Euroseeds
Embracing Nature

Position

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EUROSEEDS View on Plant Breeding Research

Plant Breeding Research: A cornerstone for sustainable agriculture and competitive bioeconomy & biotechnology

Europe's plant breeding and seed sector is among the most research-intensive sectors of the agri-food value chain. Developing improved varieties is a long-term, highly specialised endeavour requiring continuous investment, advanced infrastructure, and strong scientific excellence. Euroseeds' members reinvest up to 20% of annual turnover into research and product development[1], reflecting the sector's innovation-driven nature and its commitment to delivering solutions for farmers, actors along the value chain, as well as society.

Plant breeding innovation is essential to reconcile productivity with sustainability. European agriculture must keep improving to meet high and stable yields and high-quality production under increasing pressure from climate change, resource scarcity, and plant health threats.

To help deliver these outcomes, the European Union must ensure sustained and dedicated research funding mechanisms for plant breeding under FP10 and ECF, including through well-designed public-private partnerships and support for pre-competitive research collaboration. **Plant breeding innovations depend on continuous progress in plant science and enabling technologies, and on incorporating seed sector needs through effective cooperation between public research and the seed sector.** Strengthening research investment across the innovation chain from publicly funded research to plant breeders is therefore essential to translate scientific advances into improved varieties that can be deployed at scale and deliver tangible benefits for European farmers, value chains and society.

The case for FP10 and ECF: a strong, dedicated budget for plant breeding R&I is essential

Discussions surrounding FP10 and the ECF take place at a moment of rapidly increasing challenges for European agriculture and the bioeconomy. However, recent evidence shows that public funding for plant breeding R&I has not kept pace with broader increases in EU research budgets. The Plants for the Future ETP analysis on trends in European public investment in plant

[1] https://euroseeds.eu/app/uploads/2023/10/A4_EUROSEEDS_brochure.pdf

breeding R&I, shows that while overall Framework Programme budgets increased substantially over the past two decades, funding dedicated to plant breeding has seen only modest growth and has declined relative to total FP funding. In parallel, key sub-programmes such as ERC and MSCA show declining levels of plant breeding-related R&I funding[2].

This trend is deeply concerning[3]. Plant breeding is a cornerstone for European and global food security, sustainable agriculture and competitive bioeconomy and biotechnology. Europe cannot deliver on its environmental, competitiveness and industrial ambitions if the innovation base at the start of the value chain is underfunded.

FP10 and ECF must secure dedicated funding for plant breeding research

Euroseeds has already flagged this risk in its response to the Commission proposal for the next EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2028–2034). While welcoming the emphasis on biotechnology, agriculture and the bioeconomy, as well as efforts to simplify delivery, Euroseeds noted with concern that the proposed structure does not explicitly secure funding for plant breeding research, despite its essential role in sustainable food systems and resilience. The plant breeding and seed sector supports simplification and stronger impact, but simplification must not come at the expense of visibility, continuity and critical mass for plant breeding research and agriculture.

In the ongoing FP10 and ECF discussions, the EU can reinforce the foundations of sustainable agriculture, competitiveness, and bio-based innovation. Plant-breeding research is central to this effort, as it also enables biodiversity, and supports public health through nutritious crop outputs and strengthens Europe's food and strategic sovereignty.

With growing demands on the same land base, for food, feed, materials, and energy, Europe must produce more and better biomass within planetary boundaries[4,5]. This makes improved, multipurpose varieties and sustained plant-breeding funding strategically essential, and calls for open, excellence-based research programmes that do not constrain innovation for Europe's diverse farmers and production systems.

As the voice of Europe's plant breeding and seed sector, Euroseeds calls for FP10 and ECF to include a strong, dedicated research budget for plant breeding, supported by partnerships and mechanisms that ensure effective deployment along the innovation chain, from genetic resources and plant science to breeder uptake and consequent value chain impact.

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[2] https://www.plantetp.eu/report-trends-in-european-public-investment-in-plant-breeding-ri/
[3] https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-03970-0
[4] https://hffa-research.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/HFFA-Research-The-socio-economic-and-environmental-values-of-plant-breeding-in-the-EU.pdf
[5] https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/topics/in-depth/land-use

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