

Statutes

of the

European Soybean Improvement Network
(ESINET)

Version 2

23 September 2019

Preamble

Due to suitable climate and soils, European farmers are remarkably good at growing cereal crops. This supports high levels of production of carbohydrate-rich grains used mostly to feed livestock. This productive agricultural system depends on two major inputs into European Union farms: about 11 million tonnes of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser, and the high-protein meal from about 36 million tonnes of soybeans to provide protein supplement for feeding animals. Demand for plant protein has increased over the last 60 years in Europe due to the increased consumption and production of meat and dairy products. After China, the European Union is now the second largest importer of soy. This protein deficit is a fundamental challenge to the resilience, acceptance and performance of our agri-food systems. This is Europe's Protein Challenge.

Addressing this challenge and delivering a fundamental change in how protein is produced and consumed (The Protein Transition) requires a holistic approach that includes increased production of grain legumes in Europe, sustainable and responsible imports; improved use of existing and new protein resources, increased efficiency of protein use, and healthier and more sustainable diets.

Especially in Europe, grain legumes increase diversity in cropping and support pollinating insects. They don't need nitrogen fertiliser and they counter the build-up of disease, pests and weeds in cereal-based crop rotations because they are biologically different to cereals functioning as break-crops.

Soybean is sensitive to day length with shorter days needed for initiation of flowering. This sensitivity is genetically determined and so genetic adaptation to location (especially latitude) is very important for the improvement of the crop. However, the soybean is a self-pollinated in-bred crop species. This means that genetic progress made by individual breeders is freely available to others through crossing using the improved cultivars. It is difficult for breeders to obtain adequate returns from the seed market for their efforts. Consequently, pre-competitive cooperation between breeders and collaboration within the research community is essential if the cost of crop improvement is to be shared fairly, both between breeders and with wider society.

The European Soybean Improvement Network (ESIN) was established on 20 May 2019 at a meeting in at the Department of Genetics and Plant Breeding, Poznan University of Life Sciences in Poznan. This followed a workshop on 6 November 2018 with 32 participants hosted by the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna (BOKU) where it was agreed that a network would help support collaborative research, sharing of methods, germplasm exchange, and interaction with the policy community. The overall aim of the network confirmed in Poznan is to strengthen investment and cooperation in the improvement of soybean to increase the agronomic and environmental performance of soybean-supported cropping systems.

The founding members of the network have already a strong record in cooperation, particularly through participation in research activities facilitated or coordinated by Donau Soja. The ESIN formalises this existing collaboration and opens it out to all in Europe who are involved in the improvement of the soybean.

Name, location and legal nature

1. The network is called the "European Soybean Improvement Network" (here after The Network).
2. The Donau Soja Association (Wiesingerstraße 6/14, 1010 Vienna Austria) provides the secretariat and functions as the contact point.
3. The Network is legally informal and in itself has no legal nature. The member organisation that provides the secretariat is the legal representative of The Network.
4. The life of The Network is unlimited.
5. The network is politically neutral and open to all who are involved in the improvement of soybean-supported cropping systems in Europe, especially through plant breeding.

Purpose

6. The overall goal of The Network is the improvement of the agronomic, economic and environmental performance of soybean-supported cropping systems in Europe. As part of a protein transition in Europe, the agronomic performance of soybean crops as compared with other cropping options that farmers have must be improved. The network focuses particularly on the use of genetic improvement and plant breeding to achieve this.
7. The Network is particularly concerned with the challenge of overcoming the consequences of low investment in plant breeding of this in-bred self-pollinating crop species. Because genetic improvement available in cultivars of such crops has a strong public good character (the genetic improvement is available to all and is non-rival in use), the incentive for private investment is low. Advances therefore depend on public intervention and on collaboration in pre-competitive work. The Network seeks to develop a coherent approach to this public investment and to provide a platform for pre-competitive collaboration.
8. The Network pursues these aims through a range of specific activities including:
 - a. provide an open platform for exchange of knowledge and support between scientists, plant breeders and others interested in the improvement of the soybean for production in Europe;
 - b. provision of a platform for the research done under the Donau Soja coordinated China-Europe Legume Improvement Alliance (CELIA) programme;
 - c. from (b), supporting the field and laboratory work for the Friedrich Haberlandt Scholarship in the field testing of of soybean from Europe and China at sites in Europe and China;
 - d. exchange of germplasm between public research organisations or universities and and commercial plant breeders;

