

## **EU Seed Regulation – Promoting diversity**

In a position paper published in July 2013, the Bundesverband Deutscher Gartenfreunde (BDG - German Allotment Garden Federation) appealed to the German government to lobby for the further deregulation of market access to seed and propagating materials, both for fruit, vegetables and old agricultural varieties. The paper was issued in response to the drafting of a regulation for the revision of seed legislation in Europe, which was presented by the European Commission on 6th May, 2013. Details of the paper that were made public in advance shocked amateur gardeners throughout Europe. According to various articles which appeared in the media, not only farmers, but also amateur and allotment gardeners, would only be able to use licensed seeds and it would become illegal for them to exchange reproduced seeds between one another.

"I fundamentally share your concerns regarding the range of seeds available to allotment gardeners in specialist stores," replied the Minister for Agriculture, in a letter to the BDG. "Amateur gardeners generally aim to have a wide variety of plants in their gardens and make a significant contribution to the preservation of genetic diversity; they must therefore have access to the same diverse range of seeds in future." The Minister pointed out, however, that the requirement to market standardised seeds in Europe is intended to ensure that allotment gardeners are able to obtain high-quality seeds of the modern varieties that they require from retailers. She continued, "At the same time, seed legislation resulting from this motivation to protect consumers – considered by some to be too restrictive – must not lead to old, regional varieties no longer being available on the seed market."

"In the negotiations for the EU regulation, Germany will argue for a further simplification and deregulation of this area of law, in order to reduce the known short-comings with regard to the marketing of old varieties." The Minister concluded by saying: "I am committed to ensuring that this happens and would like to thank you for setting out your position so clearly. This is important for substantiating the German position in the negotiations taking place in Brussels."

The BDG will continue to provide expert opinions on the development of the EU seed regulation and exert its influence in the interests of amateur gardeners.

Thomas Wagner  
BDG