



# From Cereal Populations to Organic Heterogeneous Material: success stories and lessons learned in Italy



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BREEDING: THE KEY TO INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS



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# Outline of today's presentation



**Introduction to cereal populations and organic heterogeneous material**

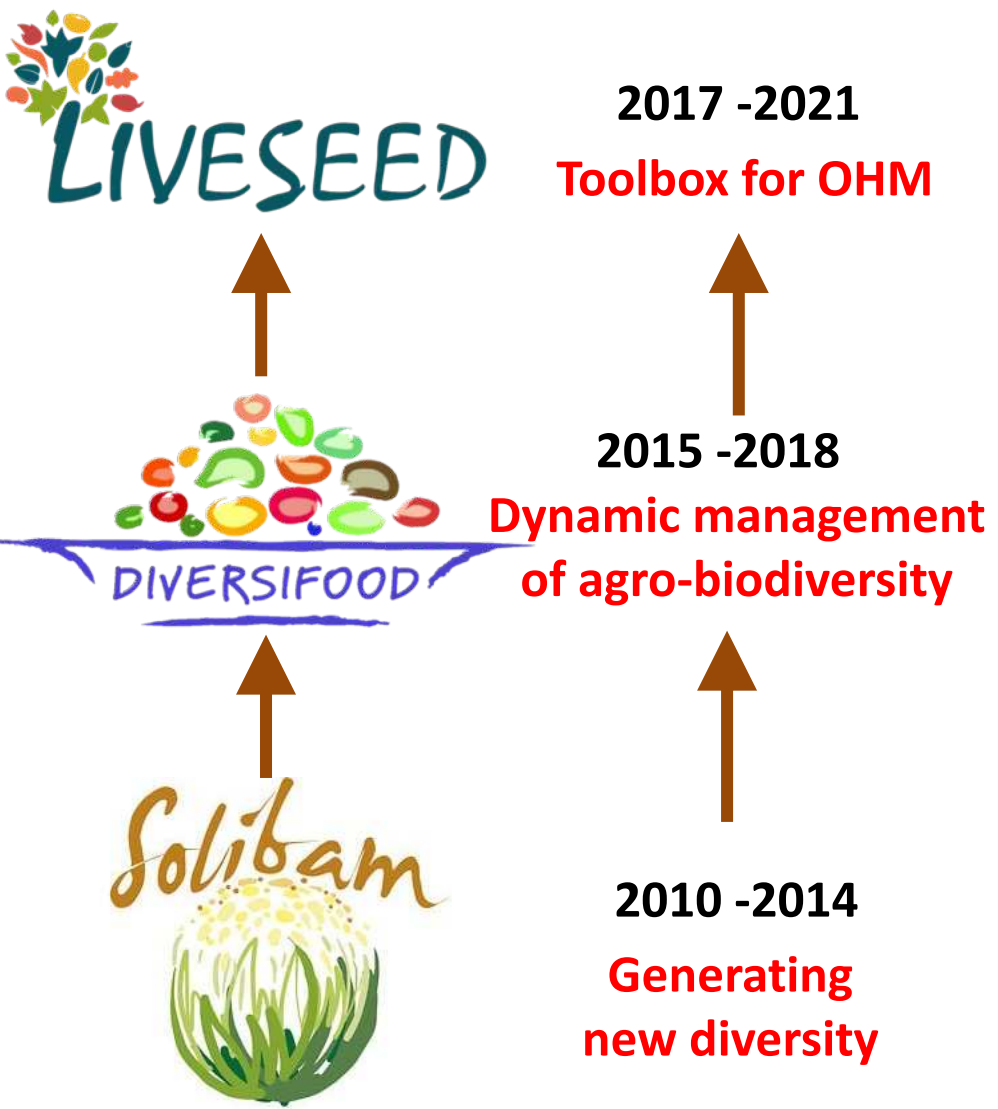


**Practical examples of OHM research and use in Italy: bread wheat, barley and tomato**



**Lessons learned and future perspectives**

# Organic Heterogeneous Material: 10 years of European research projects...and continuing



SETTIMANA DI INCONTRI SUL MIGLIORAMENTO GENETICO PARTECIPATIVO CON LA COLLABORAZIONE E IL SUPPORTO DI:

Il Miglioramento genetico partecipativo: quale futuro in Italia?

Regione Emilia Romagna

**SALVATORE CECCARELLI**  
 Laureato in Scienze Agrarie presso l'Università di Perugia nel 1966 si occupa di miglioramento genetico dell'avena presso l'IRGCA, dove attualmente è responsabile per i programmi di miglioramento genetico e salute in oltre 200 varietà. Ha poi a recente indagine Plant Breeding and Farmer Participation, di cui è autore insieme a S. Guzman e E. Welton.

PER PARTECIPARE O AVERE INFORMAZIONI  
 Riccardo Bacci rbacci@abab.it - 3293878693 - ABAB via Piave, 14 - 00187 Roma - Tel. +39 06 45437485-6-7 - Fax +39 06 45437480 - info@abab.it

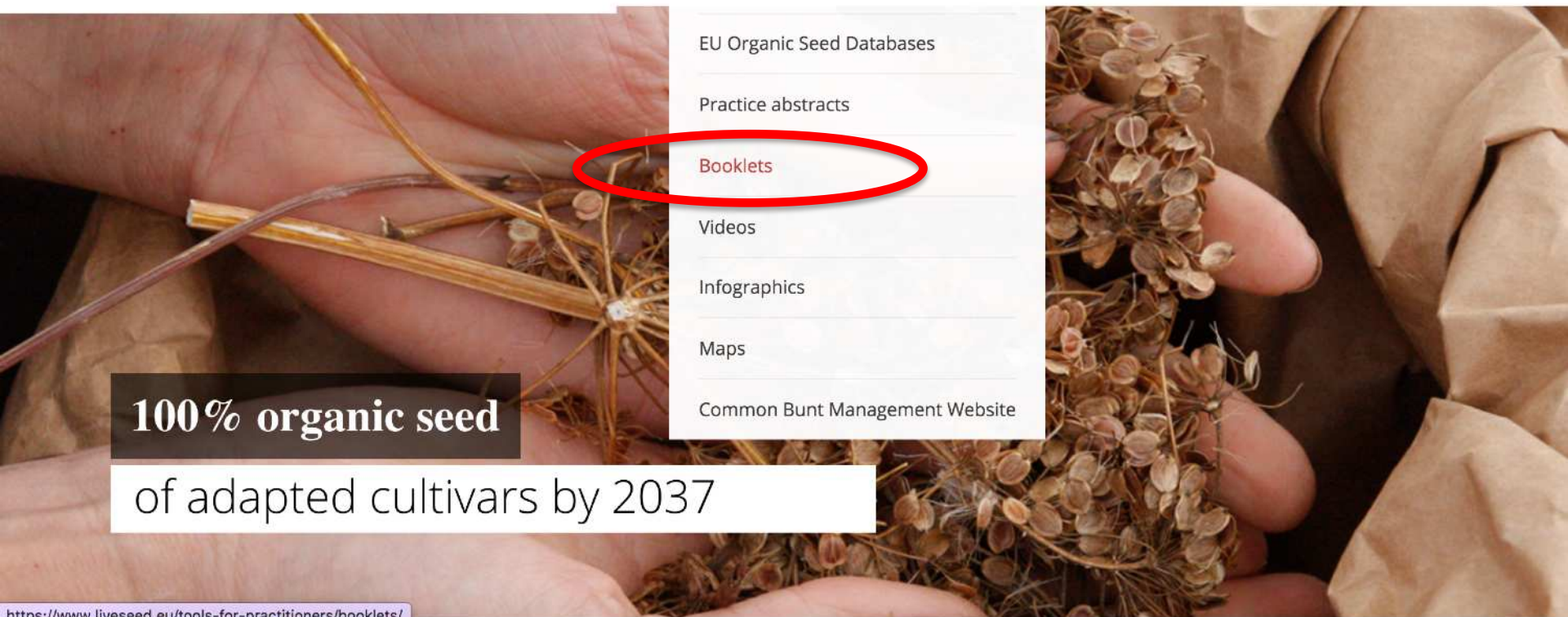
PIANO NAZIONALE SEMENTIERO BIOLOGICO  
 31 MAGGIO - 4 GIUGNO 2010

# Organic Heterogeneous Material: 10 years of European research projects...and continuing



- ABOUT LIVESEED
- RESULTS
- TOOLS FOR PRACTITIONERS
- NEWS & EVENTS
- MEDIA CORNER
- CONTACT US

- Policy Briefs
- EU Organic Seed Databases
- Practice abstracts
- Booklets**
- Videos
- Infographics
- Maps
- Common Bunt Management Website