- e. provision of a voice to plant breeders in public debate about the public investment in relevant research and innovation;
 - f. exchanging insights and solutions to challenges that plant breeding could address;
 - g. liaising between the members of the network and public investors in relevant research and innovation, particularly the European Union;
 - h. communication to the public of the work of the Network; and
 - i. supporting the collaboration between network members in obtaining support from public research investors
9. The Network interacts with its members as a whole and as individuals fostering multiple contacts and exchanges.
10. The Network is not-for-profit. It seeks to advance public interests and benefits and does not seek to generate a financial surplus over time.
11. The Network's resources can be used only to support the work of The Network as set out in §7.

Membership

12. The founding members are:

- Agricultural Research & Development Station Turda (Romania) represented by Raluca Dana and Urda Camelia
- Centro di Zootechnica e Acquacoltura (Italy) represented by Paolo Annicchiarico
- Danko (Poland) represented by Małgorzata Niewinska, Kaczmarek-Agnieszka Katanska and Hądzlik Danuta
- Donal Murphy-Bokern (Germany) representing the Legumes Translated consortium
- Donau Soja represented by Leopold Rittler
- Institute of Field and Vegetable Crops (Serbia) represented by Jegor Milandinovic, Svetlana Balesevic-Tubic, Vuk Djordjevic
- Institute of Genetics, Physiology and Plant Protection (Moldova) represented by Alexandr Budac
- Universität für Bodenkultur Wien (BOKU, Austria) represented by Johann Vollmann and Martin Pachner
- Institute of Plant Genetics, Polish Academy of Sciences represented by Sandra Rychel and Michał Książkiewicz

- Department of Genetics and Plant Breeding, PULS (Poland), represented by Weigt Dorota, Niemann Janetta, Jerzy Nawracala
- Prograin-Zia Ltd. represented by Koczerba Marzena
- Pridnestrovian Research Institute of Agriculture (Moldova) represented by Boris Babaian
- Research Institute for Field Crops 'Selectia' Balti (Moldova) represented by Maria Iacobua and Victor Ungureanu
- Saatzucht Donau (Austria) represented by Bernhard Mayr and Johann Birschwitzky
- Saatzucht Gleisdorf (Austria) represented by Maria Bernhart
- University Hohenheim (Germany) represented by Volker Hahn
- University of Zagreb (Croatia) represented by Ivan Pejic
- Agricultural Research & Development Stations Turda (Romania) represented by Negrea Adrian
- Agriculture Institute Osijek (Croatia) represented by Maja Matosa Kucar and Tomislav Duvnjak
- Agroscope (Switzerland) represented by Claude-Alain Betrix
- Bayrische Landesanstalt für Landwirtschaft (Germany) represented by Bianca Buettner and Christine Riedel
- Euralis (France) represented by Patrice Jeanson
- Gabonakuato (Hungary) represented by Jakab Timea

13. Membership is open to all natural and legal persons as well associations of persons that support The Network's purposes, contribute, or are interested in the improvement of soybean-supported cropping systems in Europe. Each member is a full member.

14. Membership is granted by the board upon written application to the secretariat. Members of the public have no general right to membership of The Network.

15. Membership expires through:

- a. termination in writing by the member at least three months before the end of a financial year;
- b. exclusion by decision of the board endorsed by the general assembly in response to activity that seriously harms the work of The Network; or

- c. the death of the member (in the case of natural persons) or by the dissolution of the member legal entity.

