

<b>PROJECT I.D.</b>
1.1. Acronym: VAREKO
1.2. Project title: Characterisation and improvement of crops suitable for organic farming
1.3. Financial backers: DAPA
1.4. Participating bodies: NATURABA, EKONEKAZARITZA. Federación de A.E.E., BIONEKAZARITZA
<b>NEIKER DETAILS</b>
1.5. Lead researcher: José Ignacio Ruiz de Galarreta (jiruiz@neiker.net)
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1.6. Start date: 8-1-2007
1.7. End date: 31-12-2009

**Summary:**

The main aim of the project is the characterisation, evaluation and improvement of commercial and local varieties of the main horticultural and extensive varieties suitable for organic farming.

The specific objectives are:

1. To evaluate local and commercial varieties of winter cereals for organic production.
2. To continue the programme already started for the genetic improvement of local varieties of tomato and lettuce.
3. To evaluate local varieties of maize.
4. To analyse the quality of the best adapted varieties of the different crops.
5. To transfer the chosen varieties to the organic farming sector.

The project is designed to continue on from *ECOSEM* (started in 2004). We work according to regulation CE 2092/91 concerning Organic Agricultural Production, whose Article 6 says that the organic production method involves the use of only seeds and plant reproduction materials that have been produced in accordance with the organic production method. There has been a transition period and several moratoria in recent years, when we were able to use seeds and plant reproduction materials obtained conventionally. This was because of inadequate supplies of organic seeds for many crops, whether horticultural, cereals or legumes. On this basis, 2001 and 2002 saw the implementation of an R+D project funded by the Basque Government that was the starting point for these activities. This project saw its continuation in 2004, with a project funded by the Basque Government and aimed at exploring and evaluating local and commercial varieties proceeding from organic seed. This was the *ECOSEM* project, which started evaluating a large number of varieties and crops used in organic farming.

However, the characterisation and evaluation work focused on the crops of greatest interest, such as winter cereals, barley and oats, maize and potato. It also dealt with beans, lettuce, tomato, carrot and leeks. With certain crops, such as peppers, chile peppers and beans, we managed to transfer varieties obtained at NEIKER and adapted to the Basque Country. We aim to offer added value to the varieties that have already been evaluated and are going to be grown. To this end, NEIKER-Tecnalia registered an organic production plot in 2006 so as to be able to carry out all the trials required to achieve the objectives set for the project.

**Results and Impact:**

From the results obtained, we will select and multiply the best adapted varieties of the different crops tested.

We intend provide organic farmers in the Basque Country with the information they need about the varieties, both commercial and free, that are best adapted to their growing conditions. They will also have access to local varieties adapted to their specific needs. Organic farming is committed to using these kinds of varieties, as they are perfectly suited to the growing techniques used.