**100% organic seed**  
of adapted cultivars by 2037

<https://www.liveseed.eu/tools-for-practitioners/booklets/>



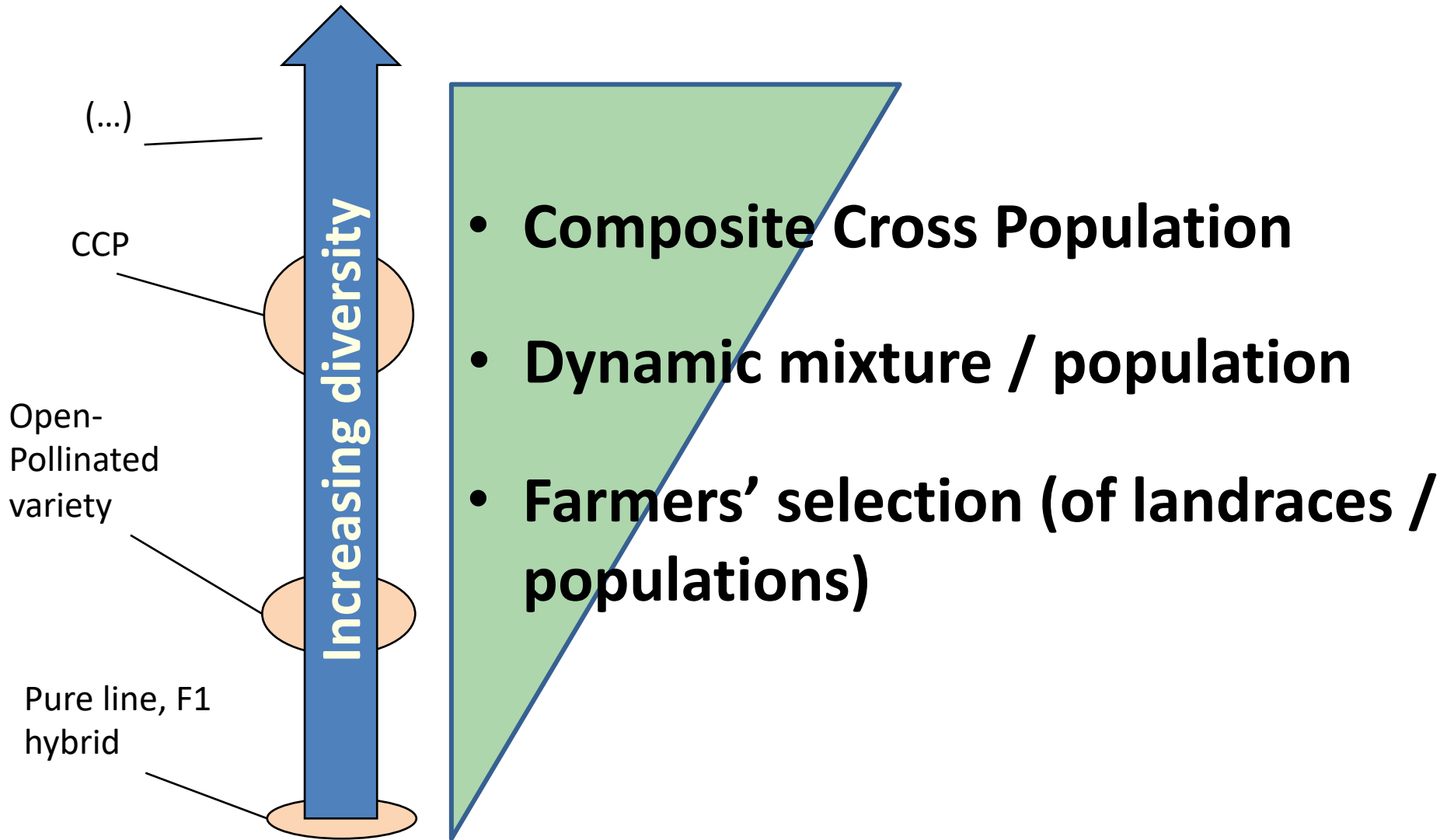
# What is OHM? **Legal definition**

**New organic regulation (EU) 2018/848 starting in January 2022**

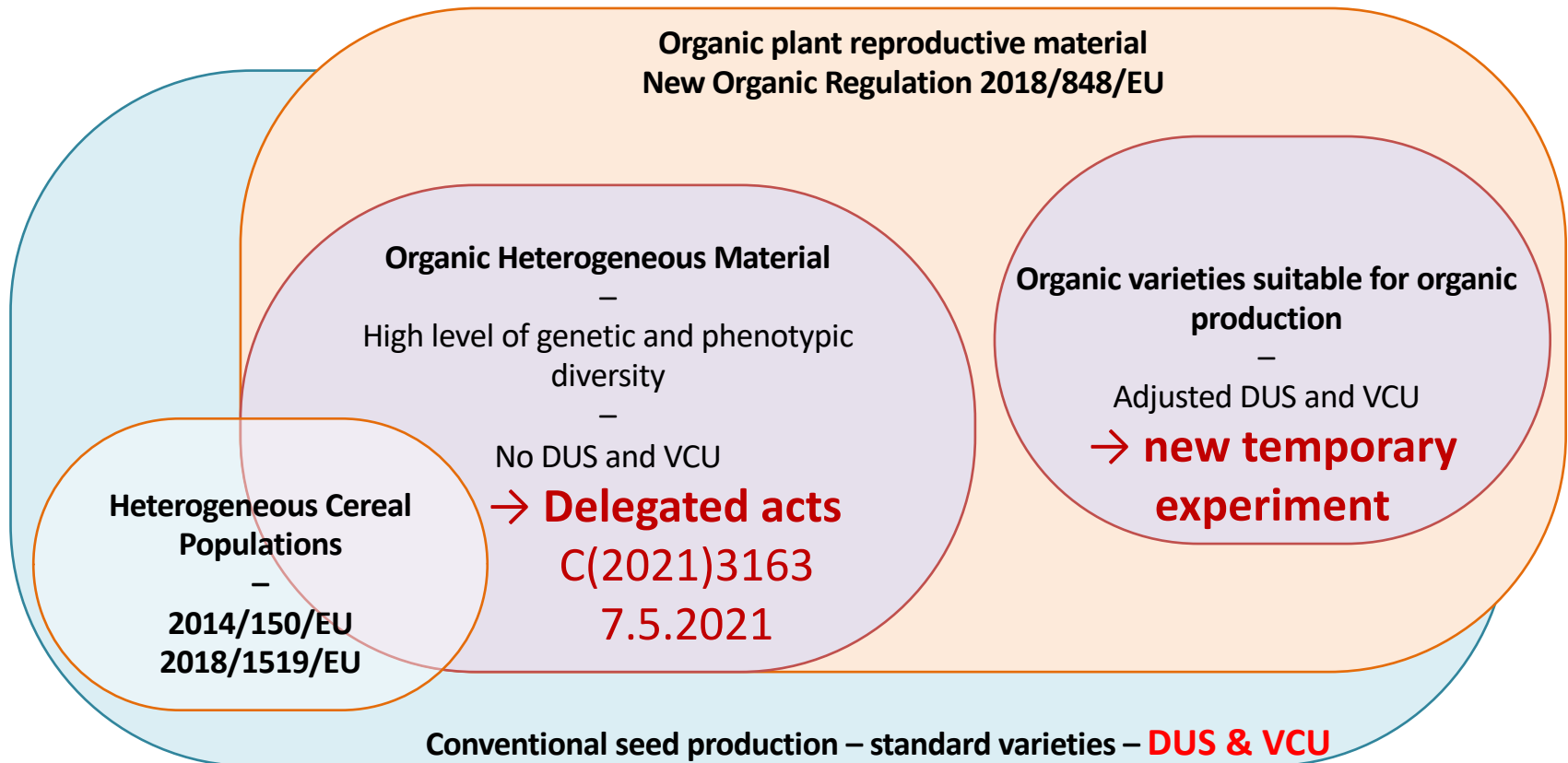
## **Article 3 Definitions**

- (18) '**organic heterogeneous material**' means a plant grouping within a single botanical taxon of the lowest known rank which:
  - (a) presents common phenotypic characteristics;
  - (b) is characterised by a **high level of genetic and phenotypic diversity** between individual reproductive units, so that that plant grouping is **represented by the material as a whole**, and not by a small number of units;
  - (c) **is not a variety** within the meaning of Article 5(2) of Council Regulation (EC) No 2100/94 ( 1 );
  - (d) is **not a mixture of varieties**; and
  - (e) has been **produced in accordance with this Regulation**

# What is OHM? **Practical examples**



# OHM: a Novel Cultivar Type



# Organic Heterogeneous Material: Exploiting natural evolutionary dynamics



Harry Harlan - 1929

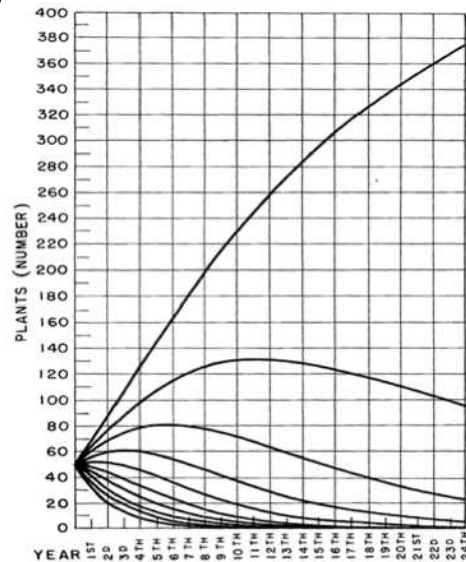
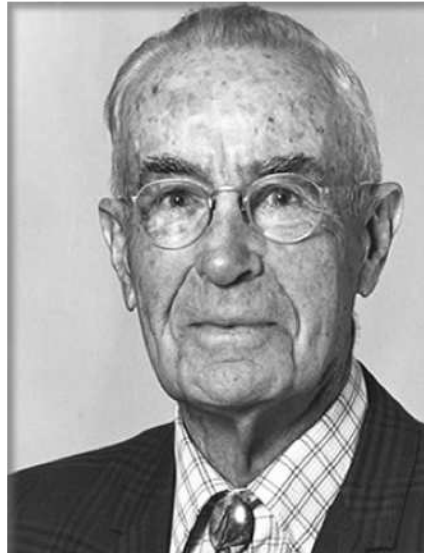


FIGURE 1.—Theoretical curves of natural selection based on an equal mixture of 10 varieties differing by 5 kernels each in their productivity per plant, the poorest plant producing 45 seeds.



Coit Suneson - 1956

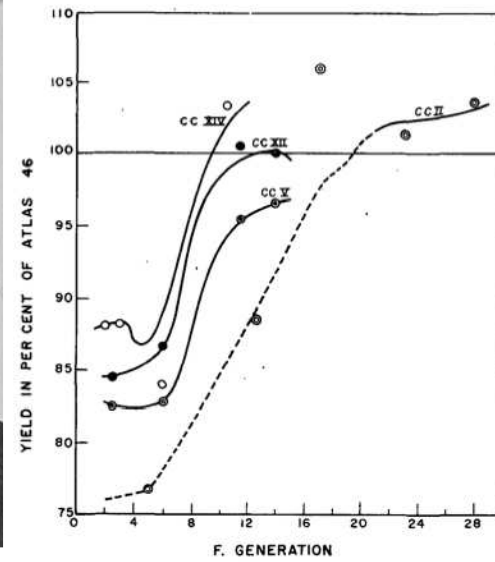


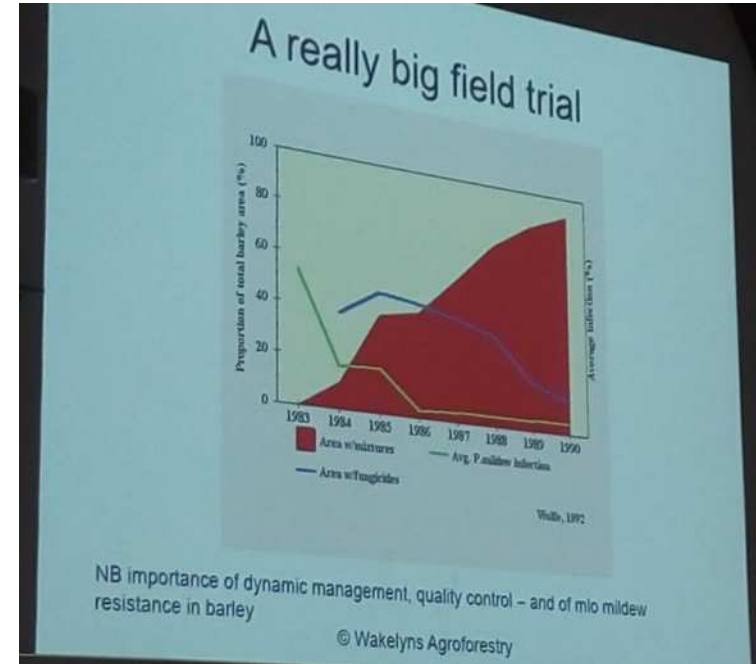
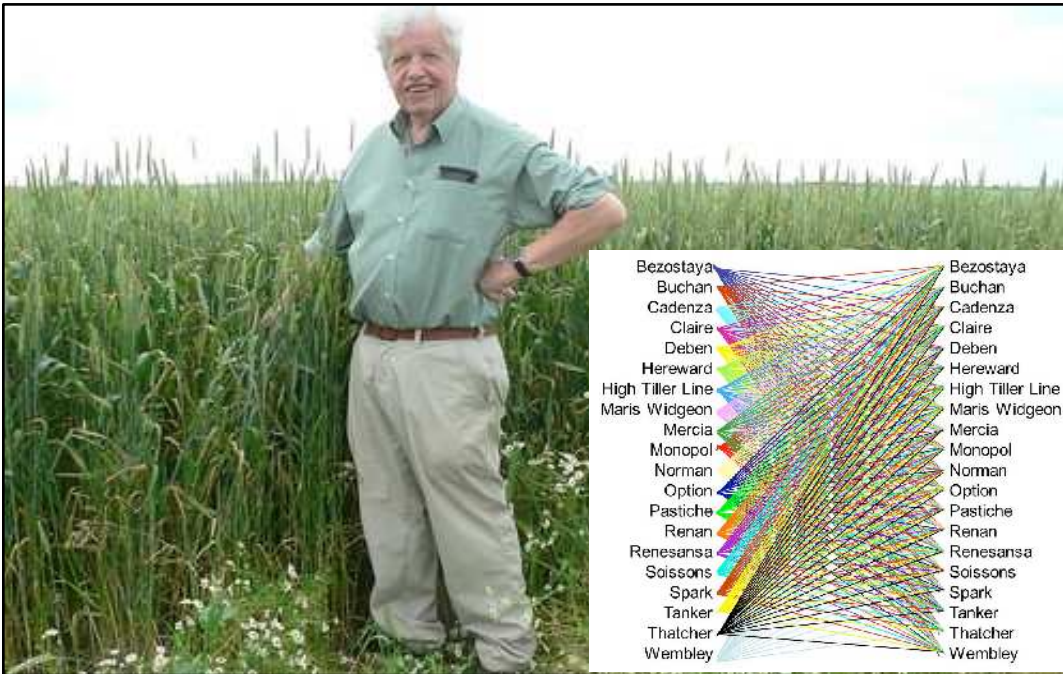
FIG. 1.—Yields of 4 composite crosses compared with each other and Atlas 46 in successive generations.

“This **inexpensive and easily executed method** [...] being proposed has been neglected or overlooked by many plant breeders focusing on techniques for improving man’s [sic] selecting and testing efficiency, rather than on **evolutionary fitness** as determined by survival” (Suneson, 1956)

“**A pure-line mentality**, convinced that **variation was bad, uniformity was good** and off-types in the field somehow immoral, developed [...] Thus it was that we laid ourselves open to **epiphytotics of serious dimensions**” (Harry Harland - cited by Martin Wolfe, 1985).



