

# Advanced Virtuality and Augmented Reality Approaches in Seeds to Seeds

Thomas Altmann, Leibniz-Institute of Plant Genetics and Crop Plant Research (IPK)



# AVATARS

## Advanced Virtuality and Augmented Reality Approaches in Seeds to Seeds

Phase I (VI/2019 – III/2022) ➤ Phase II (IV/2022 – IX/2024)

Thomas Altmann<sup>1</sup>, Amine Abbadi<sup>2</sup>, Matthias Enders<sup>2</sup>, Marius Kloft<sup>3</sup>, Andrea Bräutigam<sup>4</sup>,  
Olaf Sacher<sup>5</sup>, Ljudmilla Borisjuk<sup>1</sup>, Hardy Rolletschek<sup>1</sup>, Jozephus Schippers<sup>1</sup>,  
Hans-Peter Braun<sup>6</sup>, Evgeny Gladilin<sup>1</sup>, Mary-Ann Blätke<sup>1</sup>, Matthias Lange<sup>1</sup>

1 - Leibniz-Institute of Plant Genetics and Crop Plant Research (IPK), Gatersleben,  
2 - NPZ Innovation GmbH, Hohenlieth-Hof, 3 – Department of Computer Science, RPTU Kaiserslautern-Landau,  
4 - Computational Biology, CeBiTEc, Bielefeld University, 5 - Breakpoint One GmbH, Berlin, 6 - Leibniz University  
Hannover

# Project Goal: Prediction and Explanation of Seed Traits



**AVATARS - harnessing the data explosion in life sciences towards enhanced gain of knowledge and facile utilization**

using  
**Deep Learning** on high-throughput genotype, envirotpe, and multilevel phenotype data

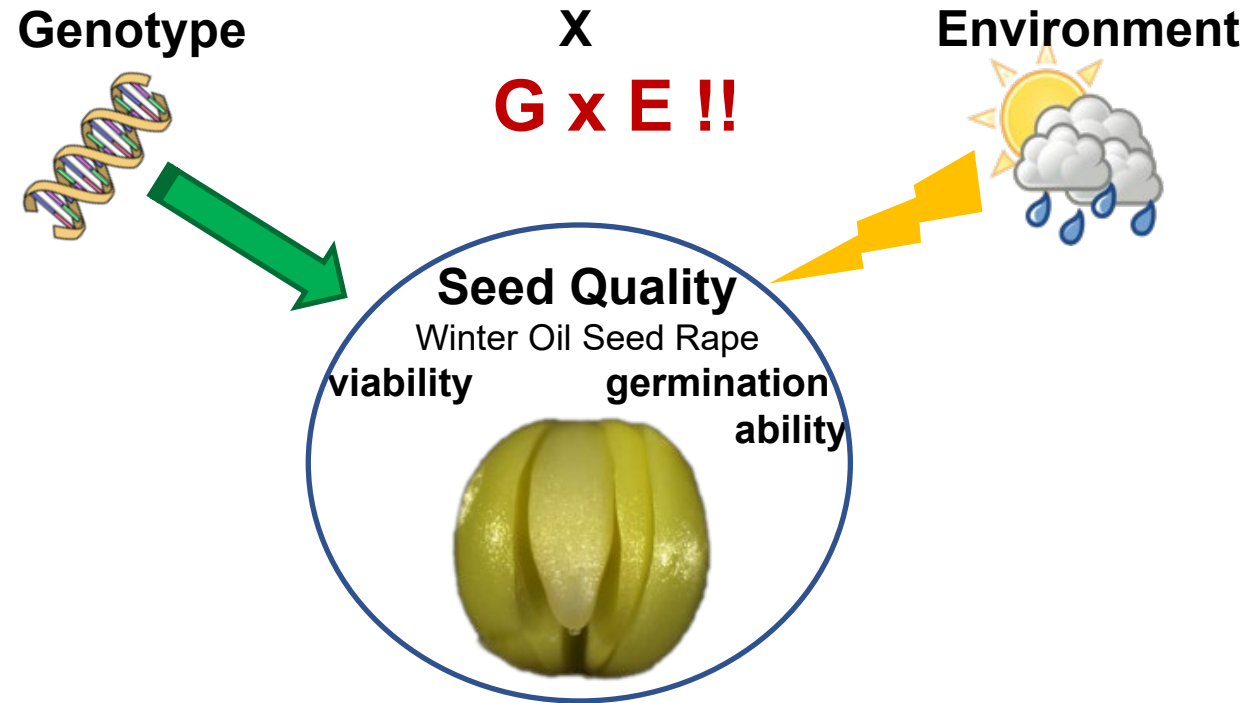


and

**mechanistic knowledge** gained from **Systems Analyses** using dynamic structural, compositional, and functional (multi-omics) data of seed formation.

**AVATARS – an integrative Data Science project**

# AVATARS – the central Question



**Genome-wide association mapping unravels the genetic control of seed germination and vigor in *Brassica napus***



ORIGINAL RESEARCH  
published: 09 April 2015  
doi: 10.3389/fpls.2015.00221

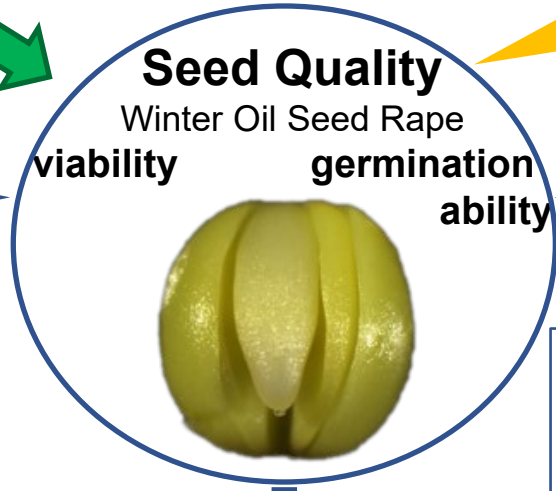
- **low - moderate correlation among 2 environments (SL2011 – SL2012):**  
GR72 (%)  $r = 0.44$
- **very low narrow-sense heritability:**  
GR72 (%)  $h^2$  (SL2011) = 0.07  
 $h^2$  (SL2012) = 0.00

Sarah V. Hatzig<sup>1</sup>, Matthias Frisch<sup>2</sup>, Frank Breuer<sup>3</sup>, Nathalie Nesi<sup>4</sup>, Sylvie Ducournau<sup>5</sup>, Marie-Helene Wagner<sup>5</sup>, Gunhild Leckband<sup>6</sup>, Amine Abbadi<sup>6</sup> and Rod J. Snowdon<sup>1\*</sup>

# AVATARS – the Interdisciplinary Concept



Genotype X Environment  
**G x E !!**



**Field Cultivation**  
Plant & Environmental Data  
400/100 Lines  
11 env. genotype  
15k SNPs phenotype  
weather data

**Single Seed Data**  
> 350.000 seeds  
TD-NMR hyperspectral images  
X-ray CT germination

**Deep Learning**  
neural networks using ultra high-throughput data

**Systems Biology**  
gene regulatory network  
metabolic networks  
3D seed model

**Controlled Environment**  
40/3 Lines  
2 env. scenarios

**Time-resolved Seed Architecture**  
MRI  
Histology

**Time- and Space-resolved Multi-Omics**

DNA methylation  
mRNA / sRNA  
proteins  
metabolites  
phytohormones

**VR visualization**  
improved human access to Big Data and support of efficient exploration and Science Outreach

**Plant Breeding 4.0**

**Seed Systems Biology**

# AVATARS – the Partner Network

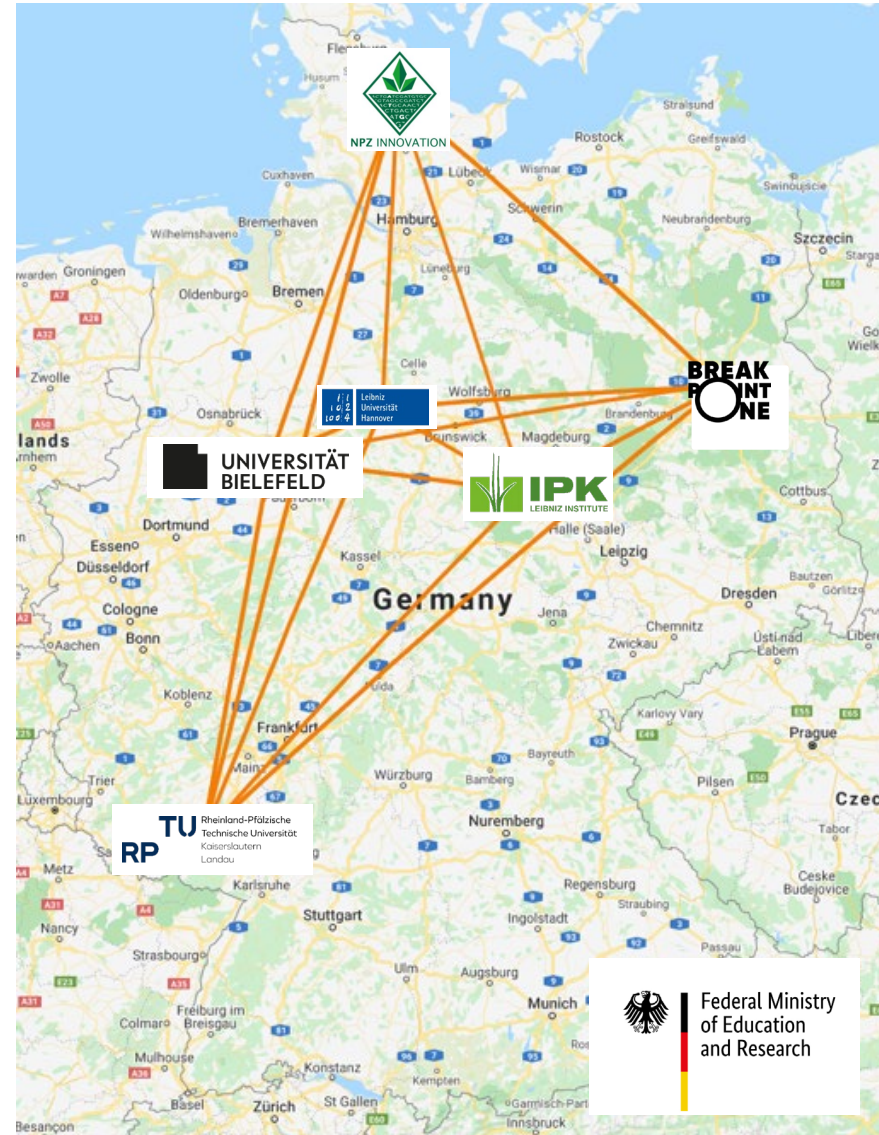


## IPK Gatersleben

- **Thomas Altmann** (project leader, IPK-HET), *growth & phenotyping in controlled environment, epigenetics*
- **Ljudmilla Borisjuk** (IPK-AAN), *MRI & histology, metabolome, respiration germination assay*
- **Jozefus Schippers** (IPK-SE), *RNA-seq & tissue sampling*
- **Evgeny Gladilin** (IPK-BA), *growing seed model & image analysis*
- **Mary-Ann Blätke** (IPK-IMM), *metabolic networks*
- **Matthias Lange** (IPK-BIT), *informatics infrastructure*

