

no patents on seeds



MEDIA RELEASE

Unitary Patent taken to next level – amid concerns about consequences for farmers and breeders

Brussels 28. 06. 2012. Today, the Member States will take a decision on the new European Patent Court. Presumably it will be based in Paris. Next week also the European Parliament will take a vote on the new EU patent regime. The EU Unitary Patent aims to harmonise the way patents are granted and enforced. *No patents on seeds!* is demanding that an exemption is introduced into the Unitary Patent system allowing the usage of seeds and animals for further breeding and propagation for agriculture.

“The monopolies of big companies have to be limited when it comes to the interests of farmers, traditional breeders, food producers and consumers!” says Christoph Then for the coalition *No Patents on Seeds!*. “However companies such as Monsanto, Syngenta and Dupont-Pioneer are lobbying to enforce control on plant and animal breeding through the Unitary Patent.”

The European Parliament will take a vote on a so-called breeders’ exemption within the regime of the Unitary Patent next week. However, the text as proposed by the reporting secretaries Mr Lehne (EPP) and Mr Rapkay (S&D) will not allow the marketing of newly bred plants and animals independently from the right of the patent holders. Therefore, there is no legal clarity, especially for small and medium sized breeders. They will continually face the threat of the patent holder claiming the successful outcome of their breeding efforts. But also farmers, food producers and consumers would be affected by the current development of market concentration that allows a few companies to take control of the market for seeds and breeding. In the long-run, they will have less choice and pay higher prices.

Furthermore, the planned regulation leaves aside animal breeding completely. This is worrying since many farmers are still actively participating in animal breeding. Dairy farmers not only produce milk, they also propagate animals for breeding. Similarly in pig breeding, there are many regional organisations producing not only meat, but also active in further breeding and propagation.

Against this background, *No Patents on Seeds!* urges Member of Parliament and the representatives of the Member States to amend the current proposal to include animals and the possibility to breed, propagate and market plants and animals independently from the right of any patent holder. Their demands also include the strengthening of farmers’ rights. As experience with patented seeds in the US shows, farmers need specific protection against the patent claims of the international patent holders.

The coalition *No Patents on Seeds!* is warning that large corporations such as Monsanto, Dupont, Syngenta and Bayer are abusing current patent laws in order to gain monopolistic control over global food production chains. The number of patents granted on plants and animals has significantly increased within the last few years. The coalition *No Patents on Seeds!*, which is driven by several civil society organisations is aiming to protect the environment, developing countries and agriculture.

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