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ESA is the voice of the European seed sector. ESA's members are national associations and individual companies active in research, breeding, production and marketing of seeds of agricultural and ornamental plant species. ESA represents more than 7000 seed businesses in the EU and beyond.

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PRESS RELEASE

NEW STUDY PROVES HIGH VALUE OF PLANT BREEDING INNOVATION TO EU ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

A newly published study on the socio-economic value of plant breeding in Europe demonstrates strong positive impact on growth and employment, as well as environmental protection and biodiversity preservation.

At a high-level event hosted by MEP Jasenko Selimović in Brussels today, the European Technology Platform Plants for the Future (Plant ETP) presents its new study entitled *"The economic, social and environmental value of plant breeding in the Europe"*. Conducted by Hffa Research GmbH, the report provides quantitative and qualitative information that follows up on and supports a European Parliament report of 2014, which stated that *"the EU should play a leading role in the development of sustainable plant breeding techniques and in promoting agricultural and plant breeding research and practice"*.

According to the author, Steffen Noleppa, plant breeding activities in the EU in the last 15 years resulted in numerous clearly measurable benefits for the economy, the environment, and also society at large. Some key findings include:

- On average and across major crops cultivated in the EU, plant breeding contributes about 74% to total productivity growth, equal to an increase of yields by 1.24% per annum.
- Plant breeding increased primary agricultural product supply at levels of, for instance, 47 million tons of grains and 7 million tons of oilseeds, thus stabilising markets and reducing price volatility.
- Genetic crop improvement added over €14 billion to the EU's GDP since 2000.
- Plant breeding contributes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions: about 3.4 billion tons of direct CO₂ emissions were avoided in Europe thanks to plant breeding innovation over the last 15 years.
- Through plant breeding, Europe has been able to prevent biodiversity loss by preserving habitats the size of Latvia being turned into farmland.

Garlich von Essen, Secretary General of ESA, welcomes the release of the study: *"This study shows the importance of plant breeding innovation for the EU itself as well as its contribution to achieving overarching policy objectives like food security, environmental protection, and biodiversity preservation. Now we have quantitative data that proves this. It should be seen as a call for action to policy makers to assure both a science policy as well as a supportive regulatory environment that fosters and drives future innovation. In short, this report shows that supporting plant breeding innovation is first and foremost a great investment into our economic as well as our societal future."*

The full report (pdf) can be found on the Plant ETP website at: <http://bit.do/plantetp-HFFAResearch> Follow the conversation on Twitter: #PlantBreedingEU

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