control and the use of fertilisers by developing innovative maize varieties that make these goals possible. At the same time as new varieties are being developed, new cultivation and harvesting concepts are being developed that offer an alternative to the globally dominant large seed companies.

## Ute Boekholt

Ute Boekholt is a German organic vegetable seed producer and co-founder of the Seed Conservation Network East, which produces seeds of several hundred traditional vegetable varieties. Part of U. Boekholt's work is to find and evaluate genebank accessions by multiplying their seeds and further developing them on the farm to increase their performance and make them suitable for low-input organic farming and gardening. She has experience in evaluating, describing and registering varieties to make them available for the market. U. Boekholt is convinced that regional seed systems engaged in on-farm variety development not only promote cultivated biodiversity, but can also make a significant contribution to reducing the use of pesticides in vegetable cultivation.

## Rosario Floriddia

Rosario Floriddia is an Italian farmer engaged in maintaining and developing the genetic diversity of cereals. For many years he has been working with hundreds of varieties and has a longstanding practical experience in developing genetically broad populations.

According to his conviction and practical experience, regionally adapted varieties and populations are an important element of sustainable and resilient food systems. The practice of on-farm development of varieties needs to be maintained also in a technology-based society. Rosario and his brother prove with their big family farm that cultivated biodiversity can be practised also on a big scale.