

AGRI Committee underlines the value of a competitive plant breeding sector

On 21 January 2014, the European Parliament's Committee for Agriculture adopted with a broad majority on an own-initiative Report entitled: "**Plant breeding: what options to increase quality and yields**". The Report looks at options and recommendations to improve crop quality and yields in Europe and highlights the major issues facing Europe's scientists, breeders and farmers in order to meet future increased needs for food while coping with more extreme weather conditions.

The European Technology Platform 'Plants for the Future' (Plant ETP) is a stakeholder forum for the plant sector with members from industry, academia and the farming community active in research, breeding, production, farming and food processing. **Plant ETP welcomes this EP Report** as an opportunity for an informed and constructive debate on the fundamental importance of the plant science and plant breeding sectors to the productivity, diversity, health and quality of agriculture, horticulture, food and feed production and our environment.

The EP Report clearly shows that Europe needs to continue **investing in long-term research & development projects** of new varieties of crops characterised by higher productivity and high quality while reducing and optimising the environmental impact of agriculture. The Report calls on the European Commission to use Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation to fund research that supports the **development of new and innovative plant breeding techniques** and to be open to available technologies that enhance the productivity of the agriculture and horticulture sectors. The Report emphasizes the benefits of **strengthening and extending partnerships** between government, industry and research organisations and acknowledges the importance of the characterization and maintenance of the **genetic diversity**. It recognises the importance of guaranteeing **access to genetic resources** as the basis for plant breeding.

While the Report raises some concerns in view of larger multinational undertakings, it still provides a fair picture of the EU plant breeding market which is highly diversified with Small and Medium-sized Enterprises representing a high share of the sector and investing in many different varieties that are adapted to very different climatic conditions.

Plant ETP specifically welcomes the very forward-looking recommendations of the AGRI Committee towards the European Commission, such as: (1) providing a policy framework that supports the agricultural input sector as one of the key areas for the development of agricultural productivity and sustainability; (2) assuring a highly skilled workforce capable of meeting future demands in plant breeding research and (3) promoting plant science and plant breeding in schools and universities and among the general public.

The European Technology Platform 'Plants for the Future' is currently working very hard with its members of the industry, academia and farming communities to develop an Education Action Plan for the European plant sector. Plant ETP therefore welcomes these specific recommendations and will be looking forward to presenting its ideas later this year.