

# 58TH ANNUAL MEETING

of the **SOCIETY**

**FOR ECONOMIC BOTANY**

**BRAGANÇA - PORTUGAL**

**JUNE 4-9, 2017**

Living in a global world:

local knowledge and sustainability

## **BOOK OF ABSTRACTS**

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**SPRINGER NATURE**



## Farmers' seed production in organic horticulture in NW Portugal.

**Presenter:** Verena Wallner

**Authors:** Wallner, Verena [1], Carvalho, Ana Maria [2], Vogl, Christian, R. [1].

Organic agriculture aims to provide organic farmers with organic seed. The EU regulation on organic agriculture supports this aim by implying the obligatory use of organic seed and planting material. Nevertheless, derogations for using un-treated GMO-free non-organically produced seeds are granted, because organic seed is not sufficiently available and an absolute restriction would impede organic farmers in terms of diversity and competition.

To understand a seed system, both, its formal and informal parts should be considered. The informal part of the seed system, which covers farmers' seed production and bartering between farmers, can play an important role for supporting the availability of and granting access to organic seed. In Portugal, the informal part of the seed system has still importance in traditional farming systems.

The aim of this paper is to identify the importance of organic farmers' seed production in organic horticulture in Portugal. Twenty-two organic vegetable farmers in NW Portugal were selected through purposive and snowball sampling. Inventories of the crops grown during 2016 were made with the farmers and the sources of seed were documented based upon structured interviews. This data was complemented with qualitative data collected with semi-structured interviews about seed saving practices and reasons for choosing organic seed, for purchasing, bartering or saving seed.

Twenty-one of the respondents use saved seed for obtaining seed and planting material for one or more of the crops they cultivated during 2016. Crops which are mainly reproduced by the farmers are tomato and cucumber, peas, beans and pumpkins. Ten of the respondents reproduce the typical Portuguese vegetable marrow-stem kale, whereas most of other leaf vegetables are not being reproduced by the farmers themselves. Saving seed is indicated by the respondents to be important due to economic reasons; to guarantee access to organic material and availability of certain crops and varieties and to generate local adapted crops.

**Keywords:** Organic horticulture, Seed systems, Seed production, Seed saving, Northwestern Portugal.

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