

General Conditions for an European Native Plant Certificate



Introduction

The idea of trading wild seeds is, due to the consideration of a regional limitation of introducing wild plants, a crucial point of genetically adaptation. The commercial seed market offers several interesting species suitable for restoration, but they are generally to be described as being of non-local provenance. Through negative interaction with still available local provenances their introduction may lead to undesired results such as hybridisation or displacement.

Only harvesting material and collected or propagated seeds, used for restoration and rehabilitation projects in the same region, ensure ecosystem services which will not be provided by improper cultivars and non-local propagation material. Exploitation, production and trade of regional seeds without any common rules lead to an unmanageable market for consumers. Wild forms compete against cultivars of the same plant-species. On behalf of nature conservation a system of rules is therefore needed in order to support transparency on a future European wild species seed market.

The important EC fodder plant directive¹ causes serious problems between national nature conservation laws and those for seed breeding protection. Therefore, in 2010 a new Commission directive¹ has been passed, which approves the trade of „wild“ seeds among the cultivars, supporting the use of wild forms but containing also many formal conditions, like detailed registrations and declarations of every single harvested or propagated mixture. This moment at the latest is the start of a competition in trade between wild seeds and cultivars.

For future exploitation, production, use and sale of wild plant seeds, the below mentioned general conditions for a „European Native Plant Certificate“ have to be followed.

¹<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:228:0010:0014:EN:PDF>

Compliance with nature conservation

Collection in the source area and dissemination in the target area are sensitive issues to nature conservation.

Recommended approach:

- Check existing nature conservation laws at all administration levels in accordance with planned action, e.g.: the inviolacy of existing stocks, avoidance of bastardisation of flora, admission to protected areas.

- To avoid genetic losses within a certain species the following rules should be observed:
 - Selection of donor sites shall be orientated to its age, homogeneity and typical characteristic for the concerned type of biotope.
 - The seed collection shall comprise several donor sites and as far as possible different phenotypes.
 - During collection and propagation any selective influence on the genetic variance between the individuals shall be avoided (no breeding influence)
 - Passive selection due to the necessary procedures of propagation shall be minimized by limiting the number of grown up generations.
- The provenance seed zone shall be located inside the propagation area to minimize Cross-breeding with provenances from different seed.
- Exact definition of the taxonomic level by means of thoroughly determination. In most cases the level of subspecies might be sufficient. In rare cases varieties or other easy to define forms shall be treated as genetically independent.

Regions of provenance/Seed zones

Only seeds from the wide coherence of the living population may require an eco-systemic benefit compared to cultivars. Therefore the need arises to define seed zones to fulfil those benefits for most of the sowed plant species.

A system of simple European biogeographically regions already exists at the European Environment Agency. To adjust these eleven zones to nature conservation demands, they have to be subdivided in a more local differentiated European seed zone system, with the following attributes:

- To enable flexible starting conditions the seed zones may be accumulated to bigger production areas, which allow producers to propagate seeds of several regions of provenance - a measure to react on low seed-demands in the first years.
- Seed zones shall comply with physiographic provinces. In most cases there will be cross border seed zones between two member states. A list of criteria has to be set up, to define all seed zones under the same aspects. For this task the EEA could deliver an EU-wide handling.

Proof of identity

Production of wild seeds is costly in terms of labour. The upscale products are threatened by cheap imports or wrongly declared cultivars. Hence there is a need to define methods of proofing the identity of regional provenances to sustain small markets of local and regional productions. If the quality of seeds, the documentation process and the control mechanisms are nearly the same the cost-performance ratio can be compared by customers. Therefore suitable seems a cross between national registration and approval of private organised certification systems. The approval should contain:

- Independent Certification Company with the capacity of nationwide operation.
- Independent working commission, which issues the certification or imposes sanctions.
- Documentation of approved collection at the donor site
- Documentation of all important parts of propagation
 - list of species and related size of propagation site and number of generation
 - amount of harvested seeds
 - amount of stored and sold seeds (accession to bookkeeping)
- Documentation of mixture components and seed charges for several years backward
- Declarations on seed packing labels as certification, company, content etc.

In contrast to pure seeds the transfer of harvested hay material, topsoil or turfs is in general limited to short distances and will keep a local procedure with a low risk of manipulation or wrong declaration.

Examples of already existing certification systems

In Germany, Austria and Switzerland, sufficient certification systems are already successfully proved. The specific criteria and rules can be downloaded as pdf. in German language.

VWW 2011: <http://www.natur-im-vww.de/download/regelwerk-zertifikat.pdf>

REWISA 2011: http://www.rewisa.at/images/stories/downloads/REWISA_Richtlinie_Graeser_Kraeuter_15-04-2010.pdf

CPS 2009: http://www.cps-skew.ch/fileadmin/template/pdf/deutsch/Empf_Wildpflanzen.pdf

Further information to this subjects out of other European countries can be found on the Salvere-Homepage under downloads:

www.salvereproject.eu