

A close-up photograph of a white lily flower. The petals are large and white, with some yellowish-green variegation near the center. The stamens are dark brown and curved, radiating from the center. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white.

# **In semente messis**

**Cicero (106-43 vChr.)**

**Mission and priorities of**

**Plantum NL**

# Plantum NL

The Netherlands is known throughout the world as being a leading creator and innovator of plant reproduction material. The Association of Plantum NL in the Netherlands represents the Agricultural and Horticultural breeding and propagating industry at government level and is a major force in developing international contacts for the Dutch plant breeders and plant propagators. Plantum NL was formed in 2001 and this document represents the vision of Plantum NL for the Breeder and Plant Propagator industry.

## Background of the industry

The Netherlands produces 9.2 billion euro worth of vegetables, agricultural, and ornamental crops. Production starts with seeds, cuttings and young plants produced by the five hundred Dutch Plantum NL members.

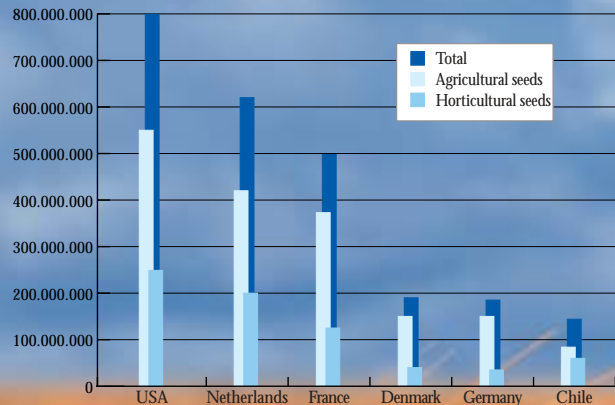
These companies breed, propagate (including propagation by tissue culture) and trade in seeds, cuttings, young plants and seed potatoes. The turnover of these Plantum NL members is 1.6 billion euro.

The Netherlands is a world market leader in the supply of propagation material for floriculture and seed potatoes. It is second to the United States as the largest exporter of agricultural seeds and horticultural seeds (see graph). In 2002, the Netherlands exported nearly 200 million US dollars worth of plant material for the floriculture trade. Exports are growing annually, in all species with the largest growth coming from the increased production of young plants raised from cuttings and seeds.

## Top countries exporting agricultural and horticultural seeds (exports in millions of US dollars)

The Dutch plant breeding and propagation industry employs 10,000 people. Many with high qualifications such as BSc, MSC, and PhD. Plant breeding is a creative discipline relying on modern technology that develops fast. Major investments are an integral part of the fast moving changes and the industry invests on average 14 percent of turnover in research and development each year to assist finding new varieties, developing faster breeding methods or innovative techniques for multiplying plants. Plantum NL considers the strength of the horticultural sector as an important incentive for this innovation and technology. A highly developed home market is therefore essential in strengthening the position of the Dutch plant breeding industry.

Top countries exporting agricultural and horticultural seeds (exports in millions of US dollars)



### Plantum NL's mission

Plantum NL is the Dutch association that represents the whole agricultural and horticultural plant reproduction material industry, which represents breeding, tissue culture, production and trading of seeds and young plants. Plantum NL is the professional partner for the industry in discussions with governments and other interest groups in the Netherlands and abroad. Plantum NL represents the industry at international seed and propagation federations and is a vital and important resource for individual members, to provide them with the most up to date information and advice.

*Plantum NL is the Dutch association that represents the whole agricultural and horticultural industry of the breeding and propagation companies and companies that trade in seeds and young plants. Plantum NL promotes the interests of its members in both a national and an international level.*

The association, formed by a merger in 2001, is developing into a leading international knowledge and information platform in the area of plant reproduction material and everything related to this form of business. Plantum NL gathers and distributes the latest knowledge to members by many forms of communication one of which is to organise meetings and seminars to discuss the important issues effecting the industry. In 2002 about 220 meetings and seminars were given.