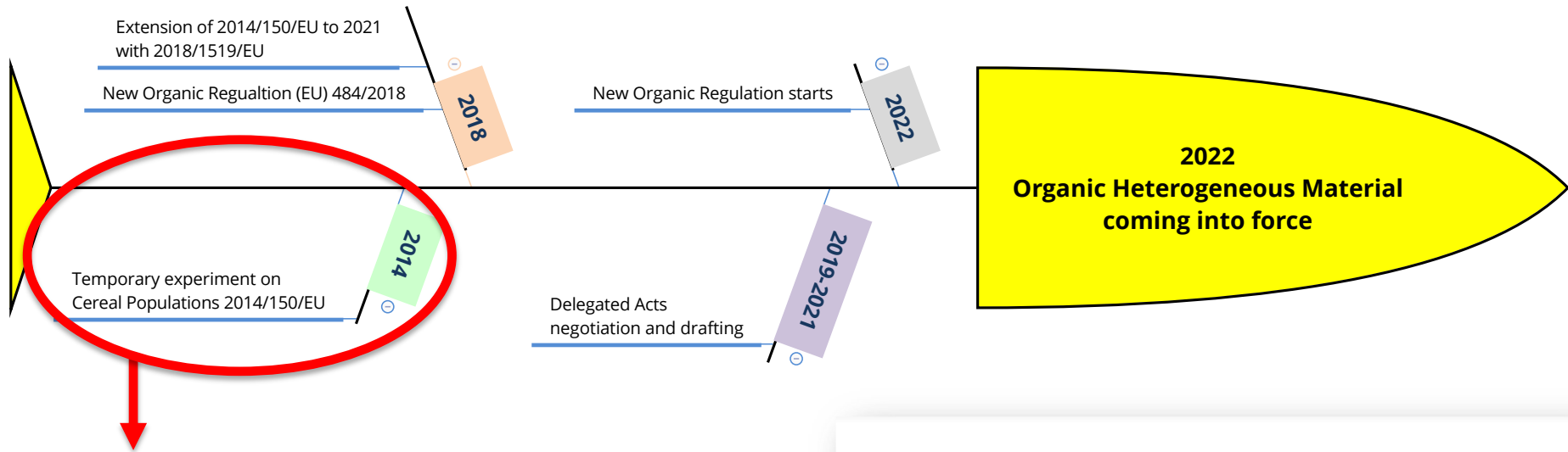
# Organic Heterogeneous Material: First deployments in Europe



**Martin Wolfe** as a plant pathologist discovered that barley populations sported much higher mildew resistance than pure lines.

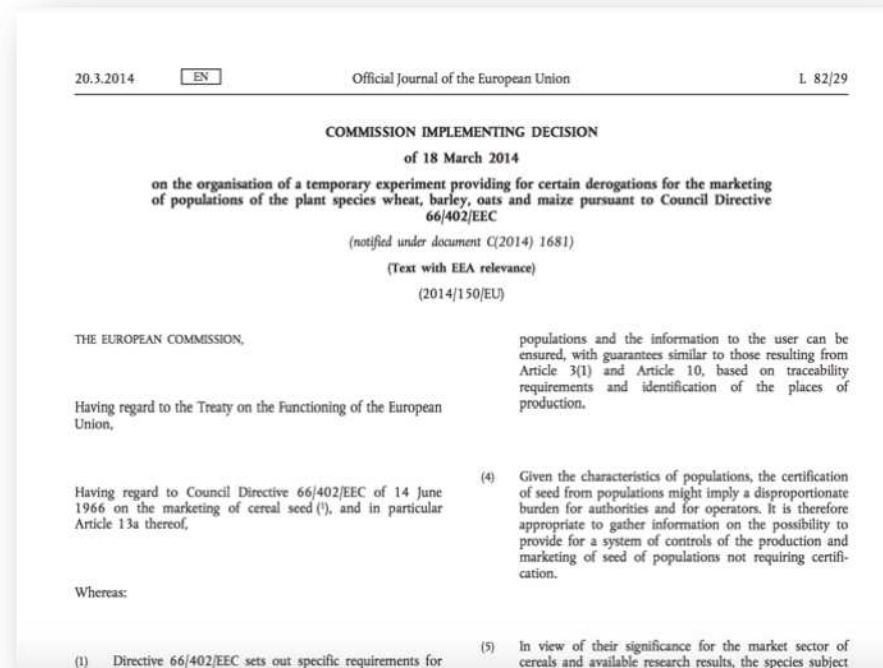
- Wolfe's idea on barley population was adopted at large scale in 1980's East Germany (GDR), **reaching ~90% of malting barley** cultivated area with **drastic drop in fungicides use**.
- Wolfe's **bread wheat CCP** (Wakelyns YQ) developed in 2002 at JIC and ORC was the first cereal population registered for seed marketing under temporary experiment **2014/150/EU**

# Organic Heterogeneous Material: The legal framework

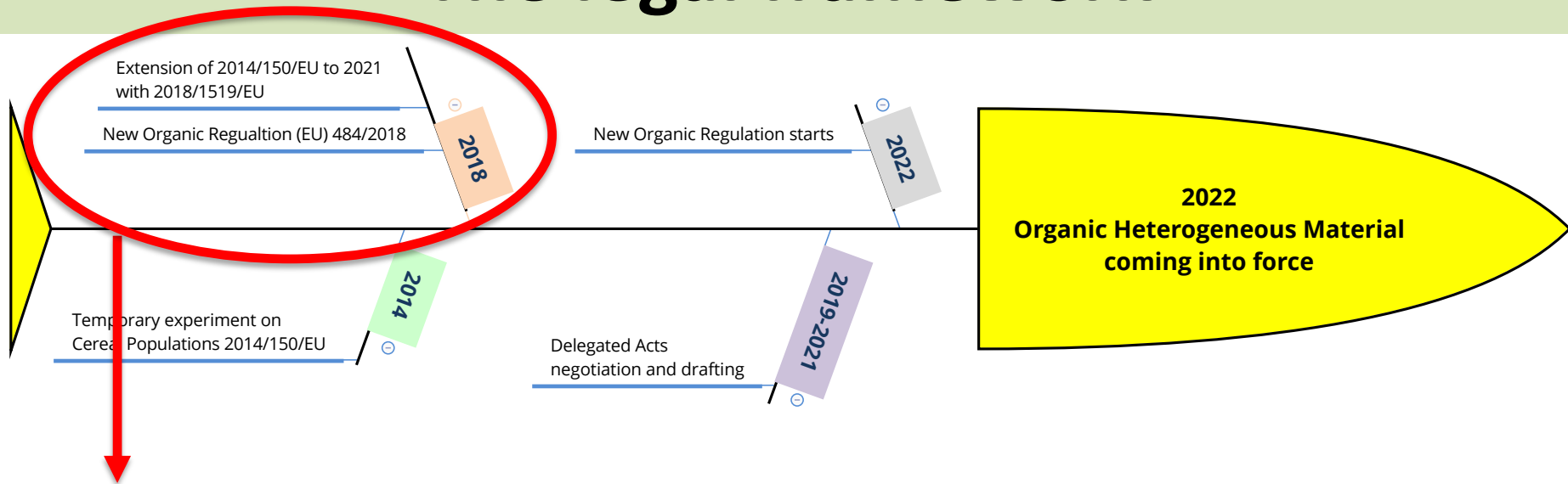


## • Participating Member States:

- Denmark
- France
- Germany
- Latvia
- Italy
- The Netherlands
- UK

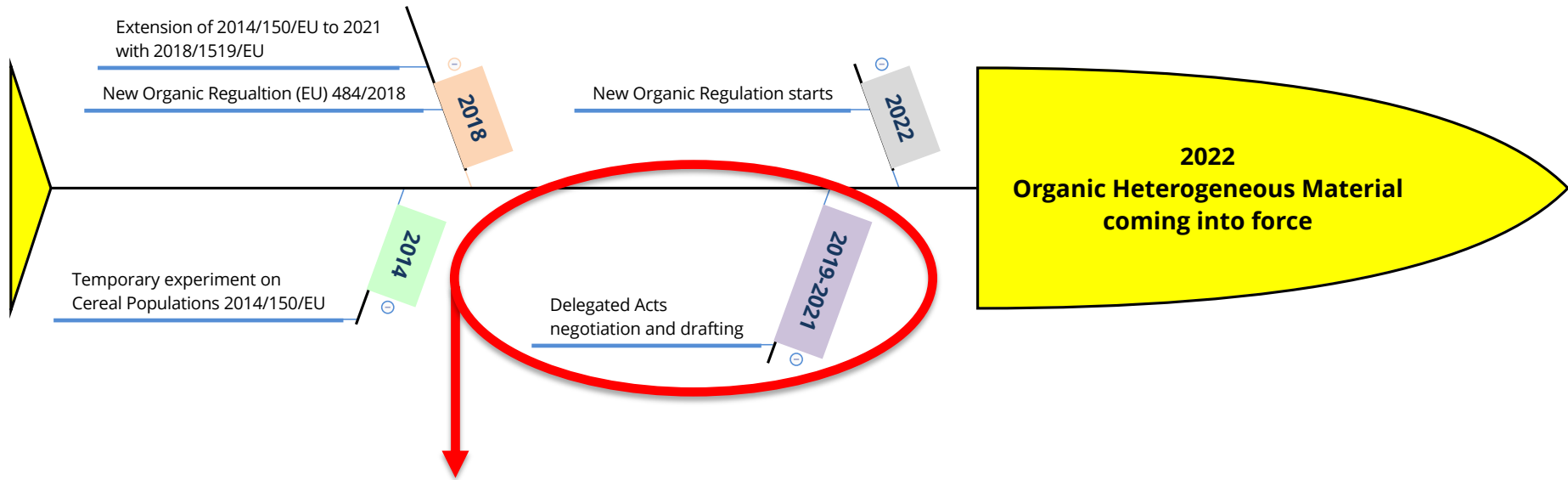


# Organic Heterogeneous Material: The legal framework



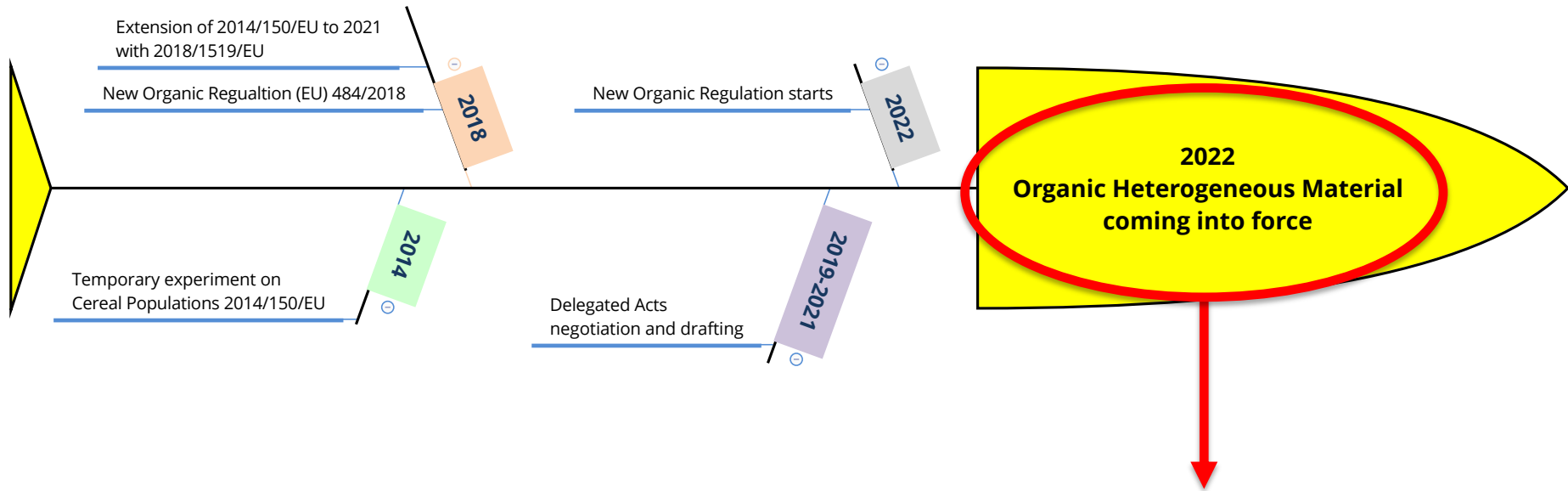
- **2018: Organic Heterogeneous Material** is introduced as a new seed category by the New Organic Regulation (art. 3 & 13) approved by the European Parliament
- **2019: Hungary** joins the **Temporary Experiment**

# Organic Heterogeneous Material: The legal framework



- The results of the **Temporary Experiment** have been informing the Commission in drafting the Delegated Acts regulating OHM seed registration and certification
- Negotiation between **Commission** and all actors involved (**IFOAM-EU, ECO-PB, Arche Noah & Seed Savers groups**)
- Delegated acts published on 7.5.2021 **C(2021) 3163**

# Organic Heterogeneous Material: The legal framework



- **OHM registration** through a simple **notification process**
- Seed **health and quality** must meet existing seed directives' standards
- **Emphasis on traceability** (record keeping for at least 5 years for maintenance and seed production)

# Italian cereal populations

## Registered Italian populations as of 31 December 2019

➤ **Soft (bread) wheat: 8**

➤ **Durum wheat: 6**

➤ **Barley: 1**



❖ **Emilia-Romagna:** Bioadapt/Oroset, Bio<sup>2</sup>, Appenbio

❖ **Tuscany:** ICARDA-SOLIBAM tenero Floriddia, Mix tenero Toscana Pa1, Mix tenero Toscana 1, **Evoldur**, **Mix duro Toscana Pa1**, **ICARDA-SOLIBAM duro Floriddia**

