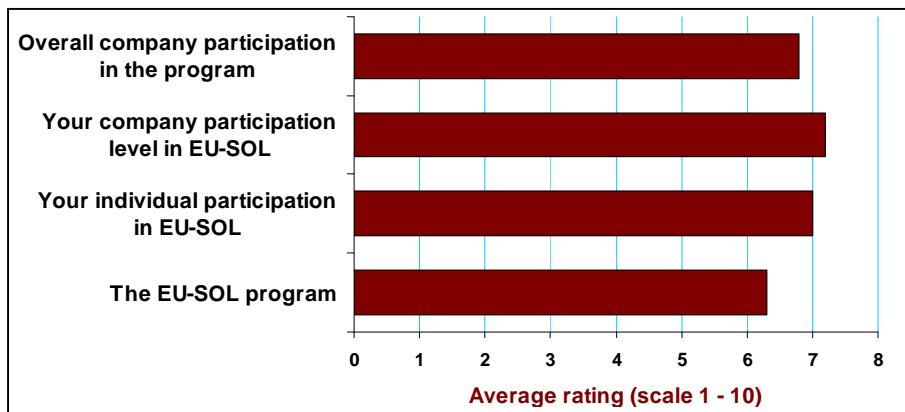




Useful tools: Plant breeder's opinions about the EU-SOL programme

Prior to a final meeting organised by the Industrial Evaluation Panel the industrial participants of EU-SOL were requested to fill in an evaluation form. They were asked about their overall evaluation of the EU-SOL program and their involvement in and the usefulness of the different modules, and how they evaluate several activities. Six out of twelve seed companies replied: two potato seed companies and four tomato seed companies.



Six seed companies returned a questionnaire that was sent in March 2011, prior to a final meeting for industrial partners in Paris. These companies rate the EU-SOL program 6.3 on a scale of 1 – 10. They thought reasonably well about their own participation in the program.

Most involved in phenotyping diversity

The involvement of the six companies in the different modules of the program was rather low, except for module 3 that was committed to phenotyping diversity related to producer and processor traits in tomato and potato. Two tomato seed companies were also more than averagely involved in the module devoted to the analysis of the biological bases of organoleptic quality traits perceived by consumers (module 1) and in the module aimed at the development of mapped genetic resources of tomato (module 4). One company was strongly involved in the EU-SOL Resource and Technology Platform and another company was strongly involved in the Outreach and Education program (module 7).

Access to diversity

“EU-SOL has created some insights that we are using, but it's hard to say what the effect has been”. This reply by one of the tomato breeders seems to reflect the general opinion of the industrial partners about the program. The value of EU-SOL was clearly not the delivery of useful information and material that can be directly applied in their breeding programs: On average, the breeders rated all modules well below five points out of ten. Although a few companies indicated that the output of the organoleptic quality research, the tomato core collection, the bioinformatics tools and the microarrays delivered by module 5 were (very) useful. The companies were less interested in the output of the Health-based Consumer Quality Traits in Tomato and Potato module and the public outreach and communication activities.

Nonetheless, one of the potato breeders indicated that EU-SOL contributed slightly to a change in their breeding program: Health related traits were not in their focus before. One of the tomato breeders noted that EU-SOL's output will not make them change their breeding strategy, but, as another breeder indicated too, it helped them in exploring new molecular breeding approaches.

The potato breeders will not continue to make use of EU-SOL resources in the future because the populations and databases are not useful for them, except the resources (plant populations) they created themselves. The tomato breeders all want to continue using the databases and –hopefully- the core collection.

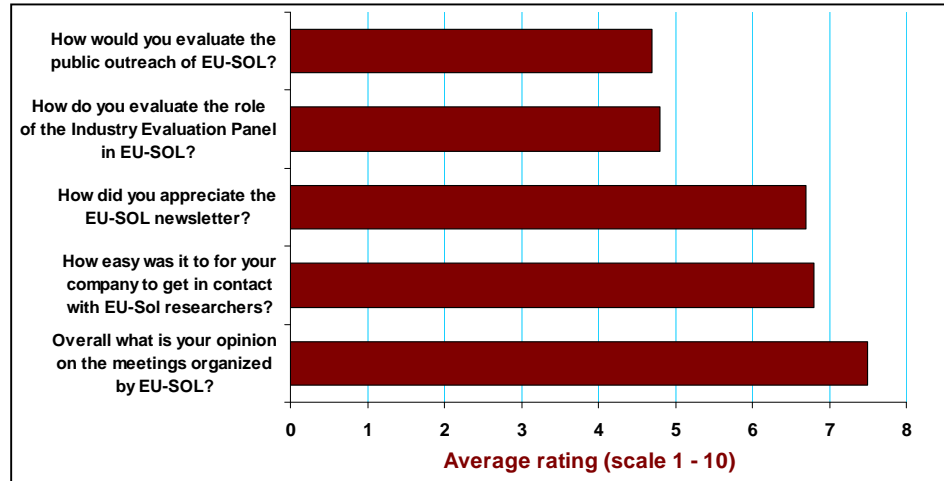
In general, the main gain for industrial partners seems to be:



- the direct access to researchers. Four out of six respondents indicated that it was very easy to get in contact with EU-SOL researchers;
- the availability of the tomato genome sequence. All tomato breeders make intensive use of the data.

Appreciation of activities

The industrial partners was also asked a number of questions about information and outreach activities. The meetings organised by EU-SOL and the EU-SOL newsletter provided the industrial partners with a comprehensive overview of what is being done in the project and were both well appreciated.



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