## Leibniz University Hannover

- **Hans-Peter Braun** (UHann), *shot-gun proteomics*




## NPZi

- **Amine Abbadi** (NPZi), *breeding nursery, genotyping, X-ray CT, NIRS & Hyperspec, germination*

## Breakpoint One

- **Olaf Sacher & Sebastian Tusk** (BPO), *virtual & augmented reality*

## University of Bielefeld

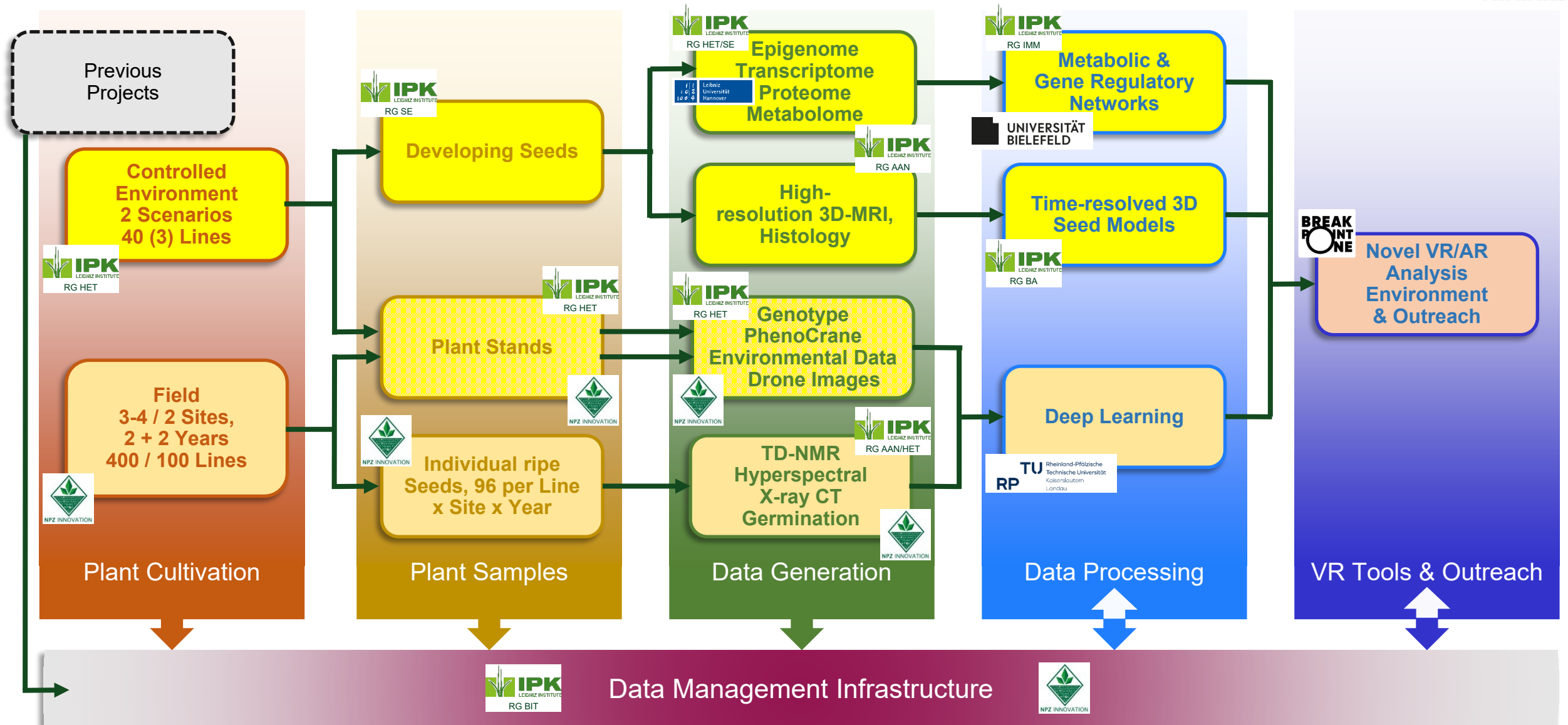
- **Andrea Bräutigam** (UBi), *regulatory networks* 

