

Legumes and agricultural systems – do we seize the opportunity?

Miroslav Florián

Central Institute for Supervising and Testing in Agriculture (ÚKZÚZ), Brno, Czech Republic

With the growth of the world population and decreasing land area per capita we need more food from hectare. As there is growing demand for protein sources and animal proteins cannot be available in such quantities, the legumes are the best solution. Furthermore, legumes act an indispensable role in crop rotations. They are excellent forecrops due to fixation of nitrogen in nodules and their residues are of a high quality. In the Czech agriculture we observed very negative tendency of decreasing sowing areas of legumes. This trend changed little bit with greening and subsidies for protein crops. However, the potential is much higher. The demand for legumes for human consumption is slightly growing and we import a lot of them even we could produce them on our own. Great potential can be identified in organic farming and especially in feed sector. Significant amount of imported soya could be replaced by national sources of protein crops. It is not only soya but also pea as well as some less traditional crops such as lupine. Increased production of grain legumes in our agriculture poses a great opportunity. It would bring great benefits to our soils, farmers and economy in general. The national agricultural policy should reflect this issue as much as possible.