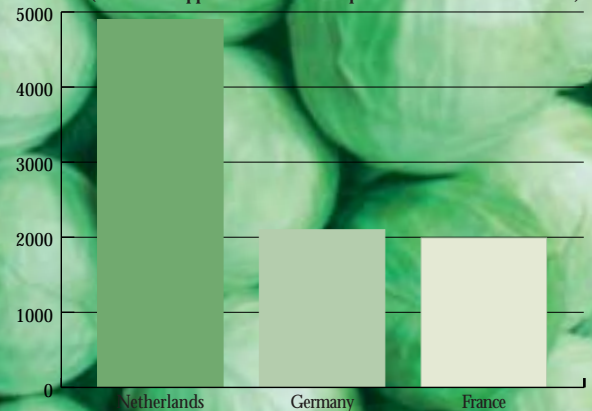
Plant breeders anticipate on questions from the society concerning plant breeding processes and breeding for resistance and lower energy requirements. Costumers have a high opinion of the quality of Dutch seed, cuttings and young plants and so Plantum NL promotes to maintain and raise this high profile of the trade's reputation.


### Better protection of breeders rights

In Europe, the largest number of applications for plant variety protection is submitted by the Netherlands. The CPVO (Community Plant Variety Office) received 4,878 Dutch applications for protection between April 1995 and November 2001. This means that the Netherlands accounted for well over 40% of all applications submitted.



Top applicants for plant variety protection in Europe (number of applications between April 1995 and November 2001).





Germany and France followed with 2,121 and 1,996 applications respectively (see graph).

Plant variety protection is the legal protection of a variety. This allows breeders protection from abuse and theft of their varieties and for the breeder to decide how to market its variety. The holder of the plant variety protection receives the exclusive right to propagate and trade in the cultivation material of its variety. Others may do this only if the protection holder consents and on payment of a certain fee. Many exporting countries and potential exporting countries lack proper regulations. Some countries have the regulations, but protection holders do not have enough power to exercise their rights. This means that others are able to reproduce and market new varieties without breeders receiving the necessary compensation to cover their investments.

Top applicants for plant variety protection in Europe (number of applications between April 1995 and November 2001).

*Plantum NL seeks plant variety protection priority by:*

- Better regulations to protect new varieties, so that breeders have more control to enforce their rights, such as the right to information, deduction of profits in the event of infringement (in addition to compensation), destruction of illegally produced protected plant material.
- The possibility of retaining the right to breed new varieties with protected plant material freely available on the market. This also applies to varieties protected by patent rights. Research and breeding must not be subject to the approval of the patent holder or payment of a fee.
- Promotion of the implementation and enforcement regulations in countries where there is no legislation on plant variety protection yet, based on the latest UPOV convention (1991).
- The development of an effective standard Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) for accessing genetic sources (wild varieties, primitive agricultural varieties) and corresponding compensation for countries (including developing countries).

*Plantum NL:*

- constantly consults with the Dutch Government, and the Plant Variety Protection Council, through European interest groups as well as with governments in other

countries and the European plant variety protection organisation, the Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO).

- presents its positions and the position of its members to the international convention organisation, UPOV, through the Dutch representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries and the International Seed Federation (ISF).
- together with its members, organises and supports courses and projects in countries seeking to introduce plant variety protection, such as China and the Ukraine.
- within the EU, is involved in drafting MTAs and is the contact with the Dutch government. Plantum NL wishes the international standard agreement (MTA) to be compatible with trade practice.

**Even out trade barriers**

Nothing is more frustrating to exporting and importing companies of breeding material, seeds and young plants than trade barriers. These companies are very much internationally oriented. These companies produce an ever increasing amount of seeds, cuttings and young plants for use within the Netherlands and for exporting to other countries. The Netherlands is the world leader for distribution of plant material.

