

Seed produced in third countries: examinations under official supervision and equivalence

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PURPOSE : Extending official examination of seed produced in third countries **PROPOSED ACT :** Council Directive. **CONTENT :** From 1998-2003 the European Commission has been testing out, based on Community legislation, a temporary experiment on seed sampling and seed testing. The aim of the experiment was to assess whether seed sampling and seed testing, under official supervision, may constitute improved alternatives to official seed certification, without a significant decline in the quality of the seed. The results indicate that under specified conditions there could be a simplification of the procedures relating to official seed certification - without any significant decline in the quality of the seed compared with that achieved under the system for official seed sampling and seed testing. Further, a detailed evaluation of the certification procedures relating to field inspection and official supervision show that the field inspections under official supervision should be extended to all the crops for the production of certified seed and that the proportion of the areas to be checked and inspected by official inspectors may be reduced. The scope of EU seed "equivalence" for seed harvested in third countries is currently restricted to certain categories of seed. The Commission, taking into account rules governing the international trade in seed (and in particular OECD schemes) is seeking to extend the equivalency regime to all kinds of seeds meeting the characteristics and the examination requirements laid down in the various Community Directives on the marketing of seeds.