❖ **Umbria:** **Barley Mix 48**

❖ **Molise:** **ICARDA-SOLIBAM duro Petacciato**

❖ **Basilicata:** Carosella, **ICARDA-SOLIBAM duro Recchia**

❖ **Sicily:** ICARDA-SOLIBAM tenero Li Rosi, **Angelo**

# Italian cereal populations

## Certified seed produced in 2020

BREAD WHEAT	ORGANIC (KG)	NON-ORGANIC (KG)
MIX TOSCANA PA1		26,700.00
MIX TOSCANA 1	18,247.00	6,990.00
BIOADAPT	14,968.00	
BIO2	1,395.00	
APPENBIO		379
ICARDA-SOLIBAM LI ROSI	17,000.00	
ICARDA-SOLIBAM FLORIDDIA	18,700.00	
CAROSELLA (ALSIA BASILICATA)	4,150.00	6,050.00
PEOPLE		3,600.00
<b>TOTAL BREAD WHEAT</b>	<b>74,460.00</b>	<b>43,719.00</b>
<b>DURUM WHEAT</b>		
ICARDA-SOLIBAM PETACCIATO	366.00	
EVOLDUR13A	8,728.00	
MIX TOSCANA PA1	2,624.00	
<b>TOTAL DURUM WHEAT</b>	<b>11,718.00</b>	
<b>BARLEY</b>		
MIX48 (UNIVERSITY OF PERUGIA)		1,300.00

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# ICARDA-SOLIBAM Bread Wheat CCP

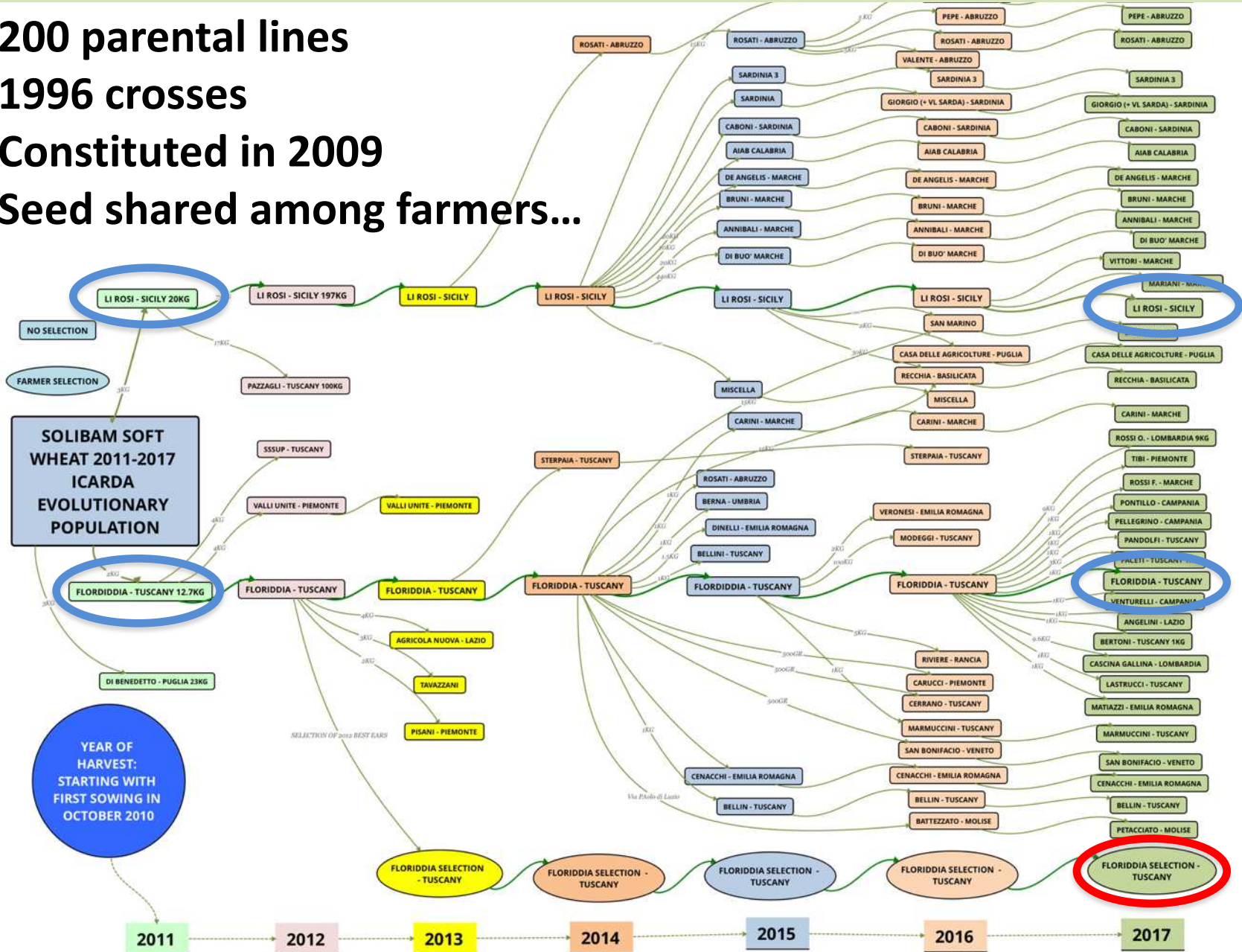
The original evolutionary population (EP) was created in 2009 at ICARDA, Syria by Salvatore Ceccarelli and Stefania Grando mixing **1996 crosses** (F2, F3 and F4).

In Italy it has been cultivated in **2 organic farms** continuously since 2010-2011 evolving in 2 distinct EPs: **ICARDA-SOLIBAM Floriddia** in Tuscany and **ICARDA-SOLIBAM Li Rosi** in Sicily.



# ICARDA-SOLIBAM Bread Wheat CCP

- 200 parental lines
- 1996 crosses
- Constituted in 2009
- Seed shared among farmers...



# ICARDA-SOLIBAM Bread Wheat

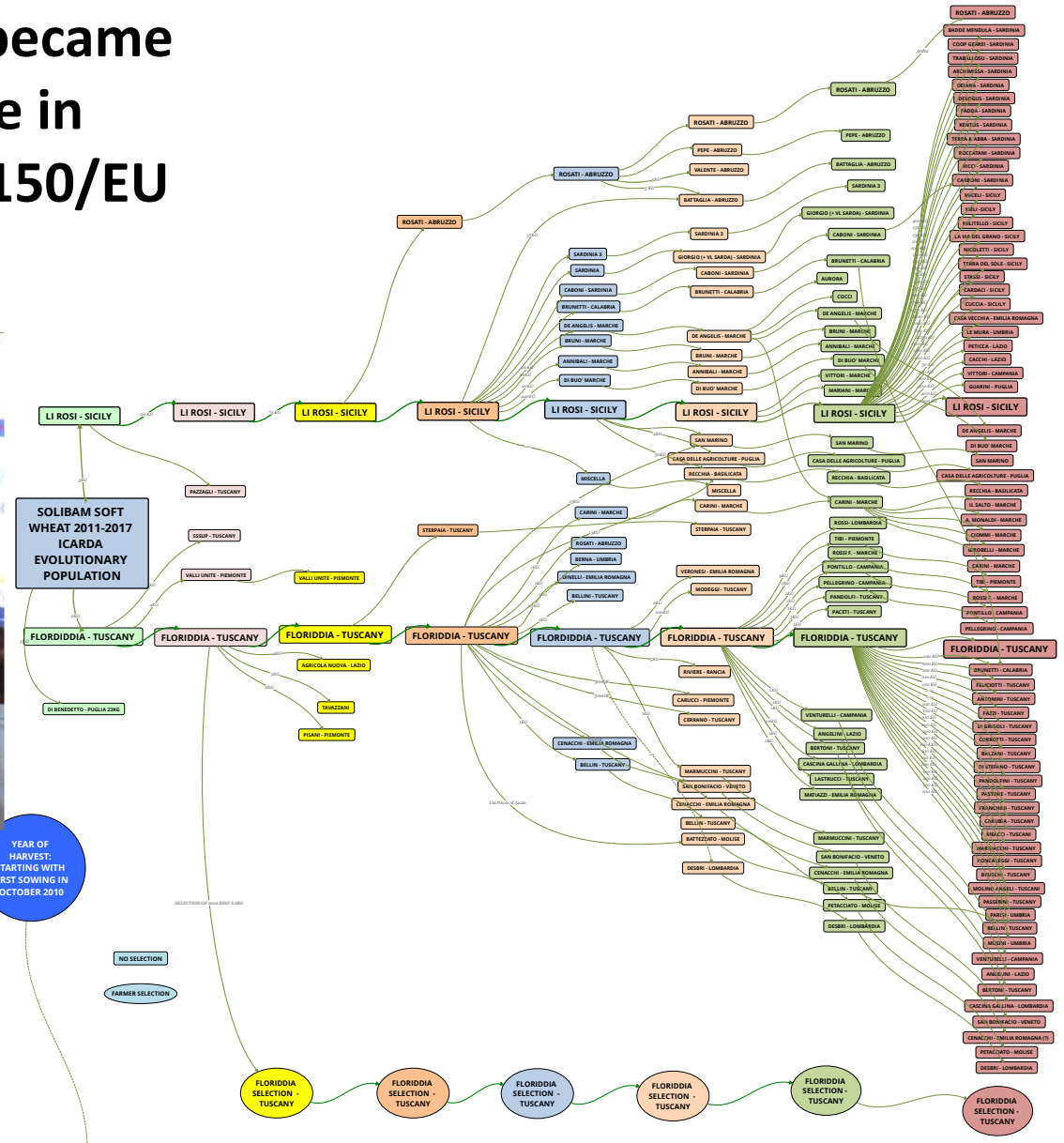
...until certified seed became commercially available in 2017 thanks to 2014/150/EU



DI BENEDETTO - PUGLIA 23KG

YEAR OF HARVEST:  
STARTING WITH  
FIRST SOWING IN  
OCTOBER 2010

YEAR OF HARVEST:  
STARTING WITH  
FIRST SOWING IN  
OCTOBER 2010



# ICARDA-SOLIBAM bread wheat seed sales

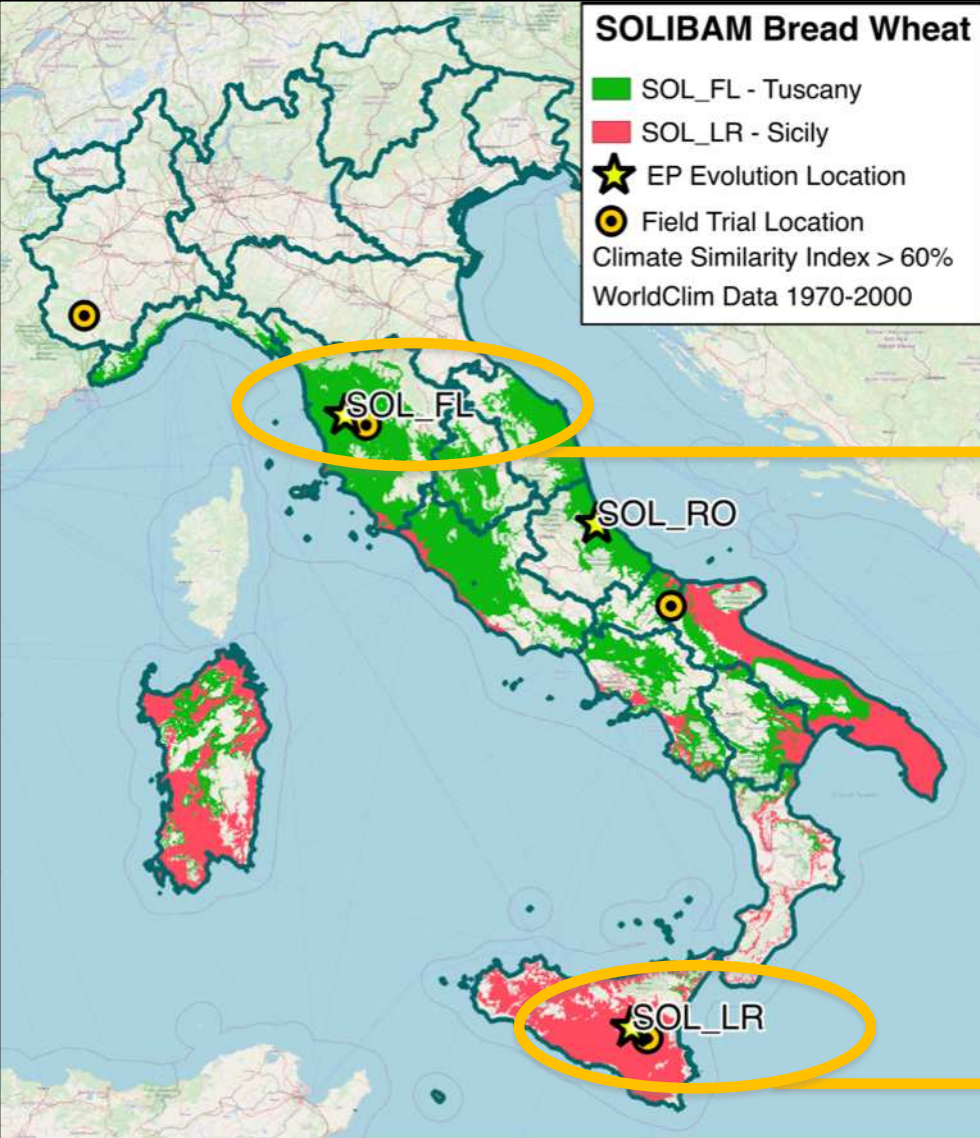
- 2017 🖱️ 2 tonnes
- 2018 🖱️ 2.4 tonnes
- 2019 🖱️ 6 tonnes
- 2020 🖱️ 18.6 tonnes