## RPTU Kaiserslautern-Landau

- **Marius Kloft** (RPTU), *deep learning*



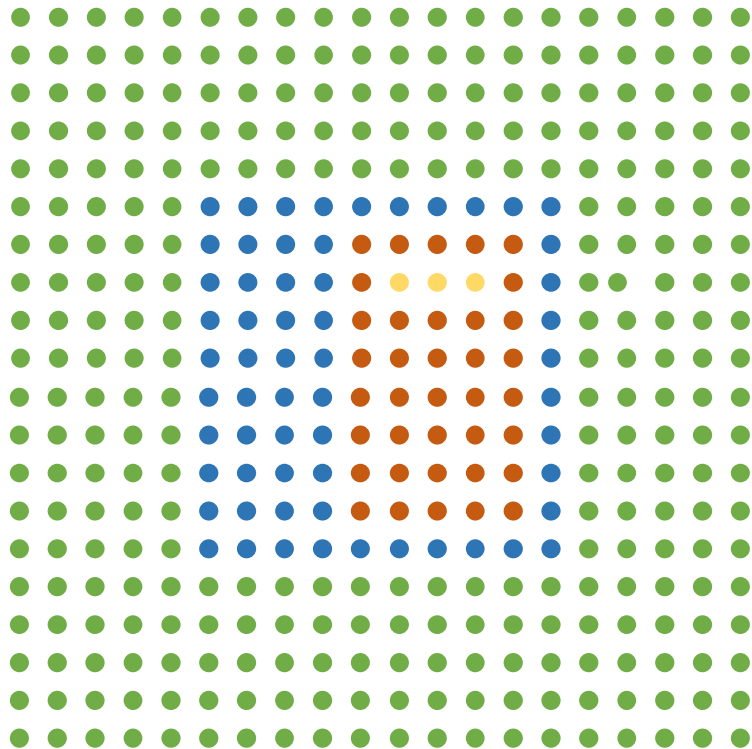
# AVATARS – the Work Flows



# Population / Cultivation Scheme



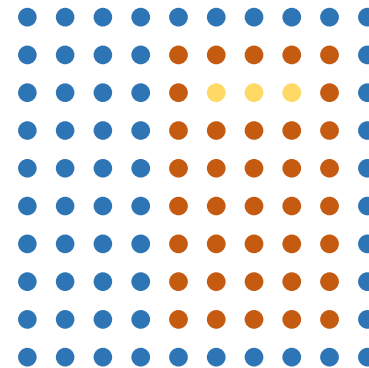
Field Cultivation:  
2019-20 & 2020-21



**400 Lines**

*x 3-4 Locations*

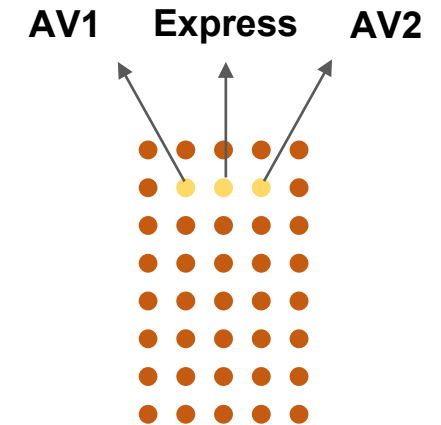
Field Cultivation:  
2021-22 & 2022-23



**100 Lines**

*x 2 Locations*

Controlled Env. Cultivation  
2020-21, 2021-22 & 2022-23

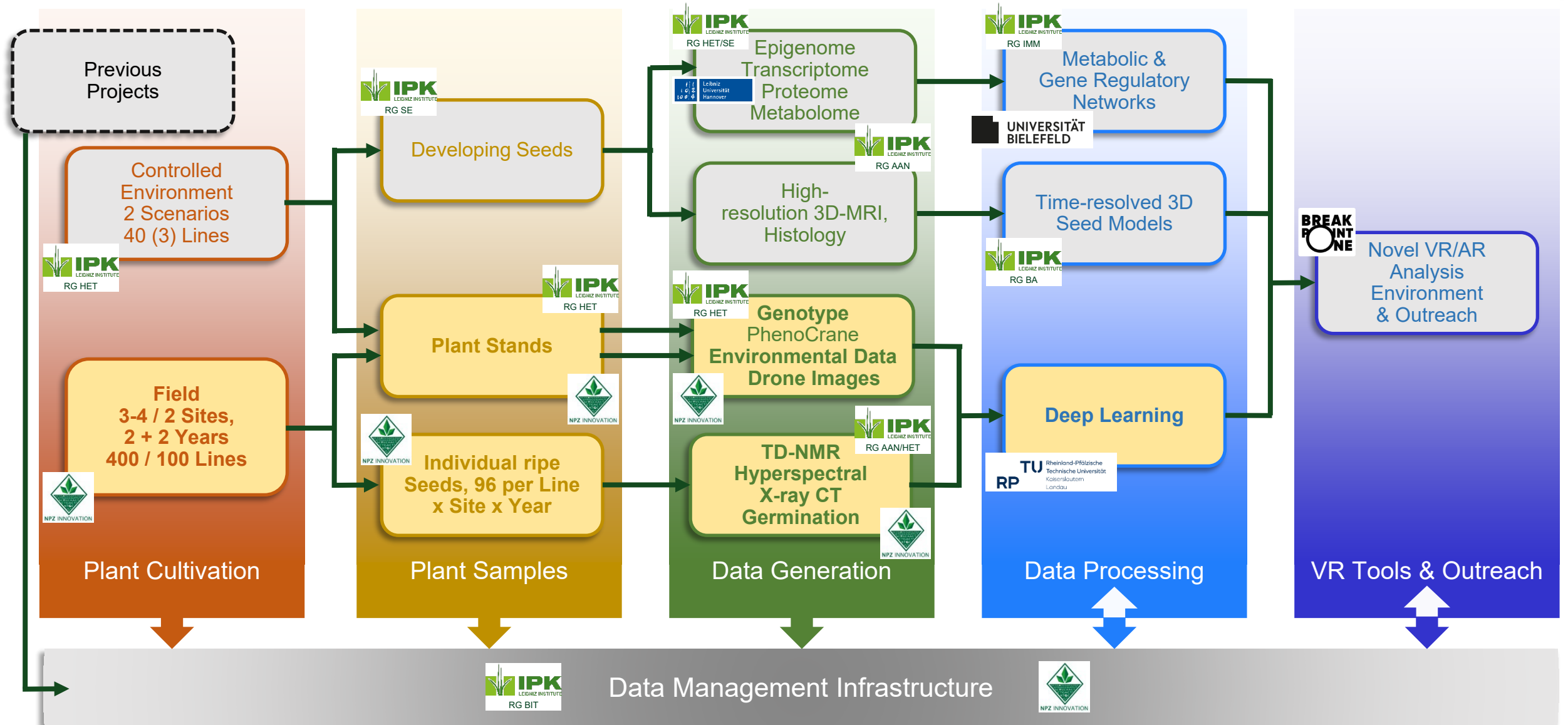


**40 Lines**

*x 2 Conditions (IPK-PS)*

- benign
- detrimental

# AVATARS – the Work Flows



# Field Trials and uHTP Seed Data

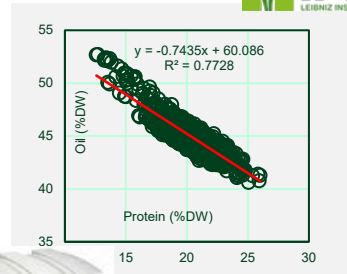


## Deep Single-Seed Phenotyping

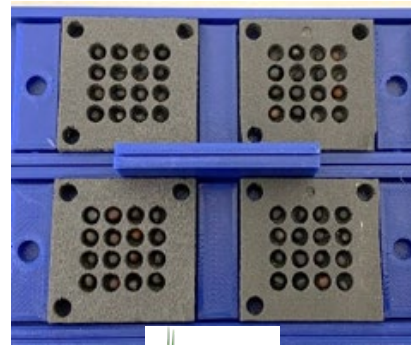
Field Trials



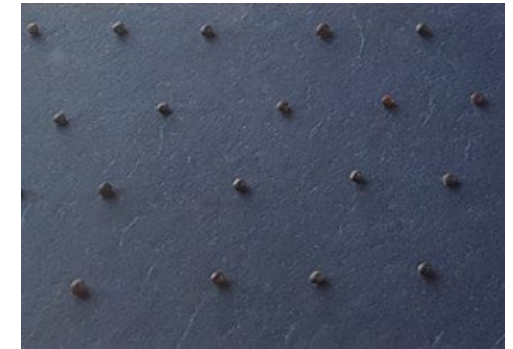
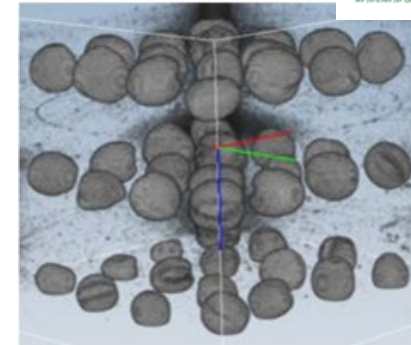
TD-NMR



Single Object 2D & 3D tracing\*  
for all analysis techniques

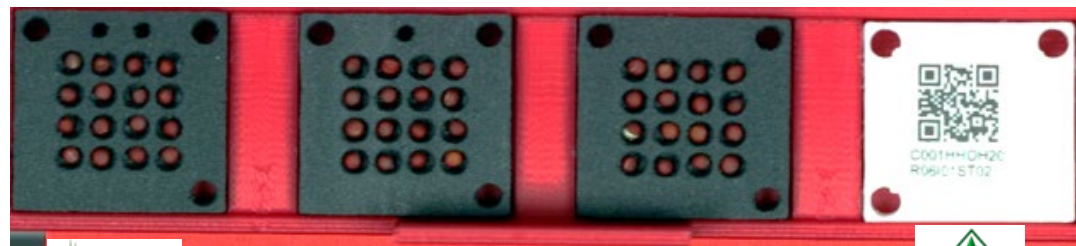


X-ray CT

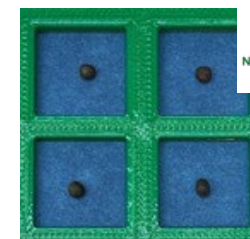


Germination Assay

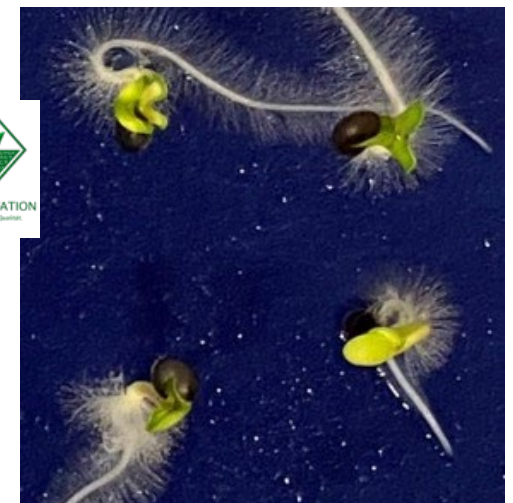
- UAV Images
- Phenotypic Scores
- Weather & Soil Data
- Genotypic Data
- NIRS
- TKM



Hyperspectral Imaging VNIR + SWIR



Accelerated Aging



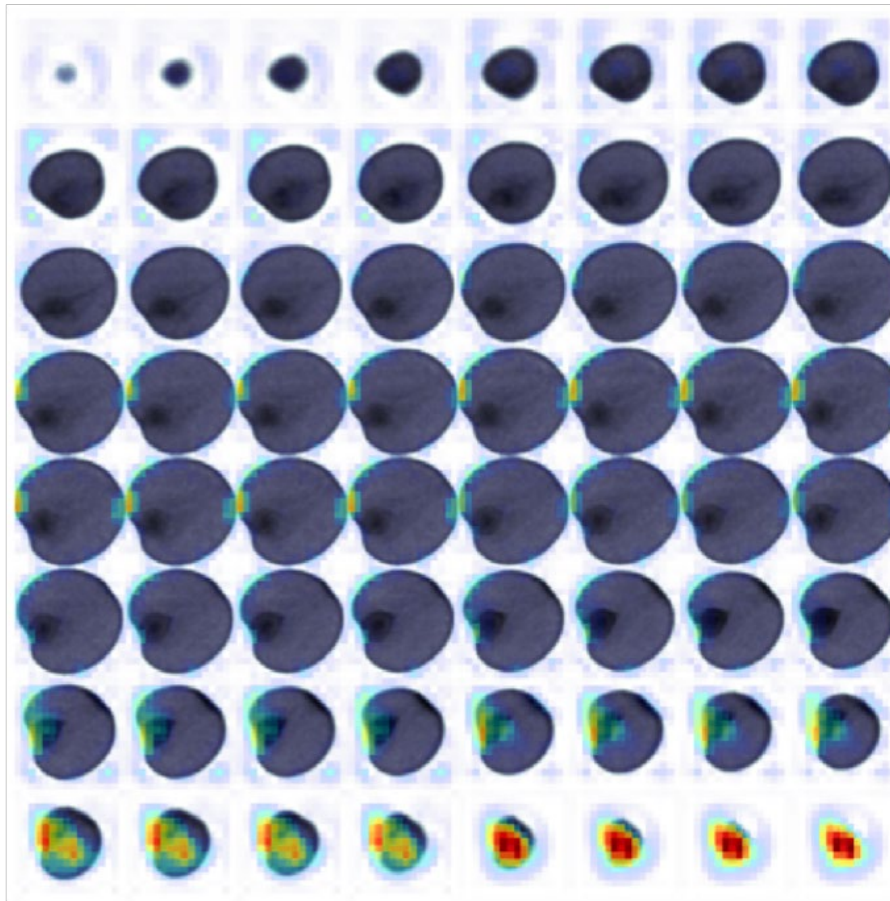
\*patent filed

In total, 364.896 seeds intended; > 260.000 done!

# Machine Learning using deep neural networks

## Explainable Anomaly Detection (AD)

Heatmap for a CT scan of a non-germinating seed

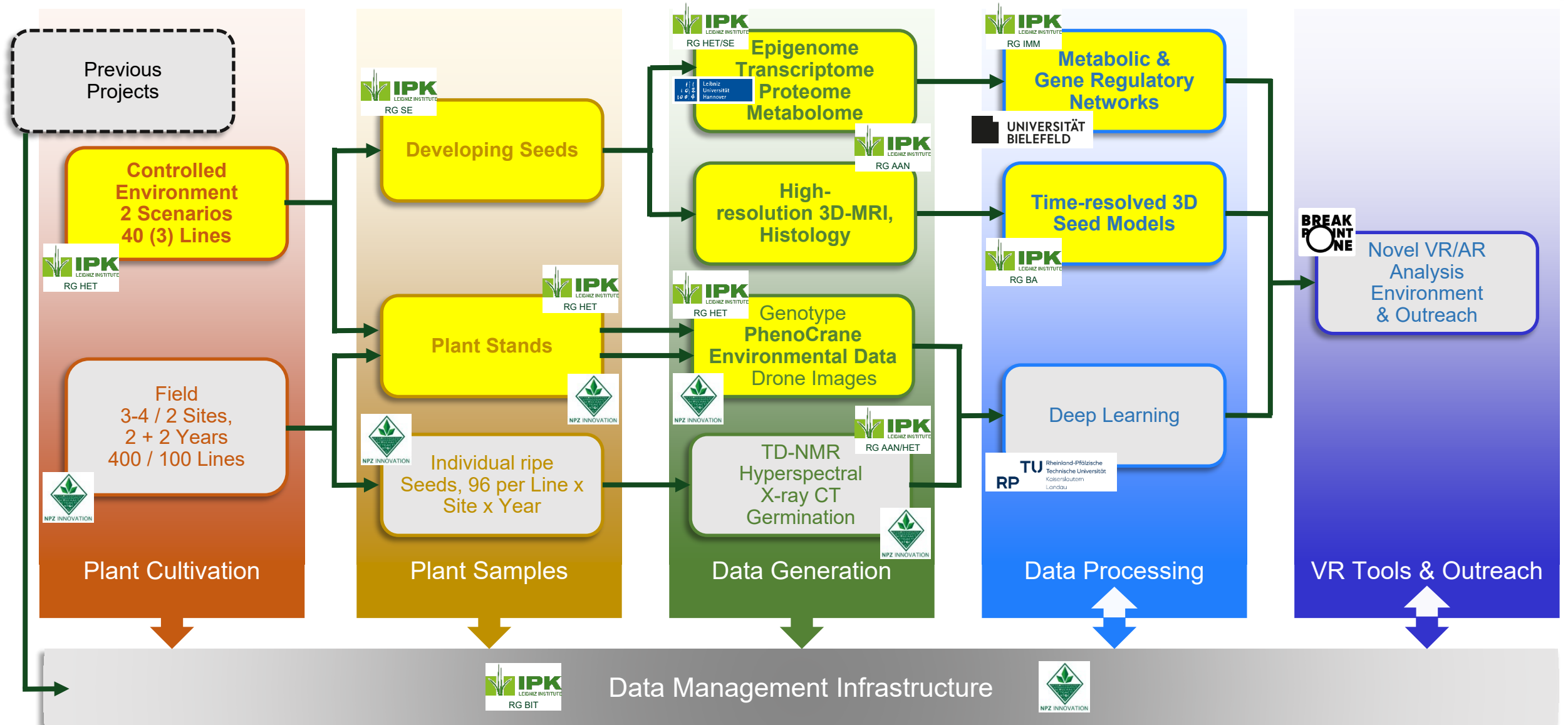


## Binary Classification Performance

Table 1: Accuracy on hold-out validation data with models.

