

# Plant Reproductive Material - PRM FAQ

### 1. What is PRM about?

The PRM legislation establishes the conditions for seed (and other plant reproductive material) to be marketed in the EU. By establishing such conditions, the legislation provides a framework for breeders to compete in fair conditions and for farmers to have access to clean, reliable, high-quality seed.

Over the past years, the PRM legislation has allowed freedom of choice for farmers, with more than 50.000 varieties in the common catalogue and 4.000 varieties coming to the market every year.

# 2. What are the key elements of this legislation?

# Identity

Plant varieties have many different characteristics that define what it is and are adapted to different soil, climate, or production conditions. According to the different farming conditions present in their fields, farmers chose the variety(ies) they want to sow. Therefore, farmers need to know what is in the seed bag that they are buying (identity).

To ensure the identity of plant varieties, the legislation establishes three criteria: Distinctiveness, Uniformity and Stability (DUS). In certain cases, where PRM cannot fulfil these three criteria, officially recognised descriptions are requested to ensure the identity of the material.

#### Performance

Moreover, farmers need to know how the variety will perform in terms of yield, resistance to pests and diseases, drought tolerance, etc. (each crop has a different set of characteristics). Having access to information on all those aspects is a relevant enabler for farmers to have freedom of choice and to make use of the most adapted PRM for their farming conditions. For agricultural species, performance is analysed by the Value for Cultivation and Used (VCU).

# Certification

Certification is an additional guarantee for farmers. Due to the way the chain is organised, it is only required for agricultural crops. Certification is done by public authorities on a national or regional level and the main features they analyse are identity, plant health (the seed does not carry pests and diseases) and germination rates (how many plants will grow out of the seed farmers sow).

#### Sustainability

Breeders work on many different traits or characteristics, based on the needs and requests from the different actors of the agri-food chain (farmers, traders, processors, retailers, etc.). Most of these traits contribute or have the potential to contribute to different aspects of sustainability: resistance/ more tolerance to pests and diseases, higher yields, longer shelf-



life, higher nutrient content, better use of resources (i.e., fertilisers), quality in processing industry (bread baking quality) etc.

Due to the large number of characteristics that farmers need to consider using the most appropriate seed for their farms (yield, pest infestation, available resources, climate conditions, etc.), there is no single trait that can deliver on all those at the same time. Therefore, the potential contribution to sustainability of a variety must be assessed at variety level and will be realised later in the chain (up to the consumer).

#### **Seed diversity**

Every farmer, depending on his/her market, will require different seed. Most farmers rely on seed provided by breeding companies due to the constant improvements and benefits that come with it. For farmers with different needs, adapted seed should be available, if it is clearly identified, complies with plant health requirements and the performance is known.



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