

Media interview: Celebrating 25 Years of CPVO

In this [media interview](#) given to [European Seed Magazine](#), Martin Ekvad, President of the CPVO, speaks about the 25th anniversary of the Community Plant Variety Office.

- How the developments of the CPVO have been for the past 25 years?
- What are CPVO's international relations and outreach activities?
- What are the main achievements of the CPVO?
- What are the remaining challenges?
- How does BREXIT impacts the work of the CPVO?
- Views on molecular tools for plant variety testing?

Celebrating 25 Years of CPVO

PRESIDENT MARTIN EKVAD LOOKS BACK AND AHEAD. BY MARCEL BRUNS

The Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO) is an agency of the European Union, located in Angers, France. Its task is to administer the EU system of plant variety protection. The agency was created to encourage the creation of new plant varieties in the EU, through the provision of better intellectual property protection for plant breeders. The CPVO manages the largest regional system of plant variety rights, based on the 1991 Act of the UPOV Convention. In the world. Since the creation of the CPVO in 1995, the office has received over 68,000 applications — of which 15,000 were granted — with over 78,000 titles still currently in force. As the CPVO is celebrating its 25th anniversary, it was a good moment for European Seed to sit down with CPVO President Martin Ekvad.



Martin Ekvad

EUROPEAN SEED (ES): MARTIN, THE COMMUNITY PLANT VARIETY OFFICE IS NOW 25 YEARS IN EXISTENCE. HOW HAVE THE 25 YEARS BEEN?

MARTIN EKVAD (ME): The past 25 years have been an amazing journey! We feel privileged to contribute to the development of a fascinating sector, working with breeders and farmers who are passionate about new plant varieties, with experts from national public authorities and with innovative leaders from the industry.

But, the CPVO is above all a success story for all plant breeders who are granted, with one single application, a Community Plant Variety Right (CPVR) that protects them everywhere in the European Union. Let us not forget that, at the beginning of the 1990s, breeders had to file individual applications in every European country which provided for protection and where they wanted protection.

There were huge expectations from the industry at the time the CPVO was established in 1995 and, after six months, the CPVO had already received over 3,000 applications. That number dropped by half in 1996 and has increased year after year since then to exceed 3,500 applications in 2018 and 2019.

Today, there are almost 80,000 CPVR in force and the CPVO granted more than 3,000 titles in one calendar year for the first time ever in 2019 — with almost half of those being for ornamentals (48,8%), more than a quarter for agricultural crops (27,9%), and the rest for vegetables (18,2%) and fruits (5%).

I would draw two conclusions out of this. First, through the creation of a uniform and harmonised system in 1995, equality was built in all EU Member States, legal certainty was improved and barriers to entry within the internal market reduced. Second, the CPVO has become

the natural choice to plant breeders looking for plant variety protection in the EU.

ES: SO, IT IS A VERY GOOD RUNNING SYSTEM, AND OTHERS WISH TO COPY THAT. DO YOU CARRY OUT ANY OUTREACH?

ME: One of the key success factors of an organisation like the CPVO lies in its ability to work hand in hand with EU and national authorities, and to remain open and cooperative with a wide range of stakeholders from the private sector. We also cooperate with public authorities from outside the EU.

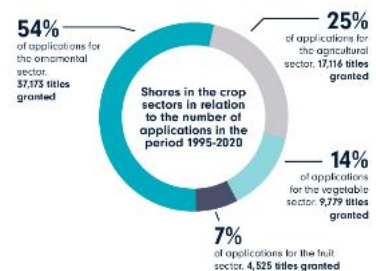
The CPVO has always been keen to involve breeders' organisations in its work. Events, EUROSEED and Plantium are observatories to the CPVO Administrative Council, and bilateral meetings are held with organisations such as AEPH and EUCOP on a yearly basis.

We participate in all sorts of events organised in close co-operation with the industry to inform relevant professionals and the public about the CPVR system. We are also partners in a series of ventures with other IP offices in the EU Member States as well as with the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO), European Patent Office (EPO), United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), China, African Regional Intellectual Property Organisation (ARIPO) and Organisation Africaine de la Propriété Intellectuelle (OAPI).

The CPVO has been directly involved in important international projects funded by the EU. For instance, we are currently providing know-how and training to the OAPI office and its member states so that they can learn from experiences made in the EU on technical and administrative procedures. The overall aim is to support efficient agricultural policies and food supply. Innovation and plant breeding are one important piece in achieving such goals. Uniform or at least similar IP systems in the EU and Africa contributes to these aims.

The CPVO is also active in the EU "new IP Key South-East (IPSEV) project, which aims at updating and harmonising IP standards with important EU trading partners. In this context, we have been promoting UPOV based PVR systems in China, Latin America and Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries and we have shared the experience gained in the EU. A similar project targeting Caribbean countries will also see CPVO's involvement in the coming months.

I believe that it is CPVO's duty to share our expertise gained through the 25-year-long experience of managing the CPVR system, and it is important that CPVO promotes the relevance of the 1991 Act of the UPOV Convention worldwide so that European consumers benefit from



CPVO BY THE NUMBERS

68,593
applications received
from 1995 to 2020

53,583
titles granted received
from 1996 to 2020

28,228
titles in force as of
01/01/2020

23,136
online applications
since 2010

higher quality products and European breeders can perform in a global level-playing-field.

ES: WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ARE THE MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE CPVO?

ME: One thing is sure, the creation of the EU plant variety right system in the mid 1990s was an excellent decision for Europe. One application, one language, one procedure and one decision for a Plant Variety Right title in all EU Member States, and while the CPVO administers the PVR system, the technical work is done by Examination Offices throughout the EU. An excellent way to share the risks and land!

The CPVR system, based on the 1991 Act of the UPOV Convention, is the largest and most efficient regional system for plant variety rights protection. Over the past 25 years, the CPVO processed nearly 70,000 applications and granted over 80,000 plant variety rights titles. Today, almost 30,000 new plant varieties are being protected in the European Union by the CPVO.

The CPVO has become a centre of excellence in the sense that technical and legal expertise from the EU Member States co-operate in the CPVO network and contribute to smart solutions available to all. I believe this role will become as digitalisation and the use of common IT tools are becoming increasingly important. To con-

Source: [European Seed](#).

You can also read the [digital version of the April 2020 issue of the European Seed magazine](#), in which you will find the CPVO article on page 32-36.