Method	Modalities	Training Size	Accuracy
AD	CT	≈95k	58.2
3D CNN	CT	≈95k	58.5
Tabular Nets	TD-NMR	≈95k	63.1
Intra-data MM	CT	≈95k	63.6
CoatNet	CT	≈95k	66.5
Inter-data MM	TD-NMR + CT	≈95k	70.1
CoatNet	CT	≈200k	71.6

# AVATARS – the Work Flows



# CE cultivation, phenotyping and sampling for imaging and omics analyses



## PhenoSphere

### ➤ Field-like controlled environments

- Illumination (up to  $1500 \mu\text{mol}/\text{m}^2\cdot\text{s}$  PAR)
- Air/Soil temperature
- Air humidity
- CO<sub>2</sub> level
- Wind simulation
- automated watering

Regulation with fast changes of environmental conditions as they are typical for field conditions!

### 2 scenarios:

- benign (✓)
- detrimental (✓)



### ➤ 'PhenoCrane' for multi-imaging phenotyping

- RGB imaging + 3D laser scanner
- FluorCam (kin. CHL-fluorescence)
- hyperspectral imaging (VNIR: 350 – 900 nm)

### ➤ Seed sampling



# CE cultivation, phenotyping and sampling for imaging and omics analyses



## PhenoSphere

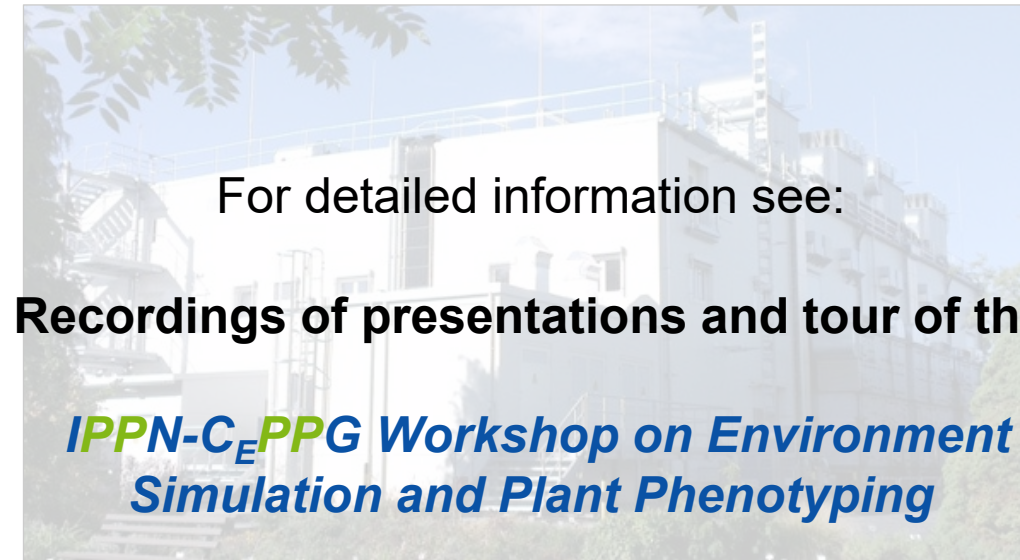
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### ➤ Seed sampling



# CE cultivation (PhenoSphere):

## benign weather regime

➤ **benign** = representative fluctuating conditions designed on a weekly basis

- based on **12 years of historic IPK weather data** (2008-2019)
- light changes in minutes / temperature & humidity in hour interv

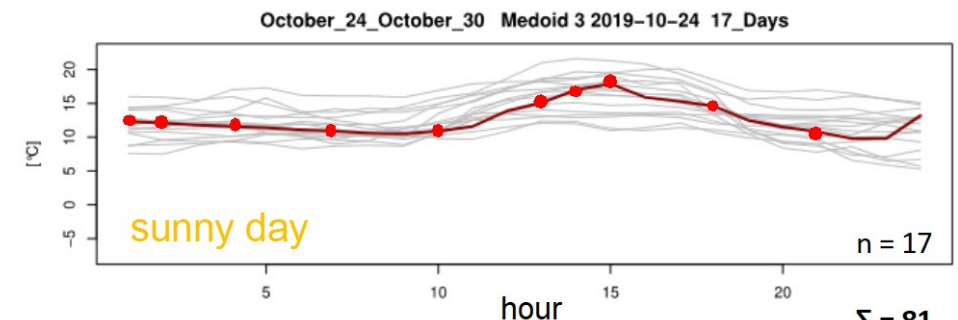
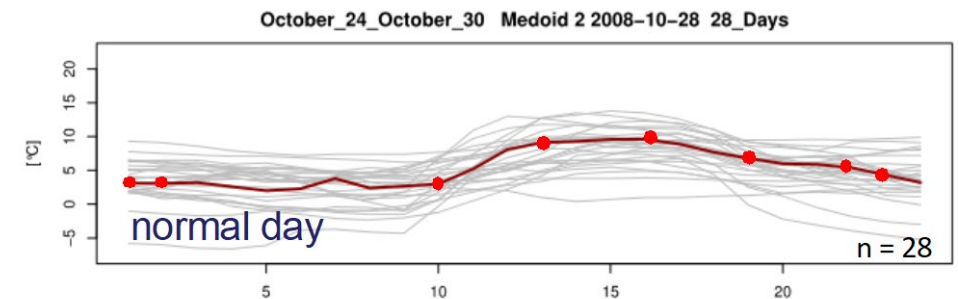
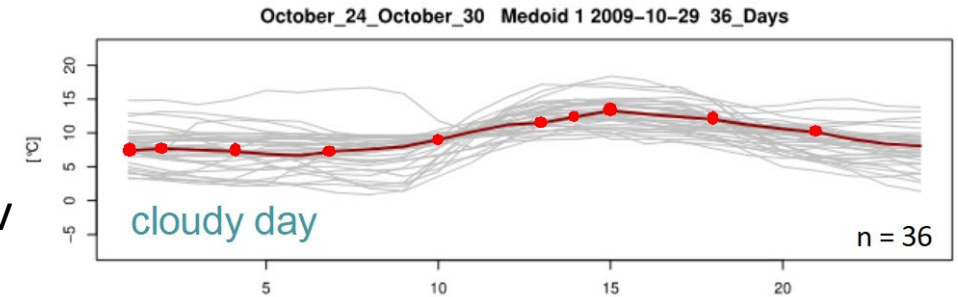
- **three light scenarios** programmed with fast changes of illumination in the range of minutes to simulate clouds

“cloudy” (8 h of fluctuations, only LED)

“normal” (5 h of fluctuations)

“sunny” (2 h of fluctuations)

- **daily temperature and humidity** ramped to approximate the diurnal curves
- **weekly adjustment of sunrise and sunset** to account for the effect of day length
- **monthly adjustment of light intensities** to simulate seasons



$\Sigma = 81$

# CE cultivation (PhenoSphere):

## detrimental weather regime



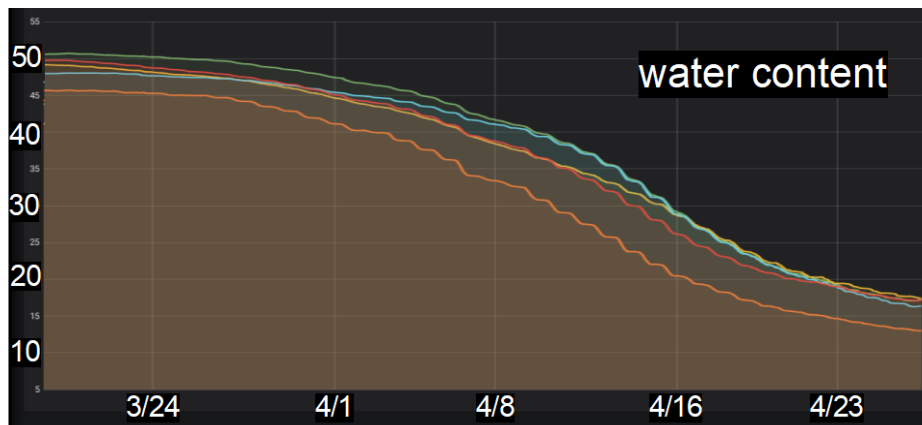
AVATARS



- **detrimental** conditions are the same climate regime as for beneficial conditions, but with two stress phases:

### I. **Spring/early summer drought during flowering** (BBCH 60-65) after 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> week of drought

- reduction in watering by mid of March
- three weeks without / reduced watering
- cloudy days → sunny days (start 14. April)
- monitoring of the effect on the plants



26. April 2022



5. Mai 2022

# CE cultivation (PhenoSphere):

## detrimental weather regime



- **detrimental** conditions are the same climate regime as for beneficial conditions, but with two stress phases:

### II. Simulation of heavy rain events during ripening (BBCH 86)

- stress during ripening: BBCH 85-86 (seeds become dark)
- 2x three days of heavy watering in two weeks  
(heavy rain: 2x 10L at three consecutive days)
- replacement of sunny days → cloudy days
- increase relative air humidity to 80-90%
- additional spraying of pods with water 3-4x each day