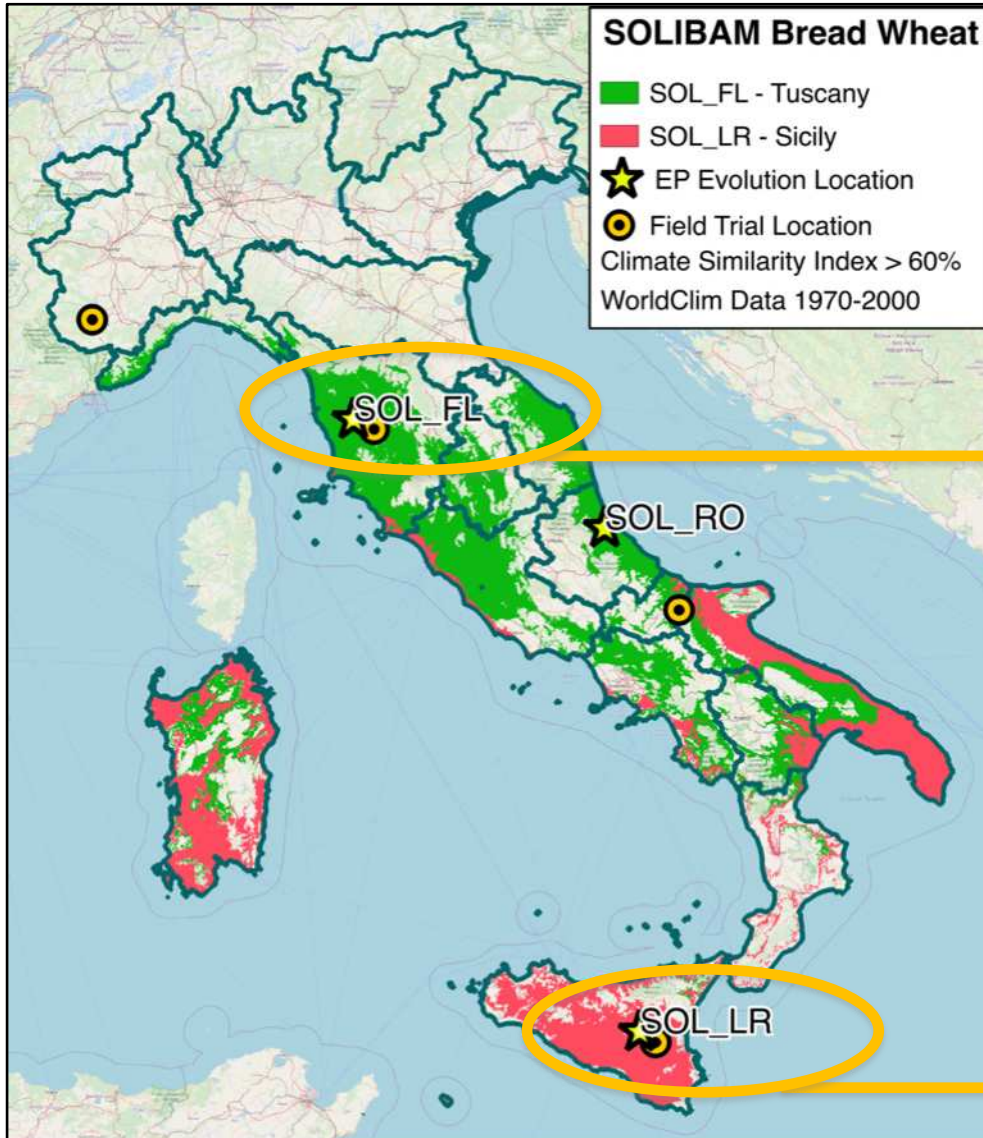
- 2017 🖱️ 11.4 tonnes
- 2018 🖱️ 15.2 tonnes
- 2019 🖱️ 23.7 tonnes
- 2020 🖱️ 17 tonnes



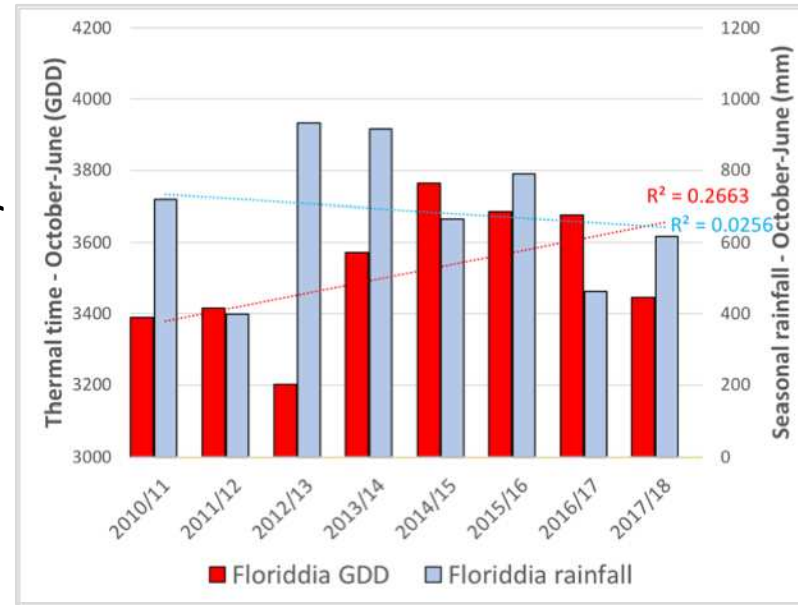
# Climate, OHM and Specific Adaptation



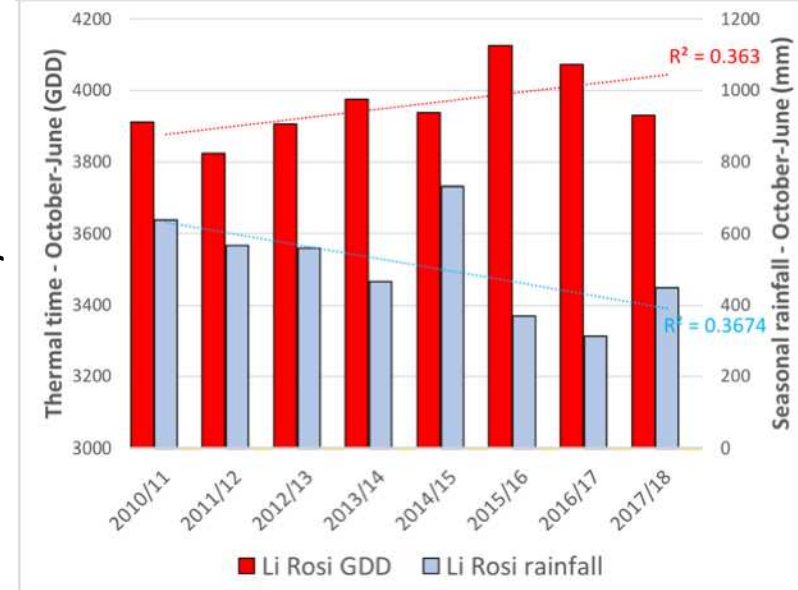
# Climate, OHM and Specific Adaptation



Tuscany

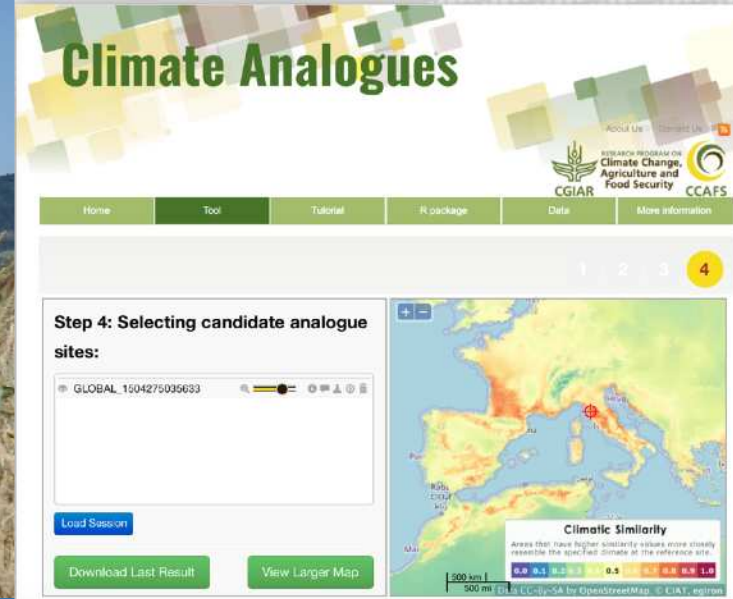


Sicily



# Materials and Methods

- 14 entries
- 4 locations
- 4 years
- **336 evaluators**
- **Spatial analysis**
- **GGE Biplot**



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journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/eja](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/eja)



## Yield, yield stability and farmers' preferences of evolutionary populations of bread wheat: A dynamic solution to climate change

Riccardo Bocci<sup>a</sup>, Bettina Bussi<sup>a</sup>, Matteo Petitti<sup>a</sup>, Riccardo Franciolini<sup>a</sup>, Virginia Altavilla<sup>a</sup>, Gea Galluzzi<sup>a</sup>, Paolo Di Luzio<sup>b</sup>, Paola Migliorini<sup>c</sup>, Sandra Spagnolo<sup>d</sup>, Rosario Floriddia<sup>e</sup>, Giuseppe Li Rosi<sup>f</sup>, Modesto Petacciato<sup>g</sup>, Vincenzo Battezzato<sup>h</sup>, Andrea Albino<sup>i</sup>, Giovanni Faggio<sup>j</sup>, Carlo Arcostanzo<sup>j</sup>, Salvatore Ceccarelli<sup>a,\*</sup>

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<sup>c</sup> University of Gastronomic Sciences, Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, 9, 12060, Pollenzo, Bra (CN), Italy

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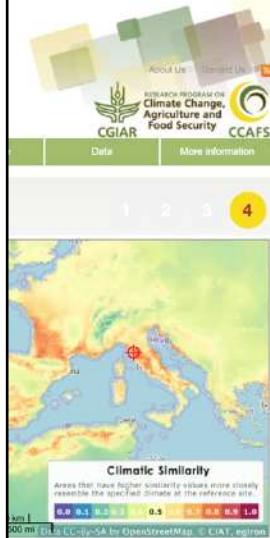
### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

Evolutionary plant breeding  
Heterogeneous plant populations  
Climate change  
Landraces  
Local adaptation  
Biodiversity  
Farmers' preferences  
Directional selection

