



THE EUROPEAN SEED LAW

Any modernisation must continue to ensure breeding progress

Plant breeding is at the beginning of the agricultural production chain. The quality of seeds and of planting material is therefore of immense importance for the production of our agricultural raw materials, of our feed and food. The tried and tested principles of European seed law have safeguarded the quality of plant varieties and of seeds and thereby helped to live up to this responsibility. It is imperative that in a modernisation of the legal framework, these principles be preserved if we are to achieve the common goal of a sustainable agriculture.

In Germany, the Federal Plant Variety Office examines and describes candidate varieties and thereby ensures the freedom of choice and the breeding progress in the interest of agriculture. Seed certification ensures the health and quality of the seeds before sowing them on the field. The legal framework for the availability of seeds of improved varieties is provided by the European seed marketing legislation. Any revision of the legal framework must be carried out with great care; it must not jeopardise the past successes of this system.

National competence promotes innovation

The test criteria for determining the value for cultivation and use of a variety have continuously been adapted to technological, scientific and social requirements. The regional and national agro-climatic conditions within Europe vary greatly. Therefore, the fact that the assessment of the value for cultivation and use (VCU) of new varieties is carried out at national level is one of the strengths of the current legal framework. The expertise of the officers of the national

authorities makes it possible to test varieties efficiently and to filter those with improved properties suitable for use in agriculture. In the future, therefore, the execution of the VCU examination must remain within the competence of the Member States.

A modernisation of European seed legislation should focus on how to make the legislation more comprehensible and how to improve procedural and cost efficiency. Moreover, in a revision of the legal framework the VCU examination of new varieties carried out by national authorities and the clear demarcation between the non-professional and professional sectors of the seed market needs to be maintained.

The established system ensures equal opportunities

The objective testing system instituted by the established seed legislation ensures fair competition on the European market and makes sure that farmers receive only high-quality seeds and planting material. However, in order to grant market access also to selected niche products, a large number of exemptions from the existing legal framework are already in place today. At the same time, distortion of competition as well as economic damage in agriculture as a result of further watering down of the legislation must by all means be avoided. Therefore, the exchange of seeds with a professional purpose between farmers must continue to be prohibited. The professional sector needs to be clearly defined. Private cultivation and exchange of seed for non-professional purposes should remain unaffected.



Plant Variety Testing:

Ensure breeding progress

In DUS and VCU examinations, a potential variety is put through its paces. The characteristics of “distinctness”, “uniformity” and “stability” (DUS) are the prerequisite for the registration of a new variety, but also in the corresponding area of law, namely plant variety protection. Plant variety protection ensures the return on investment and thus promotes the innovative strength of the plant breeding sector with its mostly medium-sized players.

Both variety testing and variety protection enhance the already existing diversity of varieties and cultivars and thus counteract the loss of biodiversity in the field.

Seed Certification:

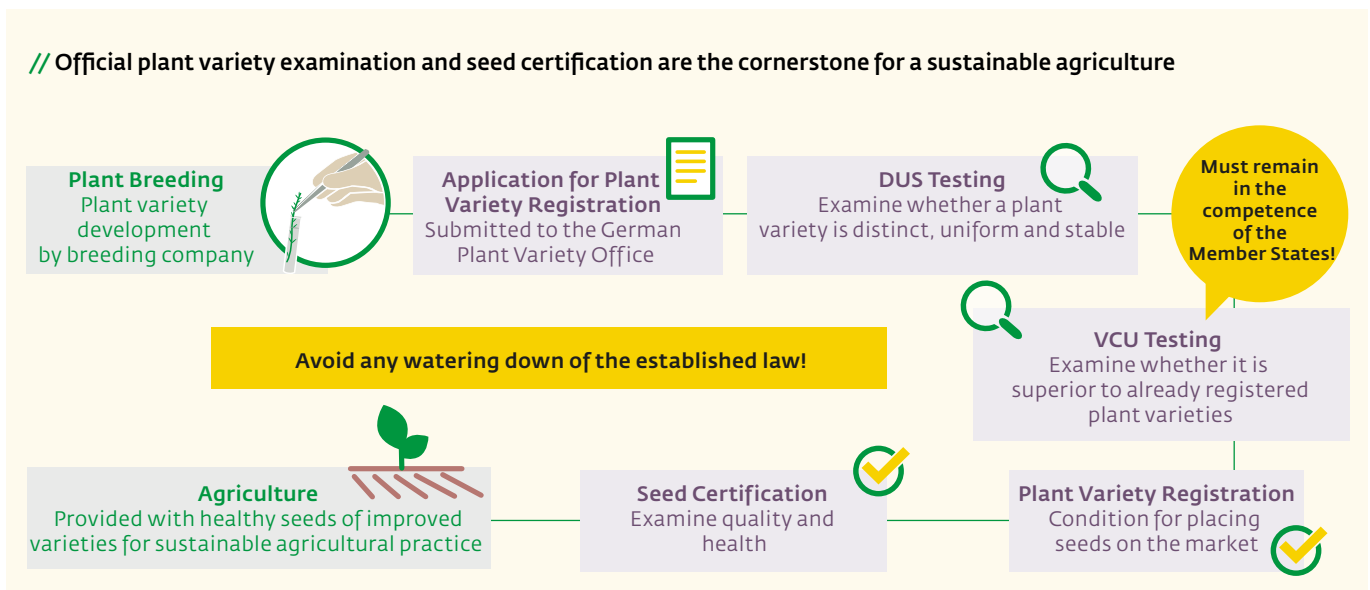
Produce top quality

In the course of the seed certification process, the quality and the health status of seeds and planting material of agricultural species are tested prior to marketing. In particular, strict compliance with phytosanitary standards prevents

the spread of plant diseases and pests. Healthy seeds help reduce the use of plant protection. Both DUS testing and seed certification need to be constantly adapted to technological progress. In particular, instruments of digitalisation and biotechnology need to be taken into account.

Achieve common goals

In developing resistant and resource-efficient plant varieties, plant breeding makes an important contribution to the sustainability of an agriculture that provides stable yields with good quality characteristics for the growing world population, despite changing environmental conditions. The current European seed legislation provides the necessary framework. Its tried and tested principles must be preserved in order to safeguard the innovative power of plant breeding, promote biodiversity and preserve equal opportunities. In order to achieve the goals of the European Green Deal and its concomitant strategies, in particular the Farm-to-Fork and the Biodiversity Strategies, a strong plant breeding sector is indispensable.



German Plant Breeders' Association (Bundesverband Deutscher Pflanzenzüchter e. V. – BDP):

The German Plant Breeders' Association represents the interests of its members, namely plant breeding companies for agricultural species, vegetables, ornamental plants or grape vine as well as seed trading companies. Around 130 companies are active in the breeding of and/or trade with agricultural and horticultural crops. Of these, 58 are running own breeding programmes. The individual companies usually work on several crop species. BDP campaigns at national and European level for improved framework conditions for plant breeding and the seed trade industries, as well as for the organisation of plant research, the promotion of new technologies and the further development of the plant variety and seed marketing system.