





EU-SOL - High Quality Solanaceous Crops for Consumers, Processors and Producers by Exploration of Natural Biodiversity

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Wrapping up

Started in May 2006, the EU-SOL programme has come to an end. Although this means that it is time to wrap up and see what has been achieved in the past five years, we feel quite confident that several parts of EU-SOL will continue to contribute to plant breeding in tomato, potato, and other Solanaceous crops. Major outputs such as the core collection of about 7,000 tomato varieties, EU-SOL's contribution to the sequencing of the tomato genome, the results of the tomato taste panels and studies on the genetic basis of tuberisation in potato are considered to be very useful by the industry. Supported by the rapid development of new, faster and more precise sequencing tools, the sequence of 100 selected genes in 1,000 different tomato varieties from the core collection could be mapped. Moreover, EU-SOL's education programme managed to distribute tomato seeds to almost 10,000 students at 340 schools in 19 countries and several bioinformatics tools have been developed. Also scientifically, EU-SOL has contributed enormously to our knowledge of the genome and resulted in more than 100 scientific papers in magazines such as Nature Genetics, Plant Physiology, Bioinformatics and Trends in Biotechnology.

There is no doubt that the companies and most of the research groups involved in EU-SOL will build on EU-SOL results in their future work. The phenotype and genotype data that were collected and systematically stored will remain available for future R&D. Tutorials for the necessary bioinformatics tools have been put online to support the scientists that have to work with those tools. Alternatives to ensure future availability of school packs are being explored and experience with outreach activities will be transferred to other projects.

This final edition of the EU-SOL newsletter is not going to present a total overview of what has been achieved. Instead, we asked five young scientists who participated in the project about their contributions and opinions. They all emphasize the participation in an international research project which made it a unique learning experience.

Furthermore, we report four interesting contributions to an open innovation seminar where the food industry and the seed industry shared their experiences in how to benefit from the breakthrough

research and innovations achieved in plant breeding. The report demonstrates that developing knowledge and tools that help plant breeders to meet the preferences of consumers and processors -which is also what EU-SOL was meant to do-, although this is an ambitious and complicated task, is feasible.

Patents play an important role in valorisation of research results. The effectiveness of patents, however, is contested, as the fourth contribution to this newsletter shows. Whereas some plant breeding companies consider patents the best tools to ensure knowledge-sharing and faster innovation cycles, other plant breeders argue that patents can



hinder breeding activities, have a negative impact on innovation, and accelerate the process of concentration. Notwithstanding these differences, discussions have been initiated to reach consensus.

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