### ABSTRACT

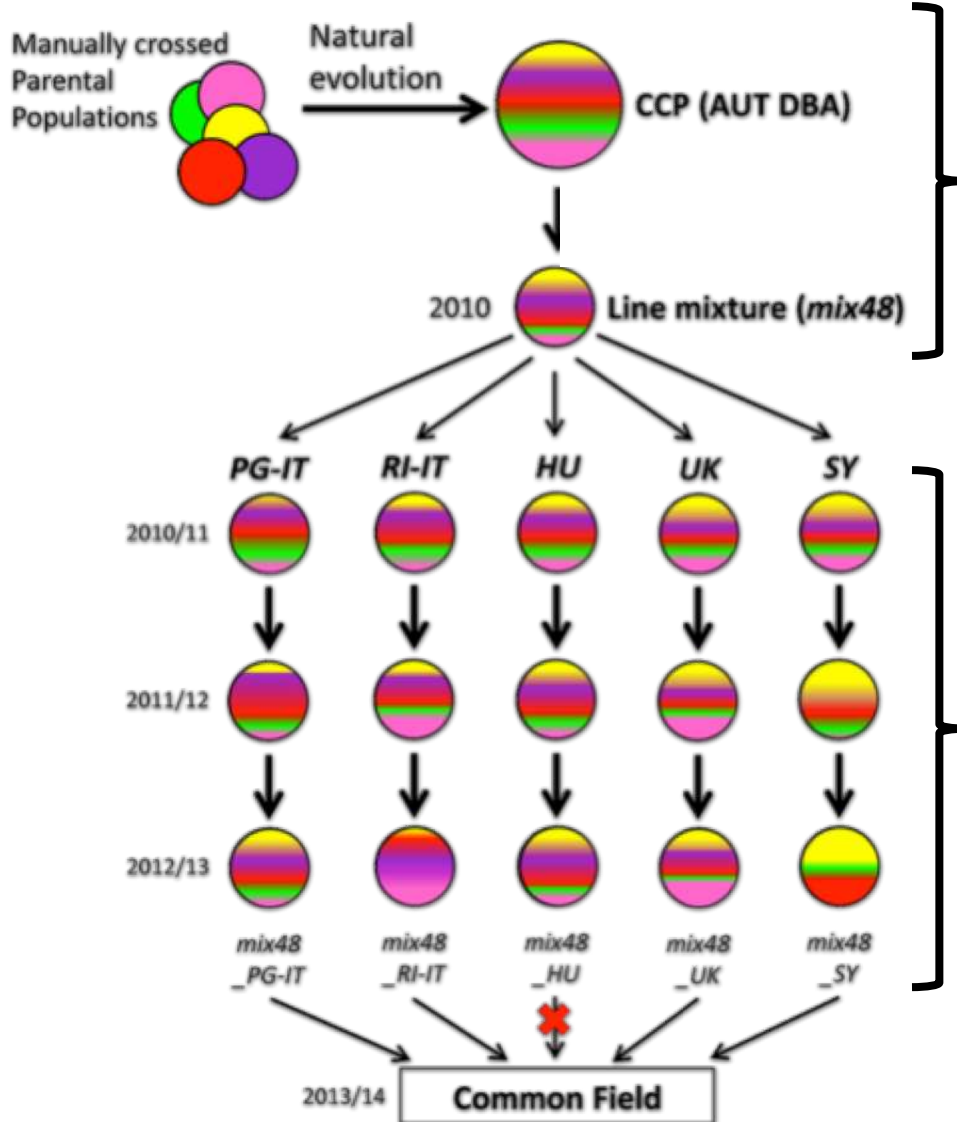
The role of biodiversity in plant breeding needs to be reconsidered to cope with the complexity, location specificity and combined challenges of climate change, human population increase, human health and food security, safety and sovereignty. From a biological viewpoint, heterogeneous plant populations derived from evolutionary plant breeding may address most of these grand challenges. Field trials were conducted over four years and four locations under organic farming conditions to test the hypothesis that evolutionary populations planted in contrasting locations, evolve adapting to the local conditions and becoming distinct from one another. The experiment also included mixtures, landraces and a modern variety of bread wheat. The results show evidence of divergent selection for grain yield under the sole effect of natural selection by which the best performing evolutionary populations yielded as much or more than the commercial variety. Farmers' selection within one of the evolutionary populations was effective in improving yield and yield stability above those of the original population across years and locations. Farmers' preference was not always associated with grain yield and was not gender dependent. We conclude that evolutionary populations are able to gradually evolve, adapting to each environment in which their seed is multiplied, reaching high and stable yield levels thus ensuring income to farmers, both as seed and as grain.







# Genetic diversity of EBP materials



Initial population  
(AUT DBA & *mix48*)  
genetic diversity

*mix48* evolution  
under contrasting  
conditions (PG-IT, RI-  
IT, HU, UK & SY)  
genetic changes

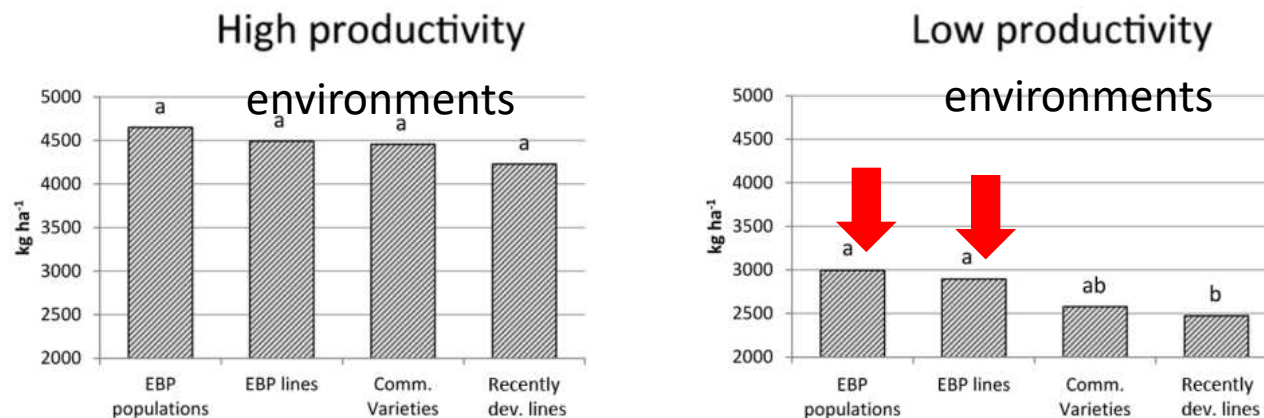


# Agronomic evaluation of EBP materials: YIELD

- Multi-environmental trials (4 years, 3 different locations)
- 2 populations : AUT DBA and *mix48*
- 13 EBP pure lines: selected from the EBP populations
- 9 controls: commercial varieties & recently developed lines selected through conventional breeding programs

## EBP populations and EBP pure lines characterised by **HIGH YIELD**

Controls characterized by lower yield in “low productivity” environments ( $P \leq 0.05$ )



# Agronomic evaluation of EBP materials: YIELD

- Multi
- 2 pop
- 13 EB
- 9 con
- breed

EBP



Field Crops Research 204 (2017) 76–88



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Field Crops Research

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/fcr](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/fcr)



Original Paper

## Evolutionary breeding for sustainable agriculture: Selection and multi-environmental evaluation of barley populations and lines



Lorenzo Raggi<sup>a</sup>, Simona Ciancaleoni<sup>a</sup>, Renzo Torricelli<sup>a</sup>, Valeria Terzi<sup>b</sup>,  
Salvatore Ceccarelli<sup>c</sup>, Valeria Negri<sup>a,\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Dipartimento di Scienze Agrarie, Alimentari e Ambientali (DSA3), Università degli Studi di Perugia, Borgo XX Giugno 74, 06121 Perugia, Italy

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#### Keywords:

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Evolutionary breeding

Sustainable agriculture

Yield stability

GxE interaction

### ABSTRACT

Varieties specifically bred for organic and low-input agriculture are presently lacking. A strategy to develop them is evolutionary breeding that relies on a combination of natural and artificial selection. This study investigated the ability of an evolutionary breeding program, carried out over 24 years, to select barley (*Hordeum vulgare* L.) heterogeneous populations and lines characterized by high grain yield and yield stability across different environments under organic and low-input conditions. A Composite Cross population (named AUT DBA) was initially developed by crossing Parental Populations highly productive under low-input conditions in Central Italy and diverse for several morpho-phenological traits. The AUT DBA was then multiplied for nine years under a low-input management system without any artificial selection.

Three cycles of artificial selection (from 2007/08 to 2009/10) were conducted by selecting within the AUT DBA plants characterized by high grain yield potential and a favourable combination of traits relevant for organic and low-input agriculture.

A new population (a lines mixture named *mix48*) was then developed by mixing the highest yielding and the most diverse lines; 13 lines were also selected. AUT DBA, *mix48* and the 13 lines were evaluated for four successive years in multi-environmental trials carried out under different pedo-climatic conditions and management systems (organic and low-input) and using nine different lines, selected under high input conditions, as controls.

For each of the 24 entries (i.e. the two populations, the 13 selected lines and the nine controls) grain yield was recorded, and yield stability evaluated by using AMMI analysis, Shukla's stability variance and Environmental variance. Average yield and yield stability indexes were calculated over all Environments and for low and high productive Environments, respectively. Finally, the effects on yield of climatic and soil characteristics were evaluated by using a reduced rank factorial regression analysis.

The grain yield of the AUT DBA and *mix48* populations were significantly higher than four of the nine

entional  
ed by

# Moving forward...more crop diversity

- 1 ox-heart tomato composite cross population
- 4 locations
- 2 years participatory selection
- 1 year comparative trials

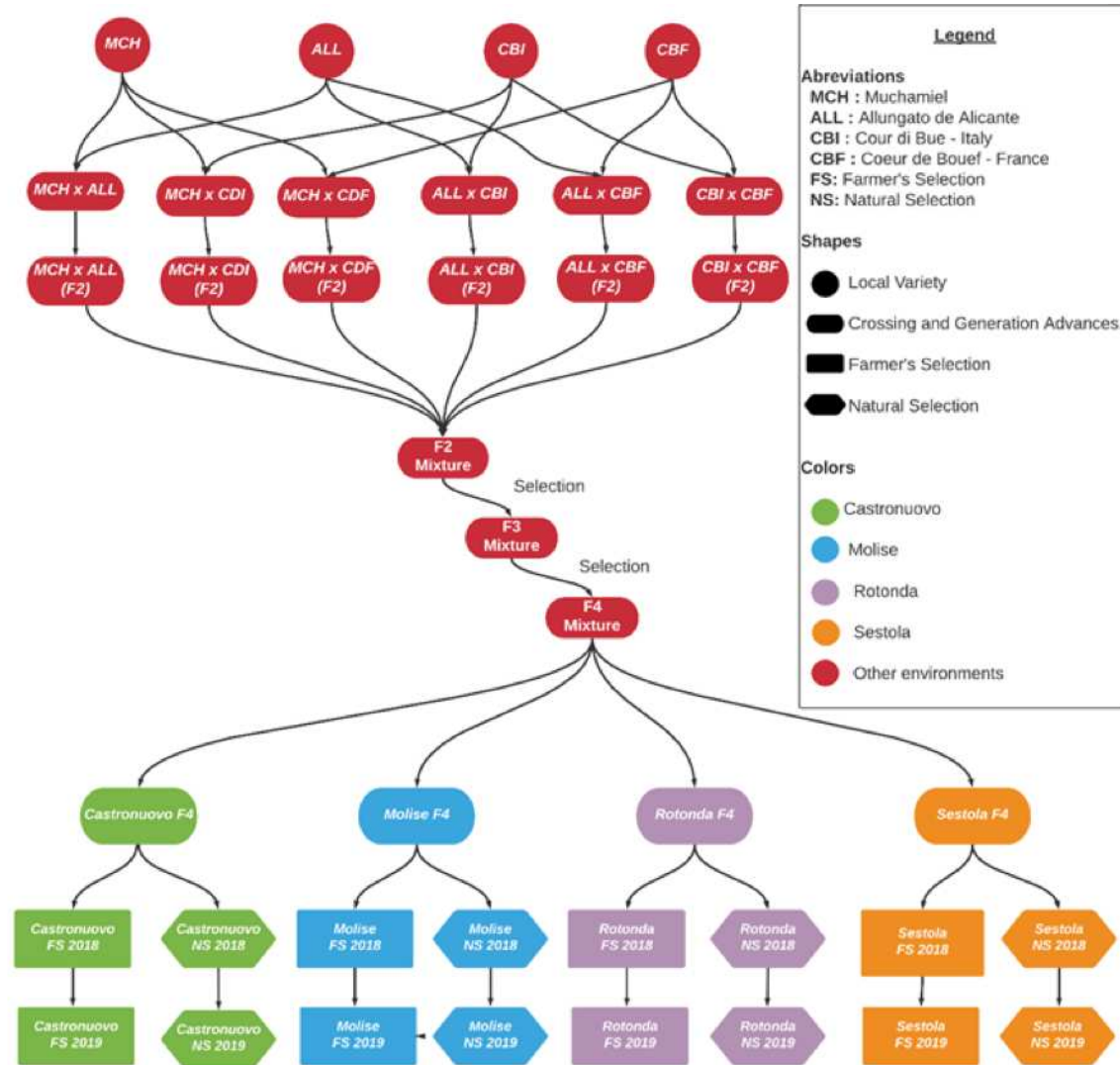


		CdB8-Allongée d'Alicante	CdB1-Muchamiel	CdB4-Cuor di bue	CdB3-Cœur de Bœuf
Plant	Country	Spain	Spain	Italy	France
	Cycle	Long	Medium	Short	Medium
	Strength	3	4	1	3
	Fruit Load	5	4	3	2
	Growth	Indeterminatrd	Determinated	Indeterminatrd	Indeterminatrd
Fruit	Other	Regular truss			
	Shape	Rectangular	CdBP c4	CdBP c1	CdBC
	Average Weight	150-190	190-250	190-250	190-250
	Green shoulder	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Coloration	Red	Light red	Light red	Light red
	Other	Homogeneity	Firmness	Shape	Shape