16. Departing or excluded members have no rights to the resources of The Network.

17. Members are obliged to fully meet all contributions expected of them as agreed with each of them within the general assembly

Resources

18. The Network can resource its activities through:

- a. membership fees;
- b. grants from public bodies;
- c. voluntary contributions from members or third parties that may be used for by The Network as The Network decides or may be bound to a specific purpose; and
- d. members' in-kind contributions of time, materials, and other resources.

19. The main resource is the in-kind contribution of resources of members to activities undertaken in The Network.

The organs of The Network

20. The Network's organs are:

the general assembly;

the board; and

the secretariat.

The general assembly

21. All members are members of the general assembly.

22. The general assembly is the highest organ of The Network and is especially responsible for:

- a. the election of the chairman and other members of the board;
- b. the appointment of the secretariat;
- c. the approval of the chairman's annual report;
- d. where relevant, the approval of a report on resources and finances;
- e. deciding on any changes to the statutes;
- f. deciding on The Network's programme of work for the coming year;
- g. deciding on the level of membership fees (where relevant);
- h. deciding on appeals to the decision by the Board to exclude a member.

23. Each member has one vote.

24. Only members have a right to make proposals at the general assembly.

25. Decisions are made by simple majority.

26. The general assembly meets annually following a written invitation and draft agenda sent to all members by the secretary at least two months in advance. Members can have additional agenda items added by contacting the secretary in writing up to two weeks before the general assembly.

27. Every correctly called general assembly is quorate regardless of the number of members attending from one hour after its programmed start time.

28. The general assembly decides on the basis of simple majority with a show of hands. A tied result is treated as a rejection of the proposal. Abstentions are not considered. A confidential paper-based vote is conducted if one-third of members present request it.

29. The general assembly meetings are fully recorded in minutes by the secretary and these are circulated within one month of the meeting by email. The minutes are considered accepted if no objections are recorded by the secretary in the month following their circulation. The secretary is formally responsible for calling the general assembly and signing off the minutes.

30. The development of The Network into another legal form can only be pursued following a decision of the general assembly.

The board

31. The board comprises its chairman who is the chairman of the general assembly and two other members, all elected annually at the annual general assembly.
32. The term of office of the board is the time interval between meetings of the general assembly.
33. Supported by the secretariat, the board is responsible for leading the development of The Network, implementing decisions of the general assembly, and reporting annually to the general assembly. The board's work is conducted within and conditioned by the extent of the work and engagement of The Network's members.
34. Supported by the secretariat, the chairman of the board leads the public representation of the Network. This representation can be delegated to the secretariat and to any member on a case-by-case basis.
35. The board supervises the work of the secretariat.

The secretariat and secretary

36. The member organisation that provides the secretariat is elected with a named secretary by the general assembly each year.
37. The secretariat supports the board in all practical matters such as organising and recording meetings, communicating with members, maintaining The Network's communication channels and the website (www.esin.eu) and generally facilitating the execution of The Network's plan
38. The work of the secretariat is led by a named person: the secretary.
39. The secretary is required to follow the guidance of the board and work closely with its chairman.

Resource planning and monitoring

40. Commensurate with The Network's activities and resources used and supported by the secretariat, the board provides a resource plan each year for the following year's work. Proportionate and 'fit-for-purpose' resource and financial accounting mechanisms will be developed as The Network develops.
41. The general assembly appoints an auditor from its members who is responsible for reviewing resource plans and for controlling the quality of resource and financial accounts.

Dissolution

42. The Network can only be dissolved by the general assembly with a two-thirds majority required.
43. In the event of dissolution, The Network's resources will be returned to those members who donated them based on a plan provided by the secretariat.
44. Changes to the statutes are made following a decision of the general assembly with the proposed changes sent to the members together with the relevant invitation and draft agenda.

Coming into effect

45. These statutes come into effect from the date of their endorsement by the chairman of the board on behalf of the general assembly following the decision of the general assembly.