*Plantum NL seeks import and export priority by:*

- Removal of phytosanitary, tariff and trade obstacles wherever Plantum NL and its members spot them.

*Plantum NL will:*

- contact governments to remove obstacles to imports and exports.
- attempt to reopen borders that are (temporarily) closed in crisis situations.
- document obstacles and share this knowledge with its members.

**Maintaining crop protection**

A large portion of breeding programmes are aimed at finding varieties that are less dependent on plant protection products or energy which is good for the environment, consumer, farmer or gardener. But crop protection products such as pesticides are needed in these breeding programmes

Plant breeding is long term from the initial crossings to the first commercial products being available on the market. Therefore plant protection products must be available over a long period of time.

Seeds often have a pesticide coating. Treating seeds is more efficient and economical than spraying crops. This form of use with plant protection products means reduced usage of these products because of the concentration used, with this precise, uniform and controlled application is to where the chemical is actively needed. It is also to the advantage of the environment, consumer, farmer and gardener that this method must continue and new seed coatings be developed.

*Plantum NL seeks crop protection priorities by:*

- Harmonisation of the regulations throughout Europe for parallel pesticide usage.
- Regulations which control the introduction of new pesticides
- Sufficient label recommendations with plant protection products for seeds and young plants.
- Free trade of treated seeds throughout the EU.

*Plantum NL will:*

- document the problems facing crop protection in plant material.
- lobby government and interest groups to achieve sufficient crop protection measures and reliable regulations for applying them.
- support members requests for "on" label recommendations of plant protection products with information and research.
- consult with other horticultural sectors on similar problems and combine forces to achieve solutions.
- build a direct relationship with the crop protection industry to lobby for the development of resources for breeders and propagators.

**Organic production**

In 2002, breeders produced organic multiplied seeds of 530 varieties for the European market. In 2004, the number of varieties is expected to increase by up to twenty per cent. As of 2004, European



directives will prescribe organic plant reproduction material for organic cultivation, but it is not yet clear how broadly the definition of organic parent material in the legislation can be interpreted.

*Plantum NL seeks organic seed production priorities by:*

- Ensuring that sufficient organically produced seed is available to meet the demand for organic parent material.
- Clearer regulations on production of organic parent material at European level, rather than for the individual member states.
- Workable regulations are created without bureaucracy and excessive registration.

*Plantum NL will:*

- aim for clarification on the obligation the producer will have for making use of organic plant material in organic cultivation.
- actively monitor the developments in European and Dutch legislation by providing input into the development of EU regulations.
- lobby that organic breeding must be oriented towards the quality of organic parent material, not to the techniques used. Plantum NL aims to exclude as few breeding techniques from organic growing as possible (except GMO techniques).
- transfer the rules to its members.

### **Attractive work**

The Agricultural and Horticultural sector is not widely seen as a good career but employment conditions and terms are as attractive if not more so than many other industries. As knowledge is essential in this industry, it is important to inspire and nurture all employees. Agriculture and horticulture contain many innovative companies whose specific character offers employees plenty of space in which to develop.

Plantum NL has concluded three collective labour agreements for the horticultural sector, in tissue culture, seed companies and greenhouse horticultural companies.

*Plantum NL seeks employment priorities by:*

- Making sure there is simple, clear employment legislation.
- Proving the flow of employees, especially plant breeders.

*Plantum NL will:*

- negotiate for collective labour agreements on behalf of the employers in the horticultural plant reproduction material industry.
- consult with social security funds such as pension funds on enforcing the regulations.
- aim for modernising employment terms at company level by advising for less detailed terms in the collective labour agreements, which will allow companies to design employment terms themselves, in consultation with their works councils.
- intensify contacts with agricultural education institutions by strongly presenting itself and the horticultural sector to school pupils and students to increase interest in choosing a profession in the horticultural industry. Together with agricultural colleges and the Wageningen University WUR, it will organise regional information days at members of Plantum NL.
- participate in "BeeHappy"; the horticulture image campaign.