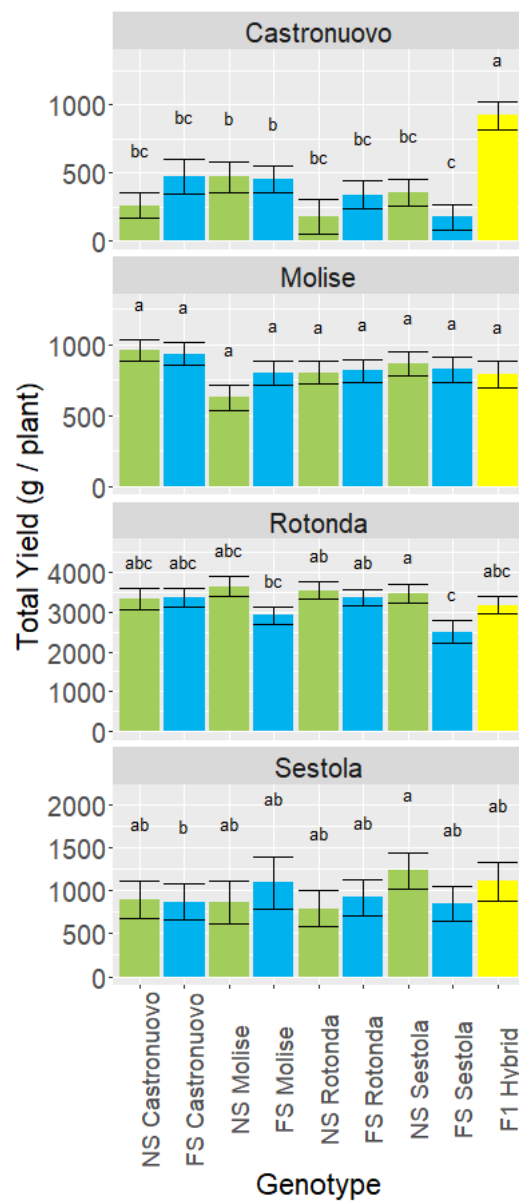
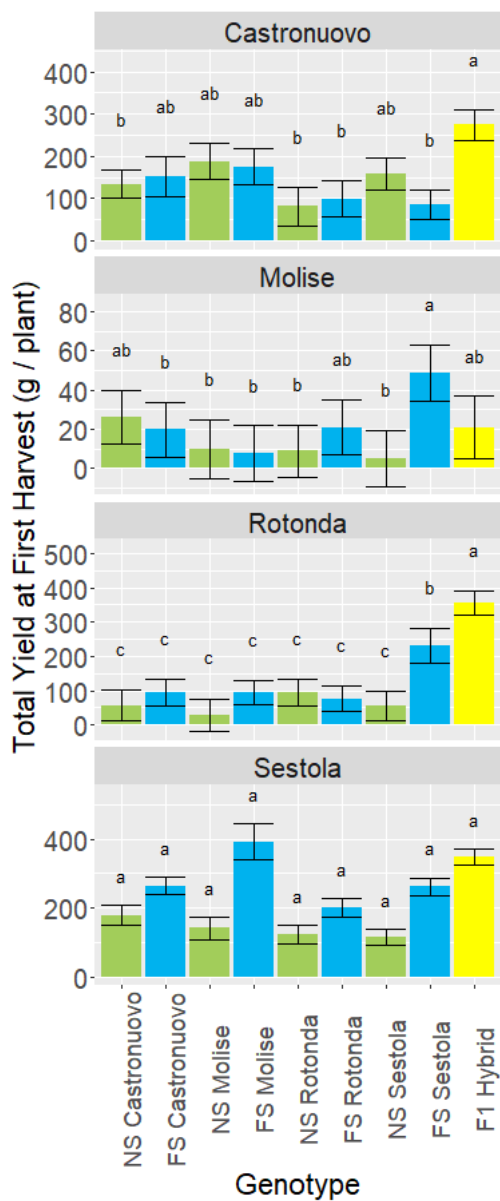
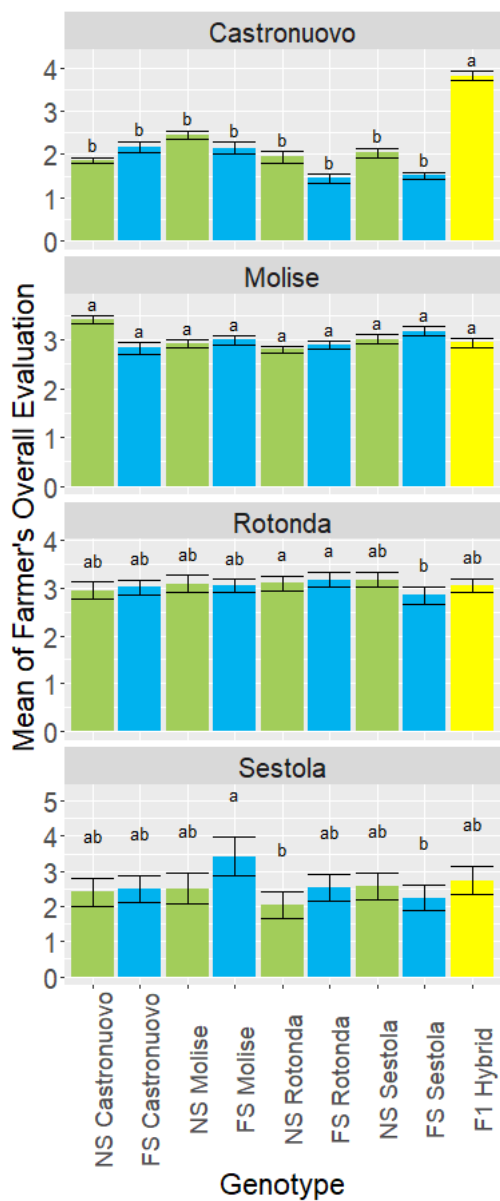


# LIVESEED tomato – RSR

Starting material: tomato CCP obtained by crossing four local varieties selected for suitability under organic management



# LIVESEED tomato – RSR



**Population Type**

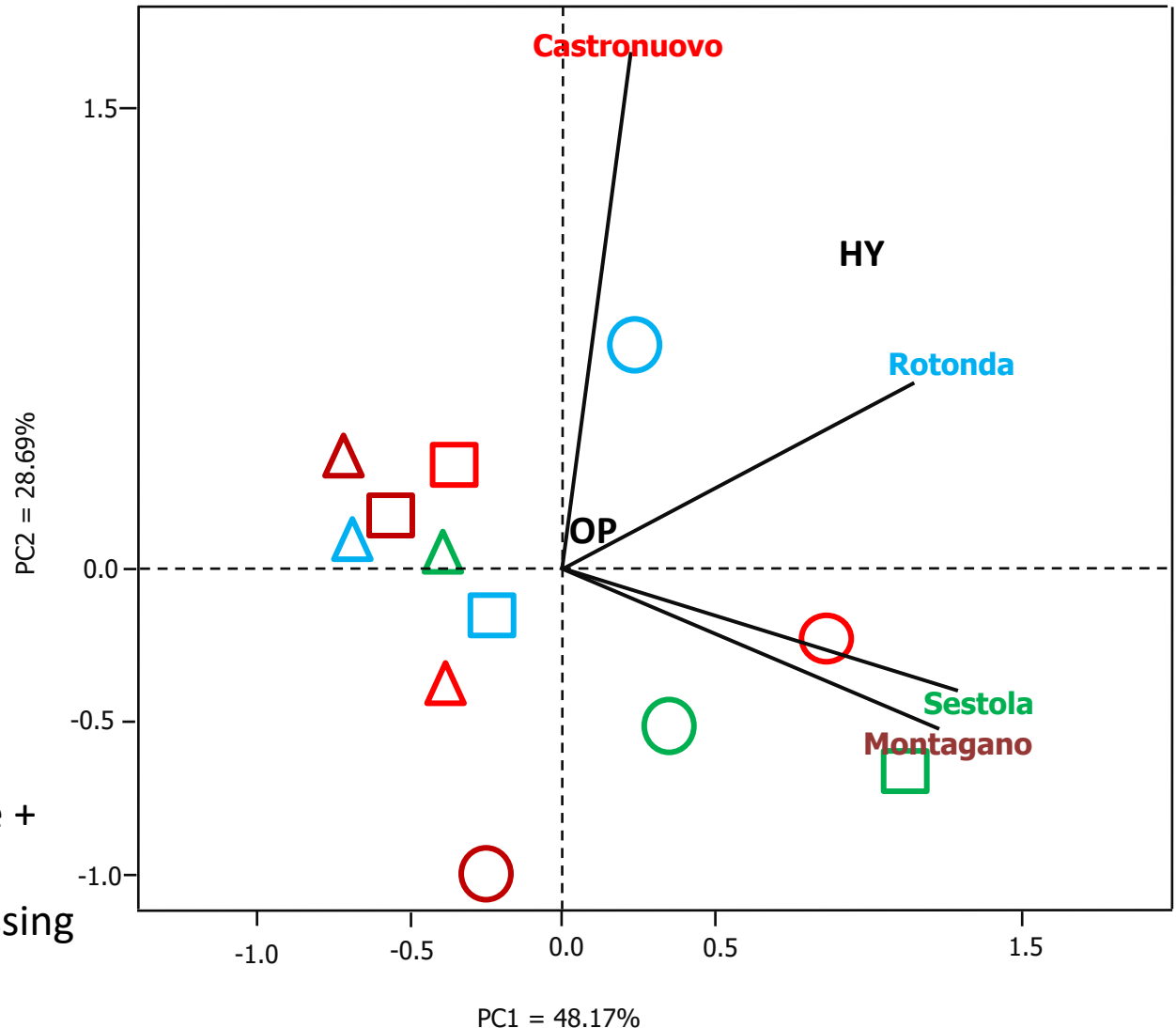
- Farmer's Selection
- Natural Selection
- Modern Hybrid

# LIVESEED tomato – RSR

**First harvest\*** (adjusted for missing plants)\*\*

- △ Random
- Farmer Selection
- Local Check
- OP Open Pollinated
- HY F1 Hybrid

Rotonda  
Sestola  
Montagano  
Castronuovo



\***Total production** (marketable + non marketable yield)

\*\*Combined ANOVA using missing plants as co-variate

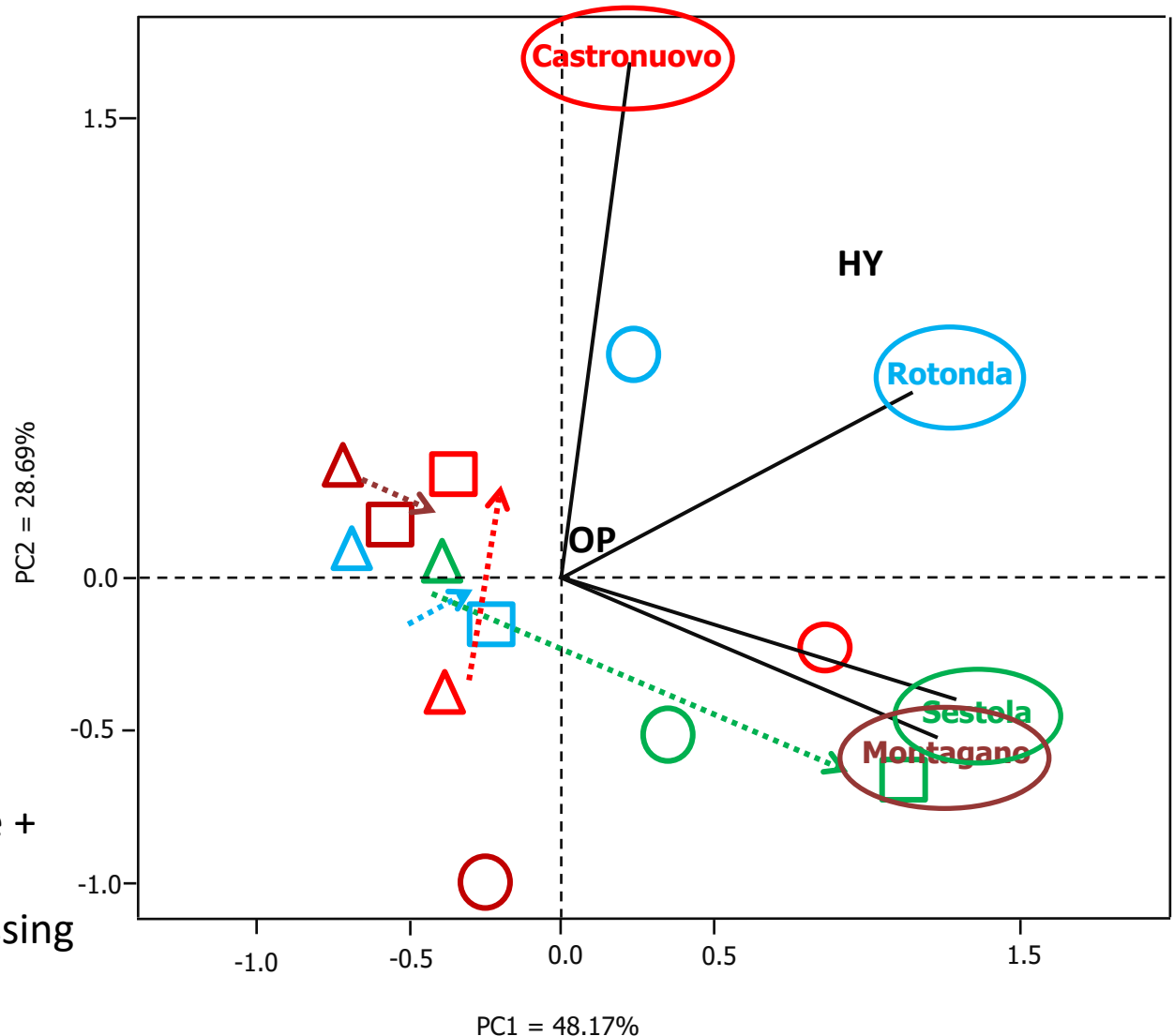


# LIVESEED tomato – RSR

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Rotonda  
Sestola  
Montagano  
Castronuovo



