

# LANDSORTEN – A SEED SYSTEM WITHOUT SEED COMPANY

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Farmers have an interest in high quality seed at a low price, whereas seed companies have an interest in high prices and low production costs. To control this contradicting economic interest, EU and many other countries and unions have implemented seed regulations, setting strict standard for marketing of seed, including approval of varieties legal to put on the market. The EU legal framework has led to high costs for introduction of new varieties onto the market, resulting in lack of diversity of varieties with limited market potential, including varieties aimed for organic farming conditions. Even though organic farming has a well defined demand of cereal varieties with certain specific traits such as good weed competition, resistance to certain diseases and ability to meet baking quality standards under low input conditions, few if any plant breeders are able to establish a profitable business to meet this demand.

Most plant breeders and seed companies are owned by companies and consortia with a main income generated by either production or marketing of agrochemicals. The supply of seed to organic farming from such companies therefore jeopardize the integrity of organic farming.

The EU seed directives are marketing regulations. They do not regulate the plant breeding of adapted varieties for organic farming, and does not regulate the USE of such varieties by organic farmers. It only regulates the marketing of seed from the plant breeder to the farmer.

LANDSORTEN is a membership organisation under establishment with the aim to solve the problem of supply of adapted cereal varieties for organic farming. The organisation takes advantage of the fact that the EU seed directives only regulates the marketing of seed. LANDSORTEN is not a

seed company producing and marketing seed. Instead, seed is only transferred from the plant breeder to the farmer on a trial basis in limited quantities. The EU Directive states in Article 3 that “Member States may provide for derogations .... for research and trials...”(Council Directive 66/402/EEC). Different member states have implemented this article in different way. In Denmark, the implemented wording in §30 in the executive order (BEK nr 1014 af 26/06/2020) that “*the requirement for certification does not apply for seed..... in small quantities on the purpose of trials, scientific research or breeding*” (authors translation). It is therefore perfectly legal for a plant breeder or for LANDSORTEN to sell seed to a farmer on the purpose for the farmer to try if the variety fits his requirements. The term “small quantities” is not well defined, but of course the quantity must be large enough to fit the purpose of the trial production. With modern sowing and harvest equipment, this means at least some hundred kg of seed. If the trial production is successful, the farmer can legally reproduce the seed as home saved seed, as home saving of seed does not involve marketing of seed, and therefore is not regulated by the directive.

LANDSORTEN is established by Agrologica as a plant breeder, and Gl. Buurholt Hovedgård being a company specialised in facilitating farmers in production of home saved seed, driving from farm to farm with seed cleaning equipment.

To finance the expenses for plant breeding, Agrologica is paid by LANDSORTEN, and LANDSORTEN charges a membership fee from the farmers based on the area grown with varieties from LANDSORTEN. As such, the system works without seed being sold except for the initial seed for a trial production. Farmers pay a fee for the membership, and the fee covers the expense of a seed sample of 200kg seed for a trial production. The seed can come from Agrologica or from farmers growing the varieties from LANDSORTEN, and Gl. Buurholt Hovedgård guarantee the seed quality. The seed is given with a restricted right to reproduce home saved seed as long as a membership fee is paid to LANDSORTEN.

Initially, LANDSORTEN acts with organic millers and farmers supplying grain to these mills, supplying varieties and heterogeneous material with high baking quality, but is open also for other farmers including livestock farmers requesting grain for feed.

The limitation and disadvantage of the system is that farmers need to set aside land for seed production resulting in reduced net-production, and need to plan changes in varieties choice and crops one year in advance in order to be able to produce his own seed. The system is only designed for seed crops like cereals and pulses, whereas vegetables and other crops need other systems to cope with the challenges of the current seed system.

**References:**

Council Directive 66/402/EEC of 14 June 1966 on the marketing of cereal seed.

BEK nr 1014 af 26/06/2020: Bekendtgørelse om sædekorn. Miljø- og Fødevareministeriet.