

Expert evaluation of varieties in the organic seed database – example of Denmark

Problems

Some countries struggle with an excess of derogations for use of non-organic seed. Farmers seek security in choice of variety and variety performance. Authorities handling derogations might lack agronomic knowledge to determine if derogations are needed. Seed companies might lack knowledge of the needs of organic farmers or seek insurance that they can sell their organic seed.

Solutions

Expert groups: In Denmark expert evaluation of varieties for the organic seed database is carried out by crop expert groups in vegetables, agricultural and fodder crops.

Criteria for evaluation (for cultivation in Denmark)

- Acceptance to National List
- Results from national variety trials (registration and post-registration)
- Trial results from comparable areas in other countries

How it works

- For harvested crops farmers get security in variety choice as they are not obliged to use varieties that are not suitable (visible in seed database)
- Authorities use expert evaluations for the derogation process and only grant derogations if no equivalent and suitable varieties are available
- Seed companies are mostly warned one year in advance if a variety is no longer suitable (observation list)



Figure: Variety trials are used in expert evaluation of varieties. (Photo: Tove M. Pedersen, SEGES)

Practical recommendations

Farmers: It is important to always check the availability of organic seed in the organic seed database, and only apply for derogation if none of the available varieties are suitable for the given purpose.

Authorities: Active use of expert evaluations in the derogation process makes decisions for or against derogations easier.

Seed companies: Preparations for next season can be supported by the use of expert evaluations and assortment kept updated, resulting in availability of organic seed of more healthy and well performing varieties.

Further information

1. www.organicxseeds.dk
2. [Vejledning om økologisk jordbrugsproduktion](#) (Danish)

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LIVESEED: Boosting organic seed and plant breeding across Europe. LIVESEED is based on the concept that cultivars adapted to organic systems are key for realising the full potential of organic agriculture in Europe. Research project 2017-2021.

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