# CE cultivation (PhenoSphere):

## detrimental weather regime

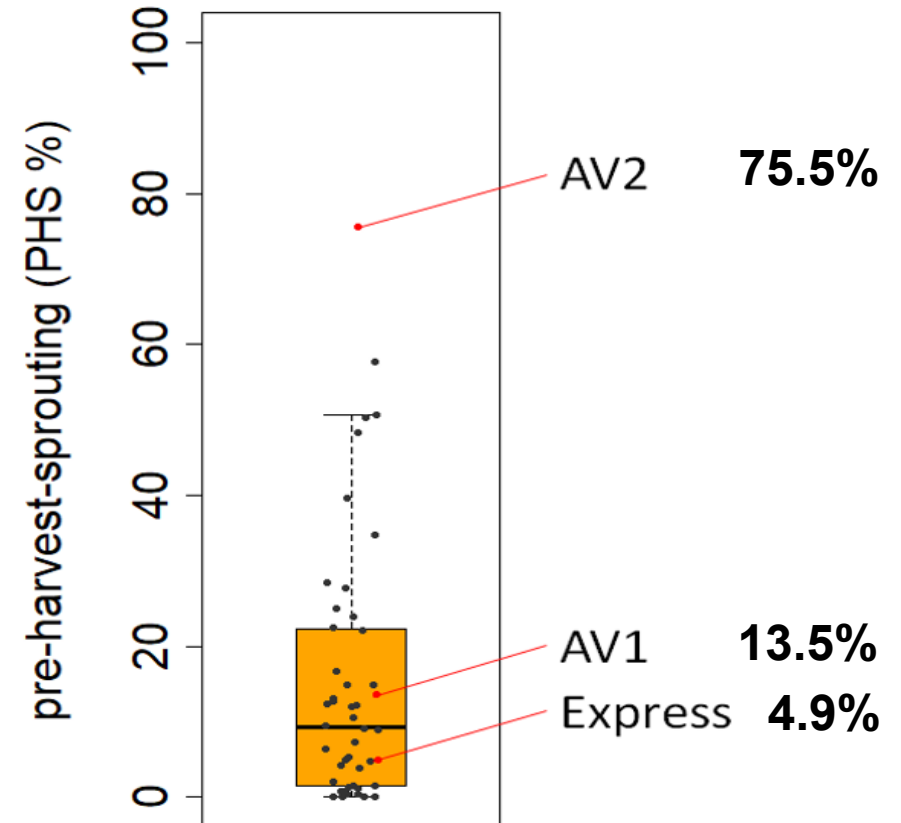


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(heavy rain: 2x 10L at three consecutive days)
- replacement of sunny days → cloudy days
- increase relative air humidity to 80-90%
- additional spraying of pods with water 3-4x each day

after 2<sup>nd</sup> week of heavy rain simulation



# CE cultivation, phenotyping and sampling for imaging and omics analyses



## PhenoSphere

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- Illumination (up to  $1500 \mu\text{mol}/\text{m}^2\cdot\text{s}$  PAR )
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Regulation with fast changes of environmental conditions as they are typical for field conditions!

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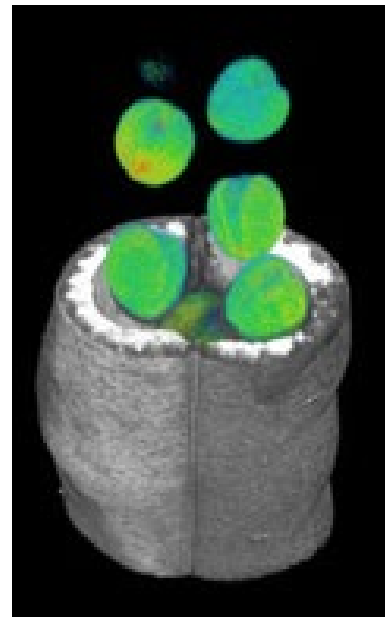
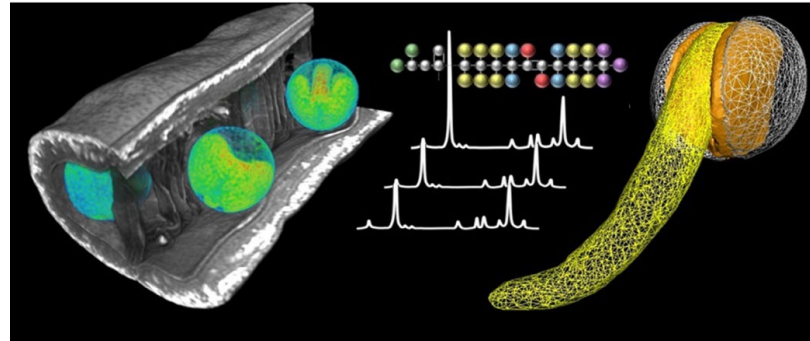
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- RGB imaging + 3D laser scanner
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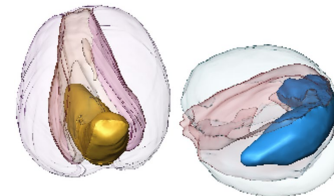
### ➤ Seed sampling



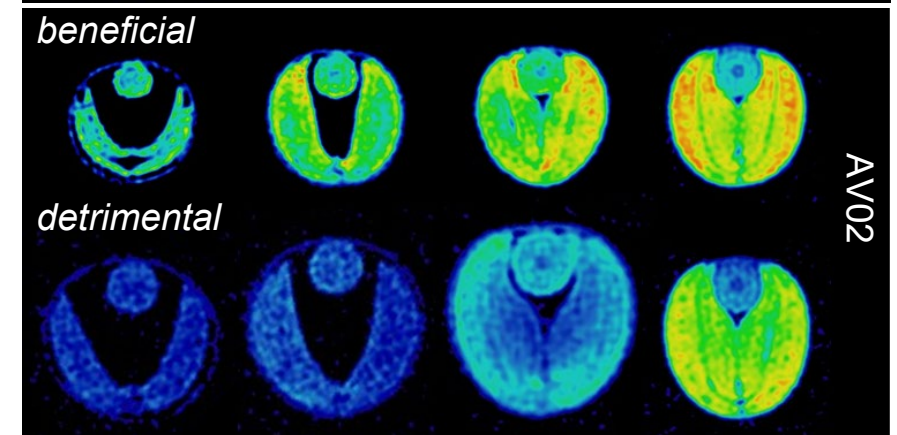
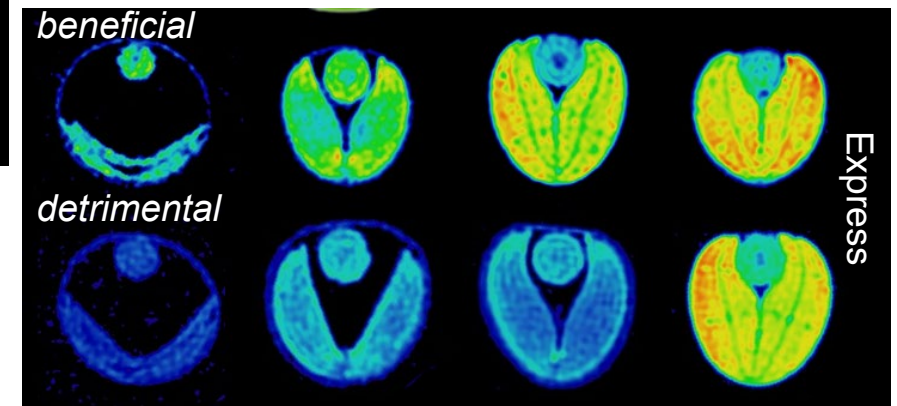
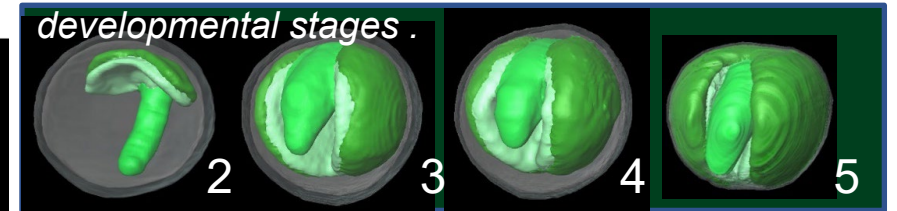
# Seed Imaging, ...



