



Country Report for Lithuania

Work Package: WP01 - Regulation & policy framework regarding production, use, and transparency of organic seed

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About the report

This report has been produced in the framework of the Horizon 2020-funded project LIVESEED.¹ The main aim of LIVESEED is to boost the production and use of organic seeds and plant breeding for organic agriculture across Europe. It is co-ordinated by IFOAM EU, and its scientific coordinator is FiBL-CH.

Work Package 01 of LIVESEED explores EU Member States in terms of their implementation and best practices connected to the EU Organic Regulations, in the contexts of national regulatory and policy frameworks, specifically regarding the production, use, and transparency of organic seed.

As part of this Work Package, Bionext, FiBL-DE and IFOAM EU visited selected countries during 2017-2018, where the organic seed production is low, to understand their bottlenecks and possibilities for improvements regarding the production and the use of organic seeds at the national level. During the visits, several stakeholder groups were interviewed (competent authorities, seed database managers, seed companies, research institutions, organic farmers, seed associations, organic certifiers, etc) in each country.

The main outcomes of the visits were summarized in country reports presenting the status quo for that given Member State. The reports' findings then were disseminated among a wide range of national stakeholders in 2019 and discussed during workshops to define viable next steps to improve the status quo in each country. The Workshop for the Baltic States took place on 31st January 2019, in Riga, Latvia, and was co-organised by a LIVESEED partner, the Latvian Institute of Agricultural Resources and Economics (AREI).

This country report is recommended for national policymakers, and all stakeholders involved in the production and use of organic seed: national authorities, farmers, certifiers, producers, retailers, plant breeders, seed authorities, and the general public.

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¹ <http://liveseed.eu>



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Implementation of the regulation on organic seed in Lithuania

Findings from the national visit to Lithuania, September 11 2017

1. General information

There are 2,539 organic farmers in Lithuania covering 7,6 % (222,000 hectare) of the agricultural land area. From this area 32 % is permanent grassland, 65,2 % is covered with arable crops and 2,8 % are permanent crops. Source: IFOAM EU 2016

2. Production and use of organic seed

In Lithuania, 46 producers are authorized to produce organic seed. This includes national and foreign seed companies, traders and specialized farmers. There is one big national organic seed company called Agrolitpa. In 2017, only 7 producers provided organic seed to the Lithuanian market. Most of them produce organic seeds for export. Cleaning and certification of the seed is often done abroad. The competent authorities estimate that only 2% of the seed demand from organic farmers in Lithuania is covered by organic seeds.

Many Lithuanian farmers use farm saved seed. Organic farmers may re-use their own seed, and this is accepted as organic seed. Although the exchange and sale of farm saved seed is forbidden, there is still a lot of uncertified seed on the market. Organic farmers are among the main buyers of certified seed (organic and conventional) because they must account for their seed use to their organic certifier.

3. Implementation of the EU regulation: the database and derogation policy

The Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for the organic seed database. The derogations are issued by Ekoagros, a state control institute and the only certifier in Lithuania.

On the organic seed database there is a list of varieties for which organic seed is available. For each variety the quantity of seed (kg/tons) that is available is visible in the database. The number of suppliers differs per year. For vegetables, there are 2 to 3 suppliers, for forage and arable crops 6 to 10 suppliers. Foreign companies can enter their seed offer on the database if their varieties are suitable for national growing conditions.

The users of the database can first choose the right crop and then the variety they need. If the requested variety is not available in the database, they can ask for a single derogation. Farmers must pay 7 EUR for each single derogation. There are seasons for derogation applications:

- preparing for spring sowing - from February 1 of the current year until the end of sowing;
- preparing for winter sowing - from July 1 of the current year until the end of sowing;
- preparing for perennial grasses for sowing - all year round.

There is also a general derogation list (checked by the Ministry and issued by Ekoagros) for crops for which no organic seed is available on the market for several years. This list is updated yearly.

4. Policy measures to increase production and use of organic seed

Organic seed producers in Lithuania receive extra payment from EU sources, channeled through the Rural Development Plan (RDP) 2014-2020, under measure "Organic Farming". There are different payments for different crops.



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For instance: 273 EUR/ha for organic cereals and perennial grasses for seed; 298 EUR/ha for organic cereals and perennial grasses for seed under conversion to organic. The most important criterion is that the seed producer is included in the list of certified propagating material suppliers or has signed a contract with a supplier of propagating material.

If farmers use certified seeds, conventional or organic, they receive also a subsidy (for cereals, 16 EUR/ha) under the RDP, direct payments. Farmers that do not buy certified seed do not receive these EU subsidies.

5. Breeding research and field trials

At the Lithuanian Research Centre for Agriculture and Forestry there is a Department for cereal breeding. Although there is no special organic breeding programme, organic variety trials of promising winter and spring breeding lines are performed since 2004 in certified organic fields. Because of limited capacity, only Lithuanian varieties are tested.

In Lithuania, the Plant Variety Division of the State Plant Service under the Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for VCU testing. There is no official VCU testing for organic farming in Lithuania.

6. Constraints and opportunities

Research has shown that if you use organic and conventional seeds from the same variety, the conventional seeds give a higher yield. This is a disincentive for farmers to buy (more expensive) organic seed.

The main problem is that seed producers have no guaranty that they can sell their offer on the organic market in Lithuania. Internationally they get a better price.

Some varieties are not suitable for organic. There are, for instance, many problems with lupine. Currently, there are no suitable lupine varieties available for organic production.

Conventional breeders are doing some small-scale breeding for organic. The problem is they do not have organic testing fields.

An opportunity is that the Organic Farming Association sets up a seed expert group that, for instance, develops a list of varieties that are suitable for organic farming (they have the support of the Ministry in this activity).

7. Recommendations from the stakeholders

- Create a common (international) database for organic seed. The current national database is not easy to find by farmers.
- The availability of organic seeds on the market must be increased. Seeds from Poland might be suitable for Lithuanian farmers.
- Develop a list of varieties that are suitable for organic farming.
- Subsidize VCU testing under organic conditions.
- Create a seed expert group.
- Work on substances for organic seed treatment.
- Investigate and communicate the benefits of organic seeds.



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8. More information

Lithuanian organic seed database: www.vic.lt/?mid=432

General derogation list: https://www.ekoagros.lt/media/1/documents/Leidimas_2018_taisyta.pdf

Extra payment for seed producers: <https://www.infolex.lt/ta/330965>

Agricultural, Food and Fisheries program for 2015-2020: research and development activities - Lithuania:

http://zum.lrv.lt/uploads/zum/documents/files/LT_versija/Veiklos_sritys/Mokslas_mokymas_ir_kon_sultavimas/Moksliniu_tyrimu_ir_taikomosios_veiklos_darbu_galutines_ataskaitos/LAMMC%20veisle_s.pdf



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