

## **Preface for COST860 SUSVAR Discussion Documents**

Seven discussion documents were made during the SUSVAR Visions workshop ‘Sustainable cereal production beyond 2020: Visions from the SUSVAR<sup>1</sup> network’, Karrebæksminde, Denmark, 14-16 April 2008. At the workshop, one discussion documents was written for each of the topics mentioned below. In total 55 persons from 21 European countries participated in the process. The participants came from different disciplines: genetics, plant breeding, genetic resources, agronomy, plant pathology, soil science, biometry and system analysis, all specialised in the area of cereal production.

The approach taken at the workshop was to focus on envisioning the future of sustainable agriculture, especially cereal production. This was done by scientific creative thinking on the basis of possibilities in breeding, management and seed production and not on the basis of traditional problem solving. We followed a strategy commonly used in industrial management based on the premise “imagining the future is shaping the future”. The method “appreciative inquiry” was applied supported by a professional facilitator. Experience shows that this way of working sparks engagement and creativity and that progress and results can be reached within a short time. Focus was on the following topics of relevance to cereal production:

- Competition between food and bioenergy,
- Soil fertility management,
- Economical and legal conditions for variety improvement,
- Participation of stakeholders,
- Plant breeding strategies,
- Food and feed processing improvements,
- Sustainable land use.

The initial process was to visualise the most desirable future scenario for the seven essential topics in food and agriculture systems. This process was unhindered by no requirement for a market-driven goal. Each topic was discussed in relation to a broader socio-ecological system with a focus on the means to reach the desired and more sustainable outcomes. The next step at the workshop was to produce the discussion documents.

The final stage of the process is to connect the topics in a completed vision of cereal production within a future sustainable socio-ecological system. This is in progress by a group of key persons within the network, e.g. the working group leaders (in preparation for publication in a scientific journal).

*For more information, [www.cost860.dk](http://www.cost860.dk)  
or*

Chair of Network: Hanne Østergård, Risø National Laboratory for Sustainable Energy, Technical University of Denmark DTU, Roskilde, Denmark

---

<sup>1</sup> A European network for **Sustainable** low-input cereal production: required **varietal** characteristics and crop diversity