\*Total production (marketable + non marketable yield)

\*\*Combined ANOVA using missing plants as co-variate

# LIVESEED tomato – CREA-OF

- **MAGIC tomato population derived from eight parental lines (ISI sementi)**
- **Participatory selection in 3 Organic farms**



# LIVESEED tomato – CREA-OF

- MAGIC
- eight pa
- Particip



Article

## Multi-Parental Advances Generation Inter-Cross Population, to Develop Organic Tomato Genotypes by Participatory Plant Breeding

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**Abstract:** A Multi-parent Advanced Generation Intercross (MAGIC) tomato population was developed by crossing eight founder lines chosen to include a wide range of variability. The lines were previously genotyped by a genotyping by sequencing approach. The MAGIC population was used to develop genotypes with important agronomic traits and to perform the Participatory Plant Breeding (PPB). Among the 400 plants of generation 4 (G4) of the MAGIC population cultivated in an organic field experiment, 22 individuals were phenotypically selected and a molecular analysis was done for both presence of resistance genes and fruit shape (marker assisted selection) on G5 seedlings. Three selected plants showed both the pyramiding gene of resistance to the main diseases and the *ovate* gene for pear shape typology. The 400 G10 stable lines that obtained from single seed descent will represent an important genetic resource for the tomato scientific community. The MAGIC population G4 was also cultivated in three organic farms located in North, Central and South Italy to carry out the PPB. The plants showed significant phenotypic differences in development, productivity and fruit color. This variability was used to select families of tomato adapted to low input crop management, different environments, agricultural practices and market conditions.

**Keywords:** MAGIC development; organic agriculture; participatory plant breeding; tomato selection and seed production; biotic stress tolerance; marker assisted selection

### 1. Introduction

In the last years, the application both of intensive agronomical practices and cropping systems contributed to the progressive worsening of environmental conditions, induced by large application of deep soil tillage, inappropriate utilization of inorganic fertilizers and single-crop farming, especially of horticultural plants. Consequently, phenomena of soil fertility deterioration, nitrate losses, water pollution and soil compaction have often been observed. On this matter, there are many studies assessing the environmental sustainability of different cropping systems [1–3]. To overcome these problems a combination of good agricultural practices (GAP) and innovative plant breeding is needed. Particularly, the organic agriculture production, which is increasing both in term of cultivation area and economic importance, is an example of GAP. It is based on conservative techniques that increase the soil organic matter and environmental sustainability and reduces the ecological risks, due to a lower use of synthetic products [2]. On the other hand, the plant breeding, that essentially relies on the utilization

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# Courgette population – CREA-OF

- **Cross Composite Population** created by Gabreile Camapelli of CREA-OF (Monsampolo del Tronto, Italy)
- Grown as a population with success by organic farmers in the Marche region



# Courgette population – CREA-OF

- **Participatory selection** of lines within the populations in an organic farm
- Well adapted to organic and no-tillage system



Dark green fruit selection



Light green fruit selection



# Dwarf bean population – CREA-OF

- Population (dynamic mixture) of common bean (dwarf) created by mixing **70 cultivars**
- **Selection** within the dwarf bean population according to **seed size**



2016 S1



2018 S4 large seed (sub population)



2018 S4 small seed (sub population)

# Chickpea population – CREA-OF

- Chickpea Population (Dynamic mixture created by mixing **45 cultivars**)



# MAIZE

- In partnership with **CREA-CI Bergamo** (2016 to 2020)
- **Participatory evaluation** of 17 local varieties and resulting half-dialled crosses (171 F2 and F3)
- Constitution of **RSR MAIZE CCP** using 17 crosses chosen by farmers. Locally adapted to two Italian regions (NE and South)





# OAT

Initiative of **CREA-CI Bergamo**  
in collaboration with RSR  
(2019-20)

- **Hulled oat CCP (36 parental lines)**
- **Hulless oat CCP (17 parental lines)**

Currently in multiplication  
under organic conditions



# In the pipeline...

- **LENTIL** in cooperation with Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna of Pisa. Starting from **63 local varieties** of CNR genebank of Bari
- **RICE** in cooperation with CARIPLO foundation. Starting from **246 Italian accessions** from CREA Vercelli and IRRI. Three dynamic mixtures in multiplication.



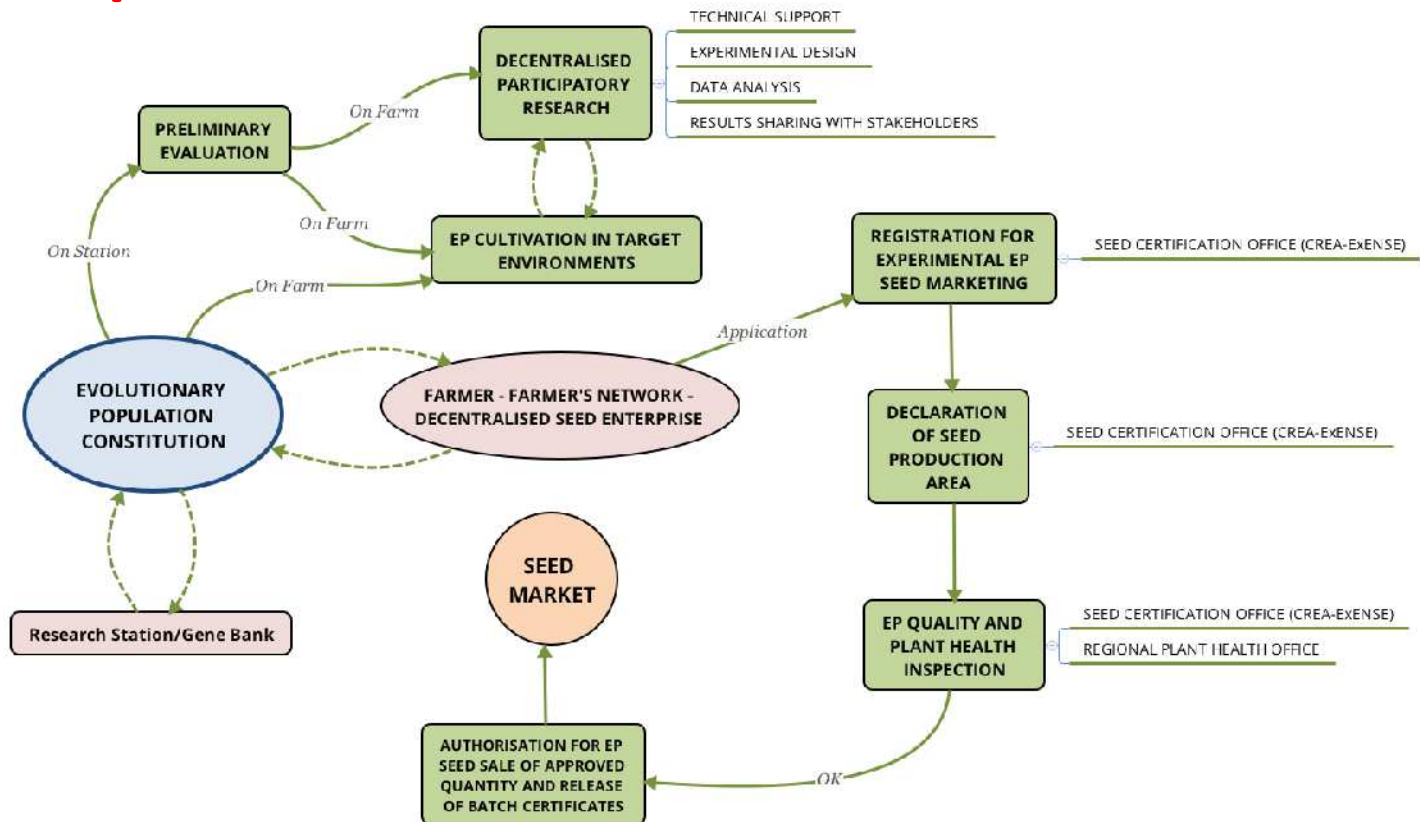
# In the pipeline...

- **WHITE LUPIN** in cooperation with CREA-ZA. Sweet white lupin CCP with potential drought and alkaline soil tolerance
- **SUNFLOWER** starting from existing open pollinated and local varieties. Initiated by EIP project Selianthus of Umbria region.



# Innovative seed systems for OHM

- Close cooperation with **Ministry of Agriculture** and **CREA-DC** during registration and certification process
- **Participatory** breeding with farmers through networks key to **high adoption** rates of OHM



# From seed to produce

- **Farmers' involvement and empowerment**
- **OSS seed label & pledge**



Queste sementi non sono protette da proprietà intellettuale, acquisendole hai il privilegio di utilizzarle in piena autonomia, con alcune limitazioni.



**Questa semente è il risultato di anni di ricerca partecipata.**



**SOLIBAM**  
TENERO FLORIDDIA POPOLAZIONE

**IN PARTICOLARE HAI:**

1. la libertà di riseminare le sementi in azienda;
2. la libertà di condividere o vendere le sementi ad altri con procedure di certificazione adatte a questo nuovo contesto;
3. la libertà di sperimentare e studiare le popolazioni e di condividere o pubblicare informazioni a loro relativi;
4. la libertà di selezionare o adattare le popolazioni, fare incroci con esse o usarle per costituire nuove linee e varietà.

**IN CAMBIO, TI IMPEGNI A:**

1. non limitare l'uso di queste sementi o dei loro derivati con brevetti o altri strumenti di proprietà intellettuale,
2. ad includere questa dichiarazione in ogni trasferimento di queste sementi o dei loro derivati;
3. a rendere disponibili i prodotti della ricerca fatta a partire da questa popolazione.

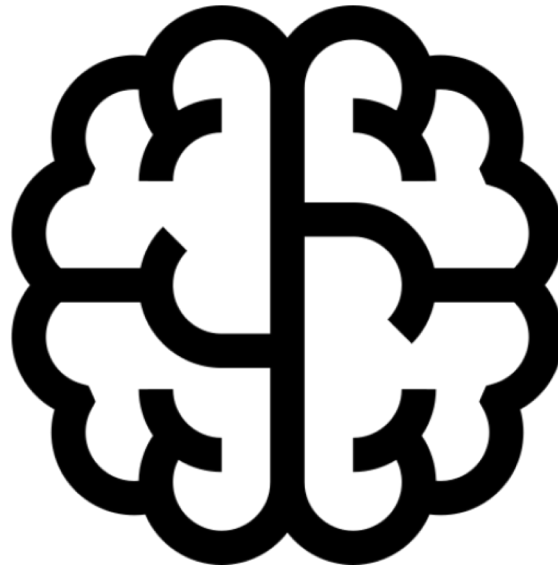
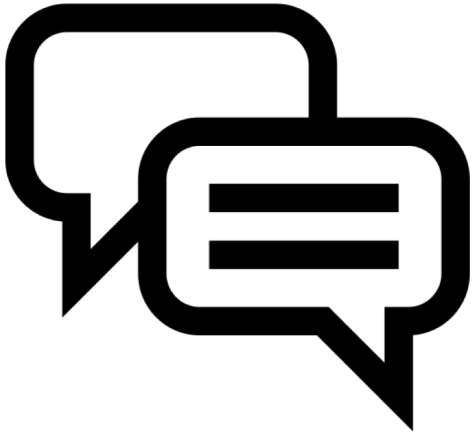
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- **Evolutionary Populations enter the seed market and the product value chain**

# Points for discussion...

- Innovative decentralised seed-systems integrated in different types of value-chains
- Seed quality and health
- Benefit sharing - financing research and breeding
- Tools to facilitate traceability and increase transparency
- Naming OHM cultivars and communicating the value of biodiversity to citizens and consumers



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**Thank you for your attention!**