CORE organic II

Projects selected in the second call of CORE Organic II. Project period: 2013-2015

Acronym	Project title	Coordinator and countries involved
COBRA	Coordinating Organic plant BReeding Activities for Diversity	Coordinator: Principal Researcher Dr Thomas Döring, The Organic Research Centre, United Kingdom. Countries: Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Nederlands, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom

Project summary:

Organic plant production is currently challenged by several pressure factors. Along with perennial problems such as weed control, climate change is threatening to affect crop production through increasing weather variability.

Plant breeding is a crucial factor in creating organic crop production systems that can better cope with such interacting stresses and producers need crop varieties with
a) good resistance against pests and diseases, esp. seed borne diseases;
b) the ability to react to environmental, esp. climatic variability; and
c) high competitiveness against weeds. COBRA aims to support and develop organic plant breeding and seed production with a focus on increasing the use and potential of plant material with High genetic Diversity (Hi-D) in cereals (wheat and barley) and grain legumes (pea and faba bean) through coordinating, linking and expanding existing breeding and research.

Although Hi-D-based systems have shown promising results in organic systems and are currently subject to intensive research, their benefits can at present not be exploited, due to agronomic, regulatory and other hurdles. Also, it is currently unclear which plant breeding approaches, Hi-D-based or else, are most efficient to breed varieties for organic agriculture.

Therefore, COBRA aims
1) to improve methods ensuring seed quality and health;
2) to determine the potential to increase resilience, adaptability, and overall performance in organic systems by using crop diversity at various levels;
3) to improve breeding efficiency and to develop novel breeding methods to enhance and maintain crop diversity;
4) to identify and remove structural barriers to organic plant breeding and seed production; and
5) to improve networking and dissemination in organic plant breeding.

COBRA‟s strength is its focus on coordinating, linking and expanding on-going organic breeding activities in cereals and grain legumes across Europe, drawing together experts from previously fragmented areas.

Acronym	Project title	Coordinator and countries involved
Healthy Growth	Healthy growth: From niche to volume with integrity and trust	Coordinator: Associate Professor Egon Noe, Agroecology, Aarhus University, Denmark. Countries: Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden and Turkey. Potential additional partners: Belgium (Flanders) and Lithuania

Project summary:
Organic markets are different in different European countries, but common to all is that local organic market chains have inherent problems in moving from niche to volume, and mainstream large-scale market chains have inherent problems in securing and advancing organic values.

HEALTHYGROWTH aims to investigate a range of successful mid-scale organic value chains in order to learn how they are able to combine volume and values, and to use this knowledge of the prerequisites for healthy growth to support the further development of the organic markets.

The project builds on the following hypotheses, derived from previous research:
1) these midscale value chains are based on new forms of organisations and partnerships between farmers, businesses and consumers, and a different form of marketing logic and strategies than either small- or large-scale chains;
2) this enables them to combine growth in volume with a high and growing level of organic values throughout the market chain as a sound foundation for organic integrity and consumer trust;
3) these new organisational forms constitute a substantial potential for development and growth of organic markets; and
4) lessons learned from the successful mid-scale chains will provide new options for small-scale producers to act and compete on the market while ensuring a premium prize for their added organic values.

The research work will be done in a close cooperation and interaction between the eleven partners. In-depth case studies of mid-scale organic value chains will be carried out in nine participating countries, followed by a comparative analysis across countries. The cross-country comparison of value chain cases will be based on six different research perspectives, plus a multi-perspectival meta-analysis, to obtain a nuanced and coherent understanding of the underlying mechanisms and principles for healthy growth. Stakeholder involvement in joint learning processes and transnational dissemination of the results are planned as a dynamic and integrated part of the project in order to share and adapt knowledge between countries and to enhance network building among actors within regions and across borders.

The project will provide knowledge on how integrity and trust can be maintained in the growth from niche to volume, and develop general as well as locally adapted recommendations for the development of organic markets. The target groups are not only other mid-scale value chains, but also smaller organic producers, consumers, and potential new organic actors in new forms of partnership and cooperation, as well as large-scale market chains.