3D MRI data

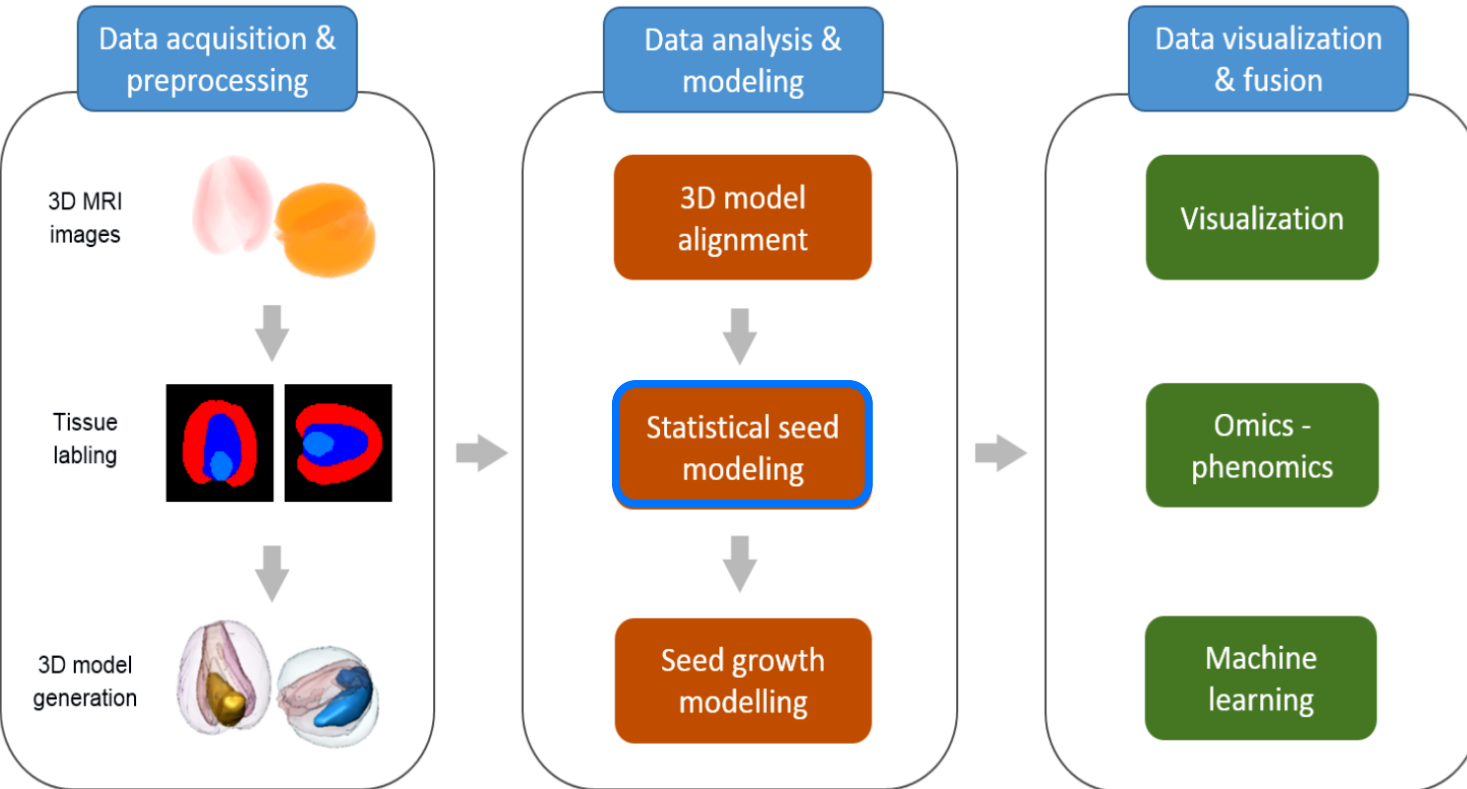


3D labels

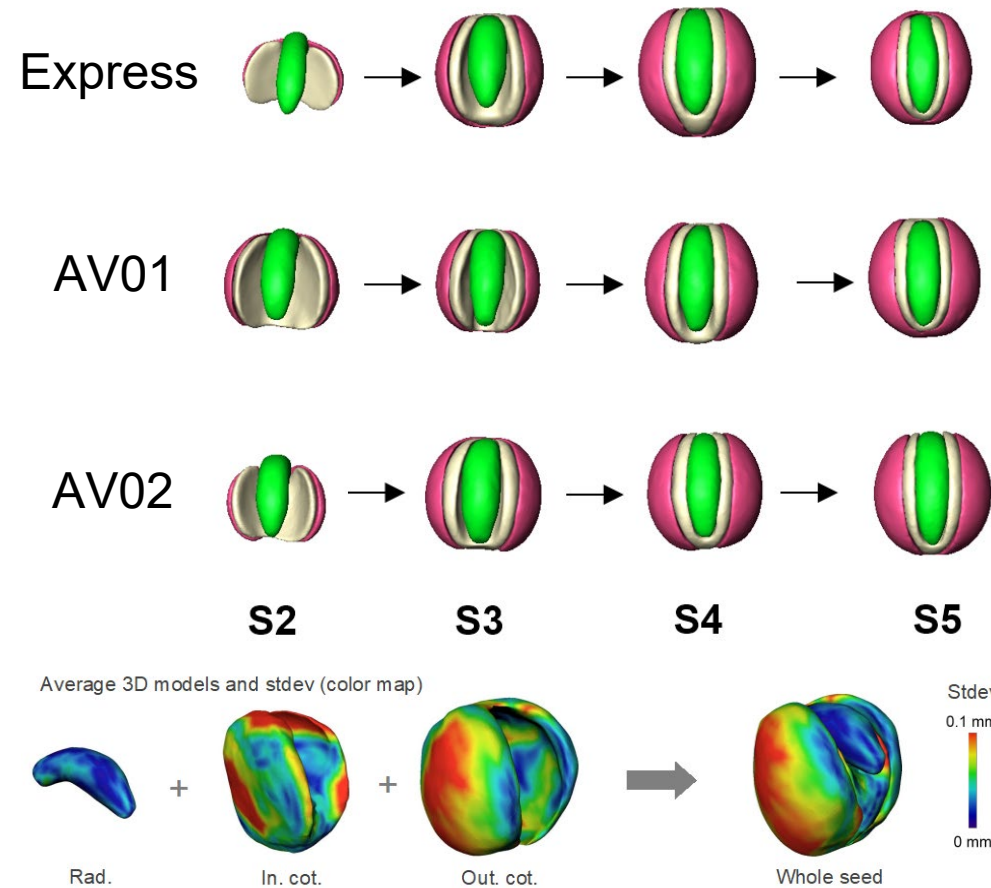


# ..., Image Analysis, and Modeling

Image processing and analysis pipeline



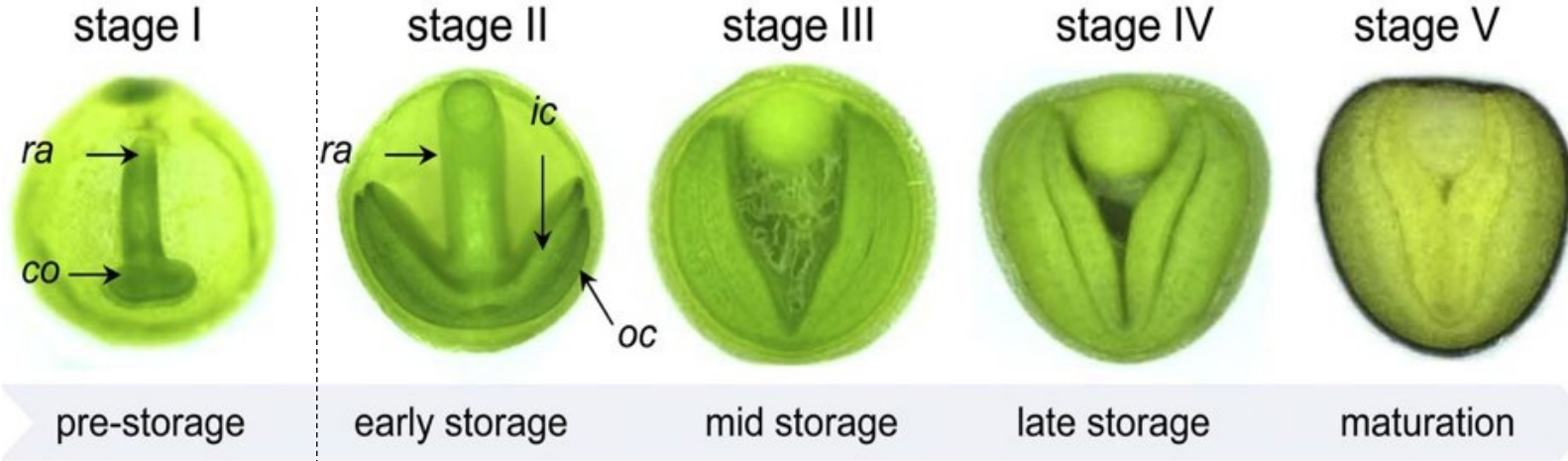
Average 3D models of *B. napus* seeds (3 lines, 4 stages; n = 5)



# AVATARS – Seed sampling and multi-omics analyses



5 Developmental stages

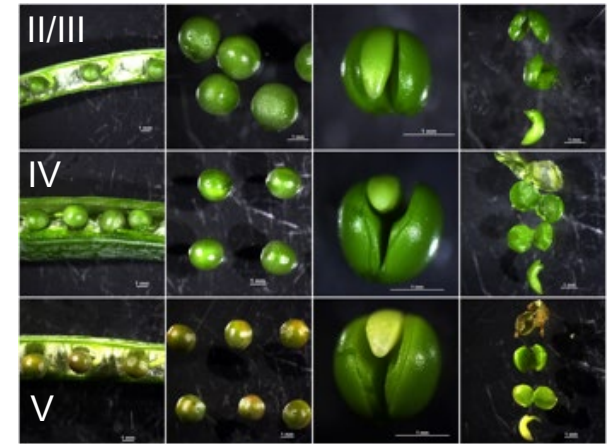


3 Genotypes

4 Seed organs: inner, outer cotyledon (ic and oc), radicle (ra) and seed coat (sc)

	Samples	Whole seeds
Express	51	
5 stages		
AV01	27	
AV02	27	
3 stages (1 / 3 / 5)		
<b>Σ 105 samples</b>		
<b>Σ 18 samples</b>		

	I	II	III	IV	V
sRNA-Seq.	3 G.	1 G. x 4 O.	3 G. x 4 O.	1 G. x 4 O.	3 G. x 4 O.
mRNA-Seq.	3 G.	1 G. x 4 O.	3 G. x 4 O.	1 G. x 4 O.	3 G. x 4 O.
Proteome	3 G.	1 G. x 4 O.	3 G. x 4 O.	1 G. x 4 O.	3 G. x 4 O.
Metabolome	3 G.	1 G. x 4 O.	3 G. x 4 O.	1 G. x 4 O.	3 G. x 4 O.
Phytohormones	3 G.	1 G. x 4 O.	3 G. x 4 O.	1 G. x 4 O.	3 G. x 4 O.
Methylome	3 G.	-	-	-	3 G.



**Benign** and **Detrimental** Conditions: **105** + **105** = **210** samples for omics analyses (+ methylome **18** + **18** = **36**)

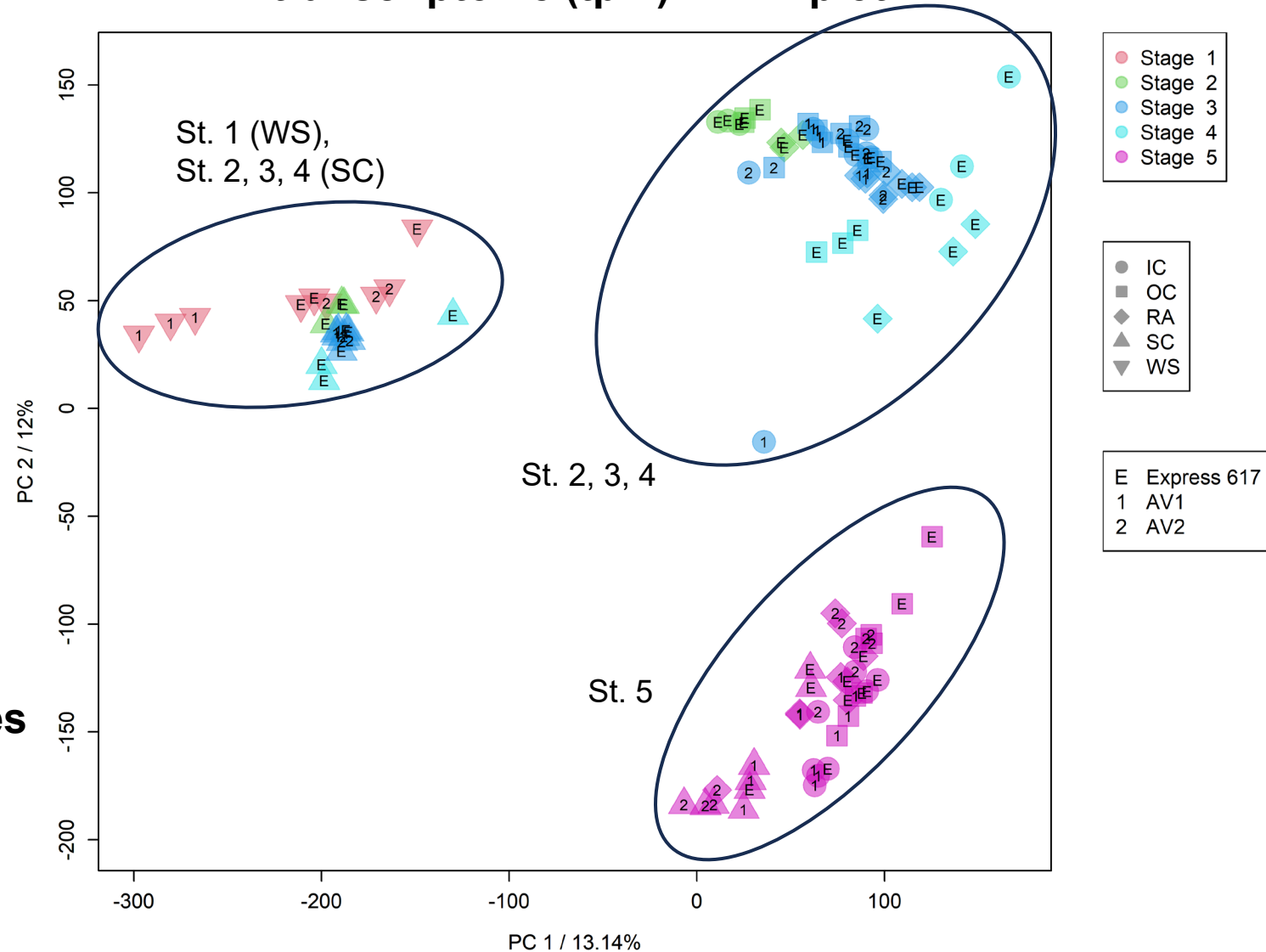
# AVATARS – Seed sampling and multi-omics analyses



