

Report

17th EU-VCU EXPERTS' GROUP MEETING May 13th to 15th 2023 – Korsør, Denmark

Presentations in pdf-format are available at: <https://www.tystofte.dk/eu-vcu-2024/>

Welcome

Short introduction to the meeting – Gerhard Deneken, The TystofteFoundation

Updates and new developments in the national VCU systems

Short presentations of status and developments in the testing systems of member states.

- Variety Testing in Slovenia and introduction of organic VCU – Simon Ograjsek, Kmetijski inštitut Slovenije
- Recent developments in German VCU-testing: Ongoing revision of sugar beet and soybean VCU – Haiko Brandes, Bundessortenamt
- Updates and new developments in the CZ VCU system – Marek Povolny, ÚKZÚZ
- Recent developments in VCU-testing in France – Julie Gombert and Valerie Cadot, GEVES
- Updates and new developments in the Italian VCU system – Anna Giuliani and Giovanni Corsi, CREADC
- Update and new developments in the Belgian VCU system – Joke Pannecouque, ILVO
- Finnish VCU system – Kalle Ohralahti and Markku Niskanen, Luke
- VCU research on fodder grasses in the Netherlands – Jan Rinze, Naktuinbouw
- VCU testing in Slovakia – Katarina Hanzelyova, Central Control and Testing Institute of Agriculture
- New development in the VCU system in Poland – Marcin Behnke, COBORU
- New developments in testing for sustainability of varieties – Klemens Mechtler, AGES

VsCU and PRM

Presentations relating to the status and preparations in relation to the proposed EU PRM regulations.

- Proposal for a new Regulation on plant reproductive material - State of play – Spyridon Flevaris, European Commission
- Changing EU PRM regulation – Perspective from Euroseeds - Nigel Moore, Euroseeds
- Report from VsCU survey among applicants in Denmark - Gerhard Deneken, The TystofteFoundation
- Report on the working group about PRM proposal – Fabien Masson, GEVES

The report of the working group was presented, and it was decided not to continue the work on generating input to the commission while the discussions by member states were ongoing.

Workshops on defining and assessing sustainability of varieties

Two sub-groups were formed in order to discuss the following questions:

- The sustainability of a variety results from the interaction of many individual characteristics.

What methodologies could be employed to assess sustainability as an overarching characteristic?

Overall the four pillars mentioned in the present EU regulations regarding variety testing describes well sustainability of varieties. Varieties could be stressed in the trials by omitting fungicides or lowering the application of nitrogen in order to highlight adaptability. Resistances could be tested in dedicated trials rather than full variety testing.

It was pinpointed, that there will be different characteristics and weights depending on location and species.

It was discussed, whether there is a need to have a common index or some other means that allow for comparisons among countries. Will be complicated by the before mentioned fact regarding differences in characters and their weight among countries.

- What is the relationship between the sustainability of a variety and its yield stability?

Standard deviation was mentioned as a means of estimating yield stability, but this can be a challenge in small countries with fewer trial sites. There could be a discordance between the need for local adaptation and using a criteria of yield stability.

Visit at The TystofteFoundation, Skælskør

- Presentation to the TystofteFoundation, its formation and its organisation – Gerhard Deneken, The TystofteFoundation
- VCU organization in Denmark – Anders Søndergaard Larsen, The TystofteFoundation

Project reports

- Report from INNOVAR – Lisa Black, Agri-Food and Bioscience Institute, Crossnacreevy, Belfast

Variety mixtures

- Variety mixtures and OHM in the Austrian INVITE wheat trials – Clemens Flamm, AGES
- Mixtures in the Danish variety test – Anders Søndergaard Larsen, The TystofteFoundation
- Variety Mixture: the current state in Italy – Giovanni Corsi, CREA-DC
- “Evolution on cereal crops testing system” (wheat variety mixtures and evaluating spelt and wheat-spelt genotypes) – Silvan Strebel, Agroscope

Surveys

- Seed coding systems for VCU trials – Tomasz Lenartowicz, COBORU

Thomasz has subsequently circulated the full data set from the survey.

- Results from clubroot survey – Valerie Cadot, GEVES

Harmonization of a clubroot resistance test would be a good case. Breeders are unhappy that results often differ among countries. There will be a follow-up meeting for interested members in the EU-VCU group on how to move on before September 2024.

- Taking grain quality and bread-making potential into account when registering wheat varieties. Overview of European protocols. (Results of 2023 survey) - Damien Eylenbosch, CRAW

A few countries did not respond to the survey initially and Damien will send a follow up mail to these members and complete the overview.

- Pesticide and fertilizer levels in the different VCU systems - discussion on if and how – Anders S. Larsen, The TystofteFoundation

A proposal for a survey on the use of pesticides was presented. From Belgium it was suggested to include PGRs in the survey. From France it was argued to include N-input and to form a small group in order to prepare the survey. The survey will be carried out before the next meeting.

EU-VCU group status

- Statutes of the EU-VCU group: report of the working group – Anna Giuliani, CREA-DC

The report of the group was presented. There were discussions and suggestions primarily regarding maintaining a website for the group and whether the status should be further formalized. The need for a membership fee relates primarily to designing and maintaining a website. In the past a webpage was run for free by the Austrian office.

The general opinion was in favour of a group rather than an association. That is, with no formal/signed agreement and no secretariat. However, it was found important to establish a webpage for the group in order to share data and presentations and highlight the existence of the group.

Teams or Sharepoint groups were mentioned as alternatives for sharing data.

The Polish group might be able to establish and maintain a webpage and will send a proposal to the working group if the director of COBORU approves.

Didzis from Latvia presented a cost effective model for establishing and maintaining a webpage.

Costs for the webpage could be charged along with the fee for the meeting.

A mandate was given to the working group to finalize the statutes of the group and follow up on a model for establishing and running a webpage. Anna suggested to form a sub-group to start working on the actual content and design of a webpage.

- Evaluation of external participation in EU-VCU group meetings

It is proposed that external participation is limited to instances where the representation is of relevance to the actual topic of the meeting. External participation applies to representatives from non-EU states, interest groups and organisations.

Upcoming meetings

2025 Slovenia

2026 Slovakia

2027 Sweden and Spain showed interest in organizing

Conclusion – Gerhard Deneken, The TystofteFoundation rounded off the meeting.

Excursion - Global Rust Reference Center

Introduction to the centre's work on yellow-, leaf-, and stem rust.