# Plant breeding: what options to increase quality and yields

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The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development adopted the own-initiative report by Marit PAULSEN (ALDE, SE) on plant breeding: what options to increase quality and yields?

The committee aims, by means of this report, to launch a thorough **debate and inquiry** concerning the whole situation with regard to plant-breeding in European and global agriculture.

The plant breeding industry is of fundamental importance as regards the productivity, diversity, health and quality of agriculture, horticulture, food and feed production and the environment. Estimated population growth will place extreme demands on agriculture. Cultivable land areas are declining due to inappropriate land use, including poor agricultural practices, a problem which has been exacerbated by climate change.

The report stressed that, in order to respond to forthcoming challenges, such as future food supply needs and climate change, it is exceptionally important to have an effective and competitive plant-breeding sector.

Members advocated:

- the importance of **developing varieties** that can cope with the conditions we expect to encounter in the future;
- the need for crops that absorb nitrogen and phosphorus effectively and which are more tolerant of drought and heavier precipitation, more **resistant** to pests and can withstand changes in temperature;
- the development of **perennial crops**;
- the use of new plant-breeding techniques (concern is expressed at the Commission’s delay in assessing new breeding techniques and the Commission is called upon, as a matter of urgency, to clarify their regulatory status);
- the importance of guaranteeing access to **genetic resources** as the basis for plant breeding;
- that the European plant-breeding market must be further improved in the interest of healthy competition;
- the role of publicly funded **independent scientific research** carried out in the long term public interest as regards long term food security;
- that fundamental plant-breeding research in the EU should be funded by the EU and its Member States.

The Commission is urged to:

- use the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation to fund applied research that supports the development of new, innovative planting-breeding techniques such as accelerated breeding;
- allocate financial resources and create a coherent structure for plant-breeding research and practice within research programmes and other suitable policy instruments, so that European diversity can be preserved and developed;
- elaborate an overall strategy on agricultural inputs, especially in relation to plant breeding;
- provide a **policy framework** that supports the agricultural input sector as one of the key areas for the development of agricultural productivity and sustainability.