Benign Condition:  
105 mRNA-Seq.  
Data Sets

**Var.:**  
**Stages > Organs > Genotypes**

transcriptome (tpm) - PCA plot



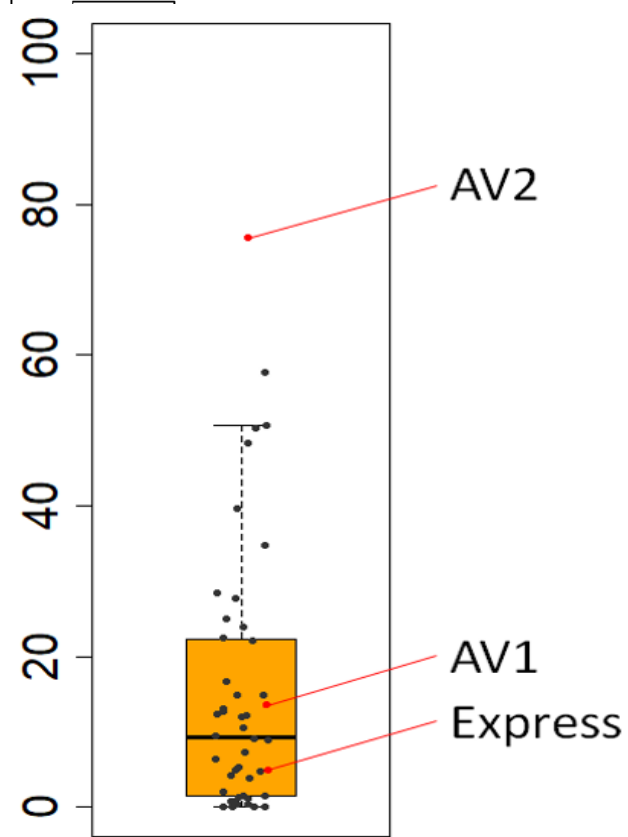
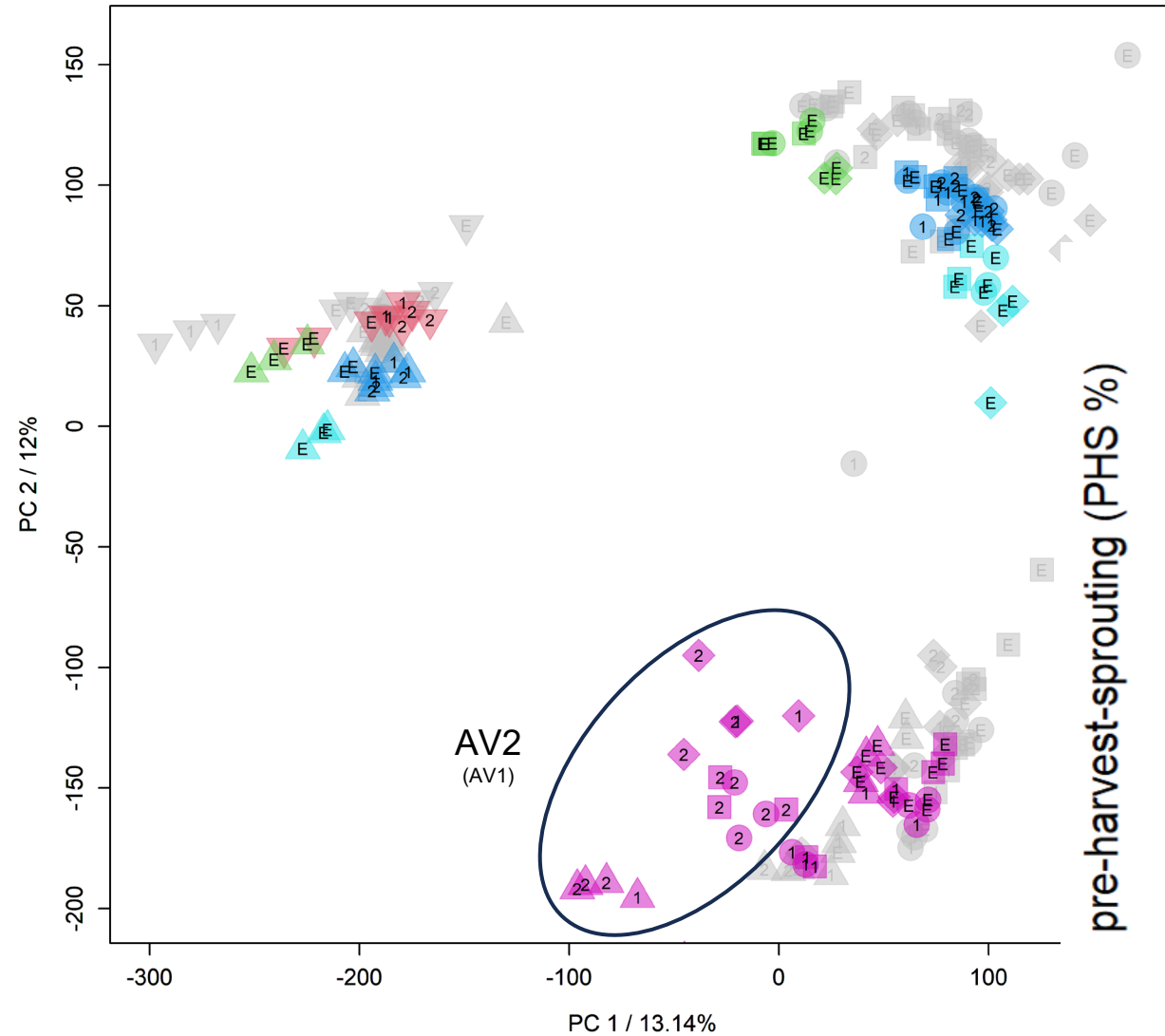
# AVATARS – Seed sampling and multi-omics analyses



