'Farmer's Day in Sadovo 2026 – a tradition in cereal crop selection and the future of alternative agricultural crops'

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The traditional Farmer's Day at the Institute of Plant Genetic Resources (IPGR) "Konstantin Malkov" – Sadovo will be held on May 29, 2026 (Friday).

IPGR – Sadovo possesses extensive research experience with all field crops. The National Seed Genebank is located here, preserving over 70,000 accessions from more than 600 plant species. This vast gene pool allows the institute's scientists to thoroughly research and develop numerous niche and alternative crops, which are attracting increasing interest today as a valuable source of nutrients and as a response to climate change.

Cereal Crop Breeding: Drought Tolerance

Under the conditions of frequent droughts in our country, the breeding program of the institute in Sadovo is primarily focused on developing drought-resistant varieties. During the event, at the institute's Demonstration Field, you will learn about:

Wheat: Demonstration of the newest varieties, sown at normal and low seeding rates, perfectly adapted to local climatic conditions.

Rye and Triticale: Crops distinguished by their undemanding nature and high drought tolerance, exceptionally suitable for mountainous, semi-mountainous, and sub-Balkan regions. In Bulgaria, triticale traditionally occupies over 1 million decares, while rye maintains stable areas of about 50-70 thousand decares.

Rich Variety of Oats:

Variety Mina: A spring naked oat variety, exceptionally suitable for dietary food and highly sought after by pigeon breeders.

Variety Kaloyan: A winter husked oat, excellent for feed grain, green mass, and organic farming.

Variety IPGR Marina: The first Bulgarian winter naked oat, combining the advantages of the previous ones – it is sown in the autumn, protecting it from spring drought, and has excellent nutritional indicators.

Alternative Crops – Agrotechniques and Potential



Scientists from the institute in Sadovo will present the intricacies of cultivating several key alternative crops, whose presence in Bulgarian fields is gradually increasing:

Flax (oilseed, fiber, and intermediate): A wonderful spring crop originating from Central Asia and the Mediterranean. It requires cereal predecessors, and due to low resistance to fusarium wilt and the risk of soil fatigue, it returns to the same field after 5-6 years. It is sown in March (germinates at 6-8 °C) in narrow rows, at a depth of 2-4 cm with a rate of 8-12 kg/da. Oilseed flax is harvested in one phase with a combine, while fiber flax is harvested with a special flax puller into sheaves. Linseed oil is unique for its high content of Omega-3, potassium, magnesium, lecithin, zinc, proteins, and B vitamins.

Phacelia: An exceptionally honey-bearing crop (yields up to 35 kg of honey per decare with a flowering period of 40-45 days) and a beautiful ornamental plant. Due to its rapid growth and shading, it suppresses weeds and is perfect as an intermediate crop for green manure. Since it completely freezes in an advanced stage, direct seeding can be applied after it. It has no common diseases with major economic crops. For honey/seeds, it is sown in late March-April, and as an intermediate crop – in July-August (depth 2-3 cm, rate 800-1200 g/da). Its areas in the country and the interest from beekeepers are constantly growing.

Bitter Vetch: An annual legume crop, whose valuable seeds are even preserved in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. It is a source of protein for animals and a medicinal remedy for humans. Similar to chickpeas (which are grown on 20-30 thousand decares in our country), bitter vetch is among the most drought-tolerant legume crops, unlike peas and soybeans, which often require irrigation. It frees up fields early, allowing for quality soil preparation for subsequent crops.

Millet: Occupies between 10 and 20 thousand decares in the country, mainly in areas with rainfall deficits, thanks to its significant drought endurance.

Winter Pea variety "Mir": is highly valued by livestock breeders because the protein content in the green mass is about 17%, and in the seeds it is about 27% of the absolutely dry matter. Peas can be used in feed mixtures together with triticale and oats. It significantly increases milk yield in dairy farms where it is used. The variety has a rapid growth and development rate early in the spring, making it suitable as a preceding crop.

The Future of the Market for Alternative Crops

Despite the undeniable climatic and agrotechnical advantages of these crops, experts from IPGR – Sadovo emphasize that the major challenge in Bulgaria remains ensuring a stable market, processing, and contract production. Without secure marketability for farmers, it is difficult for them to take the risk of large-scale production – a topic that will be a main focus of our discussions.

Precision Technologies



The event program also includes a demonstration spraying of crops with the new DJI Agras T100 drone (from the company DJI Agriculture). With the help of unmanned technologies and multispectral cameras, precise, variable rate application of foliar fertilizers and plant protection products is achieved, reducing production costs.







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Event Program (May 29, 2026)

- **9:30 – 10:00** | Participant Registration.
- **10:00 – 10:15** | Official Opening.
- **10:15 – 12:30** | Visit to the Institute's Demonstration Field.
  - *10:15 – 10:30* – Demonstration of the DJI Agras T100 drone by DJI Agriculture.
  - *10:30 – 12:00* – Presentation of varieties (wheat, oats "Mina", "Kaloyan", "IPGR Marina", triticale, rye, peas "Mir", bitter vetch, flax, phacelia). On-site discussion.
- **12:00 – 12:30** | Presentation of products by the main sponsor – **Summit Agro (Sumi Agro)**.
- **12:30 – 14:30** | Discussion Panel, Q&A, and Official Lunch.

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More on the topic:

- **Farmer's Day in Sadovo – Crops Suitable for Alternative and Organic Farming**