



Statement

European Plant Science Organisation
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Access to Digital Sequence Information must remain open

Brussels, 26.6.2018

EPSO expresses its concerns regarding the activities pursuant to the decisions at the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (Decision XIII/16) and the Nagoya Protocol (NP) (Decision NP-2/14) to “*consider any potential implications of the use of digital sequence information (DSI) on genetic resources for the first three objectives of the CBD and the objective of the NP*”.

Digital Sequence Information (DSI) has been considered a common good since the advent of sequence data generation. Unrestricted access to sequence information was and is a major factor for the worldwide success of plant and animal research as well as plant breeding. It is an important part of the ‘Open Science’ principle. The ever-increasing amount of digital information from the widespread application of *omics technologies, which has been mainly funded by public money represents a superior resource for any kind of plant research.

EPSO is seriously concerned about attempts to extend Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) rules applying to genetic resources according to the Nagoya protocol to DSI. Such regulation would smother research activities world-wide. It is also expected to impinge on the interaction with developing countries. It will seriously impact the improvement of germplasm and thus put food safety in jeopardy.

In the view of EPSO, ABS obligations on DSI would rather be in contradiction with the three main objectives of the CBD as encumbered access and use of DSI would hinder or prevent bi- or multinational research projects and therefore disfavour developing countries in respect to ABS.

EPSO is convinced that the present mechanisms already in place are sufficient to warrant a fair and equitable benefit sharing. Thus, EPSO calls the convention of parties to carefully consider the above-mentioned concerns. Restricting open access to DSI is considered incompatible with the ethics of public research.

This statement was developed by Frank Hartung & Ralf Wilhelm, Andreas Graner and Peter Rogowsky and considered and approved by the EPSO Agricultural Technology Working Group upon request of the EPSO General Meeting in June 2018.

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Useful links

- EPPO: [Implementing the Nagoya Protocol by national legislation in the countries of Europe, statement](#), 3.7.2017,
- EPPO science advice to policy – e.g. on agricultural technologies: www.epsoweb.org/agricultural-technologies-wogr
- EPPO breaking news: www.epsoweb.org
- EPPO publications: www.epsoweb.org/archive-epso-publications-and-statements?981448774=1
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About EPPO

EPPO, the European Plant Science Organisation, is an independent academic organisation that represents more than 200 research institutes, departments and universities from 30 countries, mainly from Europe, and 3.300 individual Personal Members, representing over 26 000 people working in plant science. EPPO's mission is to improve the impact and visibility of plant science in Europe, to provide authoritative source of independent information on plant science including science advice to policy, and to promote training of plant scientists to meet the 21st century challenges in breeding, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, plant ecology and sectors related to plant science. www.epsoweb.org | EU Transparency Register Number 38511867304-09