Seeds of regional origin in Central Europe

Status quo 2011 &
Recommendations for European quality standards

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Economical, ecological and scenic benefits

- Durable and site-specific vegetation
- Coexistence with native fauna
- Preservation of regional genotypes
- Respecting diversity of habitats and landscapes = high recreation value

Wild-plant-seeds of regional origin

WHY?

Landscapes in Germany

North-west Germany

South Germany near Nördlingen

Pre alps of Germany
Almost 20 years after the Convention on biological diversity (1992) …

... unquestionable aim:

**Stopp loss of biodiversity!**

**BUT:** … there is still little knowledge in EU-member states about restoration methods for grasslands with wild forms of herbs and grasses

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**Seeds of regional origin in Central Europe**

**STATUS QUO 2011**

**General situation in „Central Europe“- partner - countries**

- In all countries demand for wild plant seeds
- In all countries existing grey market with „wild“ plant seeds of unknown provenance
- In some countries propagation and collection of regional wild plant seeds
- In some countries research concerning production of wild seeds
- In few countries proved provenances by certification
- In some countries hindering by national laws in collecting wild plant seed, in all countries restrictions in trade by European seed acts for some species
Diverging situations in Europe

Reasons for different states in member states:

- Different distribution of natural vegetation-types
- Necessity to solve specific problems, e.g. …
  - erosion in the Alps (Austria)
  - land-use conflicts (Germany)
- Historical evolution of awareness in nature-protection
- Government supported research in producing seeds

Seeds of regional origin in Central Europe

STATUS QUO 2011

- Poland:
  - Only one company is offering wild seeds with declared origin
  - No scientific research in propagation methods

- Czech and Slovak Republic:
  - Specialised structures of propagation of wild plants are not known
  - Some practical researches
  - Some nature conservation institutions propagate seeds in a small scale
  - One company sells wild plant seeds but without defined origin

- Italy:
  - One company propagates wild plant seeds with declared origin
  - Intense seed propagation research, at present non commercial propagation in one association
Austria:
- **In the late 1980th** first companies started to propagate seeds for restoration purposes
- Intense seed propagation research
- **Today** about 20 agricultural seed-producing companies
- Certification label based on a privat association

Germany:
- **In the 1980th** first companies started to propagate seeds for restoration purposes.
- Until now no scientific research in propagation of wild seeds
- **Today** about 100 agricultural companies partly organised in trade associations
- Two different certification labels based on privat associations

### Certificates for wild plant seeds in the „Central Europe“-area:

**Country:** Austria  
Owner of the trademark: Association REWISA  
Company inspection by: AgroVet  
Certificate award: Expert advisory committee  
Certified seeds: All herbs and some grasses of wild forms  
www.rewisa.at

**Country:** Germany  
Owner of the trademark: Association BDP  
Company inspection by: Lacon  
Certificate award: Not known  
Certified seeds: Most of the herbs and some grasses of wild forms  
www.bdp-online.de

**Country:** Germany  
Owner of the trademark: Association VWW  
Company inspection by: ABCert  
Certificate award: Independent committee  
Certified seeds: All herbs and all grasses of wild forms  
www.natur-im-vww.de
General aspects of quality in wild plant seed markets:
The most important criteria to be documented and controlled are …

- ... seed-collection in different regions of origin approved by nature-conservation administration
- ... species propagated on arable land of the same region (keeping a wide genetic spectrum)
- ... quality control of seeds (taxonomic reliability, purity, germination rate)
- ... control of product provenance (labeling, seed-mixture-composing, flow of goods)

Common European standards for wild plant seeds

- Wild-forms compete against cultivars of the same plant-species, but indicators of quality are different (e.g. genetic spectrum, origin)
  > each market should have its own standards all over Europe

- Biogeographical areas do not stop at national borders
  > need for transnational seed zones (collection, propagation and trade)
Recommendations for European quality-standards

10 natural landscape units in Austria

Production areas and regional origins in Germany:

- **Collection** of indigenous seeds in **22 provenience regions**
- **Propagation** of collected seeds in **8 production areas / seedzones**
- **Revegetation** of agricultural reproduced seeds in **the 22 provenience regions**
Need for multinational seedzones - EXAMPLE

Even existing definitions of natural landscape units do not exactly fit together, for being differently classified!

Recommendations for European standards

Common European standards

- Define ...
  - common technical terms
  - regional and transnational seedzones
  - common minimum-standards for collecting, producing, trading and utilisation of wild plant seeds

- Create ...
  - nationally adapted trademarks to assure defined quality standards
  - mechanisms to control them and to impose sanctions

- Adjust ...
  - laws to open a legal production and growing markets

How to get there?
Compliance with nature conservation
Guarantee inviolacy of existing stocks and accordance to conservation laws

Spatial relation
Find a balance between an economically functioning size of seedzones without losing the relation to regional landscape units.

Avoidance of genetic losses
Is guaranteed e.g. by a wide range of donorsites and limited generations in propagation on farmland

Verifiable declaration (certificate)
Find a balance between a framework of rules and control and an economical production

In 2010 a new Commission directive* has been passed, which allows trade of a small amount of 5% of "wild" seeds among the cultivars.
Estimated seed-amounts in Germany = 2.000 t versus 40.000 t / year

The European member states have to implement the directive until end of November 2011.
To protect wild plant seed markets or native-seed-initiatives in the process of emerging, member states should carefully transfer the directive into national law.

Note:
!! The lately started review of the European seed legislation should critically be attended by farmers, stakeholders and administrative bodies!!
§39 Allgemeiner Schutz wild lebender ... Pflanzen ... (Textauszug):

Collection of wild seeds for agricultural propagation should be allowed by conservation authorities due to positive results for landscape and nature-protection.

§40 Nichtheimische, gebietsfremde und invasive Arten (Textauszug):

After the year 2020 regional seeds must be used in free landscape. Until 2020 they should already be used in free landscape if available.

This way ... Thank you! ...or that way?