### **Research needed for innovation and sustainability**

The Agricultural and horticultural sector spends one-seventh of its turnover on research and development. These investments ultimately answer society's demand for sustainable, safe cultivation with the results of sufficient, varied, healthy food. These companies use subsidies primarily for strategic and innovative research and additional financial support encourages this type of research.

*Plantum NL seeks research priorities by:*

- Encouraging product development, particularly in resistance breeding and the renewal of the product range.
- Encouraging process development, especially for faster methods to identify varieties, crops, the expanding seed technology sector and professionalising the techniques to develop and produce organic seeds and young plants.
- Keeping subsidy plans available for the breeding companies and expanding them if possible.
- Focusing available subsidies on the use in the plant reproduction material sector.

*Plantum NL will:*

- develop expertise on subsidies that are important to the agricultural and horticultural industry and will make this knowledge available to its members.

- promote the granting of subsidies tailored to the agricultural and horticultural industry by means of active lobbying.
- bring members together with a common research question, coordinate joint research and mandate research on behalf of individual groups of members.
- support research projects that are important to its members.
- want to maintain subsidies for long-term fundamental research and to assure innovative strength.
- consult with the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries and Plant Research International on the priorities for fundamental and strategic research.

### **Feasible European rules**

*Plantum NL seeks priorities for product quality and acceptance of food crops by:*

- Development of feasible European directives on product quality.
- The elaboration of two important points of the sowing seed directive.

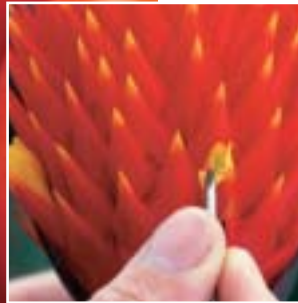
a) cultivation material for industrial purposes may be put on the market without complying with trade directives. ESA will document these consequences together with Plantum

NL. Plantum NL considers that the supply of information to the plant variety protection holder is crucial in this context.

b) the possibility to market seeds of varieties that have not yet been officially accepted for testing purposes. Plantum NL is in favour of creating as much space as possible in this area to be able to perform sufficient and meaningful trials with seeds of new varieties.

*Plantum NL will:*

- consult with governments to create appropriate European regulations.
- provide input to the creation of European directives through the European interest group (ESA) and national representatives of the European Commission.
- appoint the board members of the certification authorities that check whether products comply with quality directives. This therefore continues its prominent role within the certification authorities.





### **Practical environmental rules**

*Plantum NL seeks environmental priority by:*

- Simple, clear environmental legislation.

*Plantum NL will*

- consult with registration bodies and the Dutch government on creating practical environmental legislation with separate standards for the parent material sector and in these consultations, Plantum NL will present the diversity and specific character of this horticultural sector.
- closely monitor developments in regulations and registration and inform its members of any changes and their consequences.
- support society's desire for sustainable, economically sensible agriculture and horticulture.

### **The main achievements of Plantum NL since its founding are:**

- 1: The present respected positions of international interest groups on research, organic plant breeding and trade in treated seeds.*
- 2: The initiative to form a European collaborative association of vegetable plant growers.*
- 3: The setting up of the registration on crop protection and environment in the plant reproduction material industry. For florist and vegetable crops it clearly indicates that there should be separate standards for the regulations in plantbreeding and glasshouse propagation.*
- 4: Succeeding in having the rates of the European plant variety protection office adjusted by a reduction of the annual contribution and reallocation of research costs to individual crops in a fairer manner.*
- 5: Continuing the research into resistance to *Phytophthora infestans* in potatoes which is jointly financed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries as part of the Master Plan *Phytophthora*.*
- 6: Succeeding in having breeders of potatoes and grains compensated by farmers for the use of once grown seed. Annually this involves more than 0.7 million euro.*

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