Benign Condition:  
105 mRNA-Seq.  
Data Sets

Detrimental  
Condition:  
105 mRNA-Seq.  
Data Sets

transcriptome (tpm) - PCA plot



# AVATARS – Seed sampling and multi-omics analyses



## DEGs

Stage 5 **Detrimental** vs. **Benign**

[log<sub>2</sub>FC] > 3 and p [FDR] < 0.01

### Express

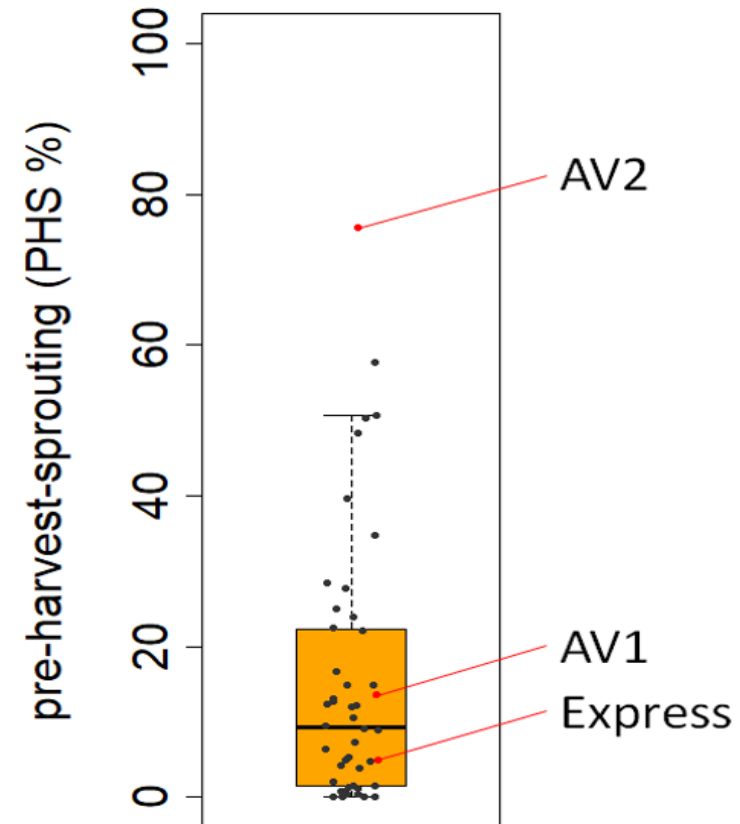
SC	204
OC	289
IC	131
RA	189

### AV1

SC	543
OC	2591
IC	1274
RA	1145

### AV2

SC	2198
OC	4625
IC	2575
RA	4602



# AVATARS – Seed sampling and multi-omics analyses



## DEGs

### Stage 5 Detrimental

$|\log_2FC| > 3$  and  $p [FDR] < 0.01$

#### AV1 vs. Express

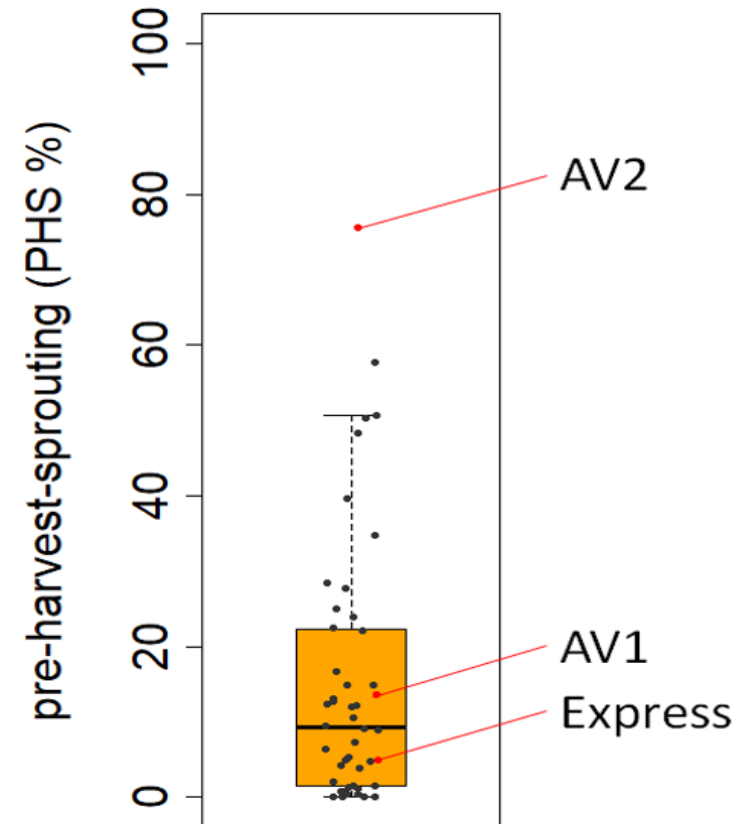
SC	1519
OC	2950
IC	2049
RA	1491

#### AV2 vs. AV1

SC	2476
OC	2591
IC	2874
RA	2665

#### AV2 vs. Express

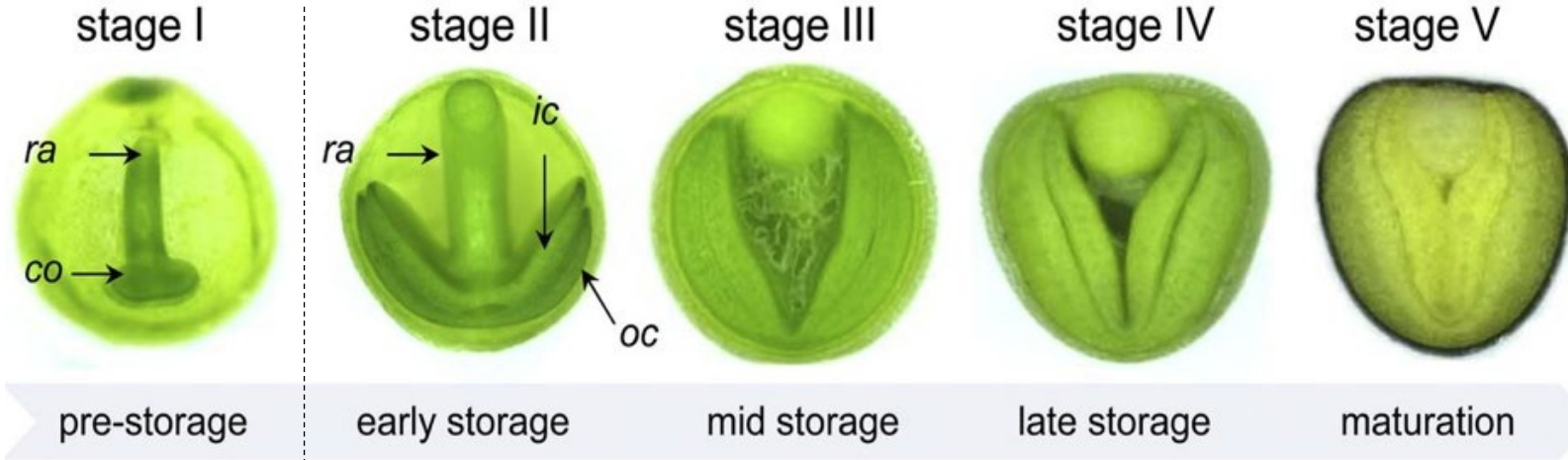
SC	4912
OC	7176
IC	5763
RA	5823



# AVATARS – Seed sampling and multi-omics analyses



5 Developmental stages



3 Genotypes

Express 51  
5 stages  
AV01 27  
AV02 27  
3 stages (1 / 3 / 5)  
**Σ 105 samples**  
  
**Σ 18 samples**

Whole seeds

4 Seed organs: inner, outer cotyledon (ic and oc), radicle (ra) and seed coat (sc)

		I	II	III	IV	V
sRNA-Seq.	3 G.	1 G. x 4 O.	3 G. x 4 O.	1 G. x 4 O.	3 G. x 4 O.	
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Methylome	3 G.	-	-	-	3 G.	



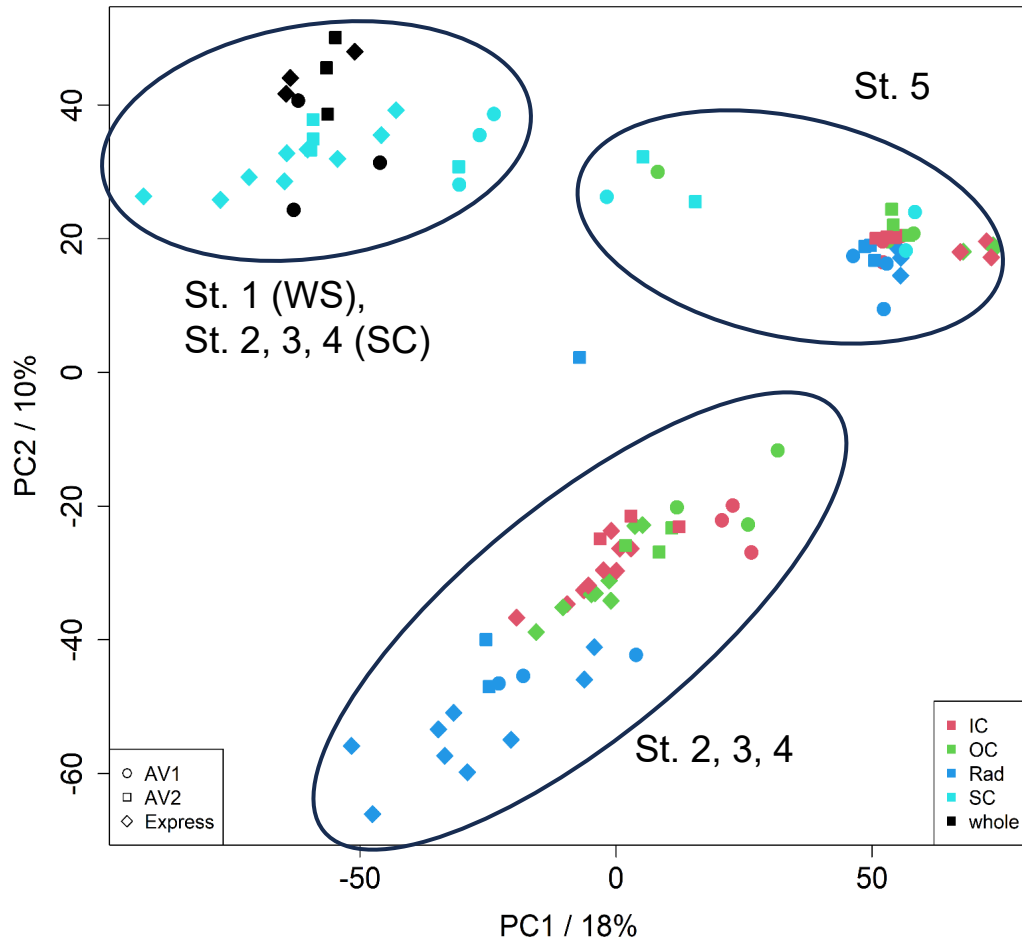
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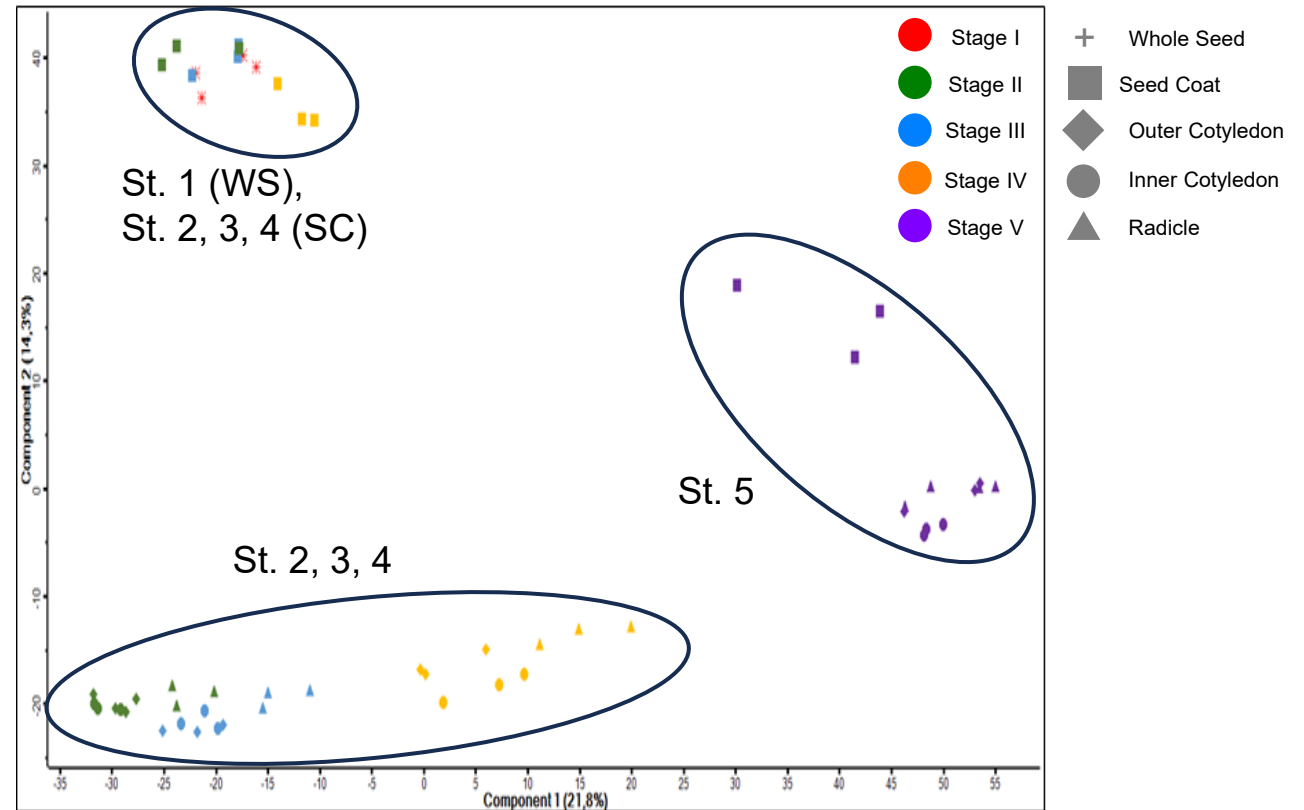
Benign Condition: 105 sRNA-Seq. and proteome data sets



small RNAs - PCA plot

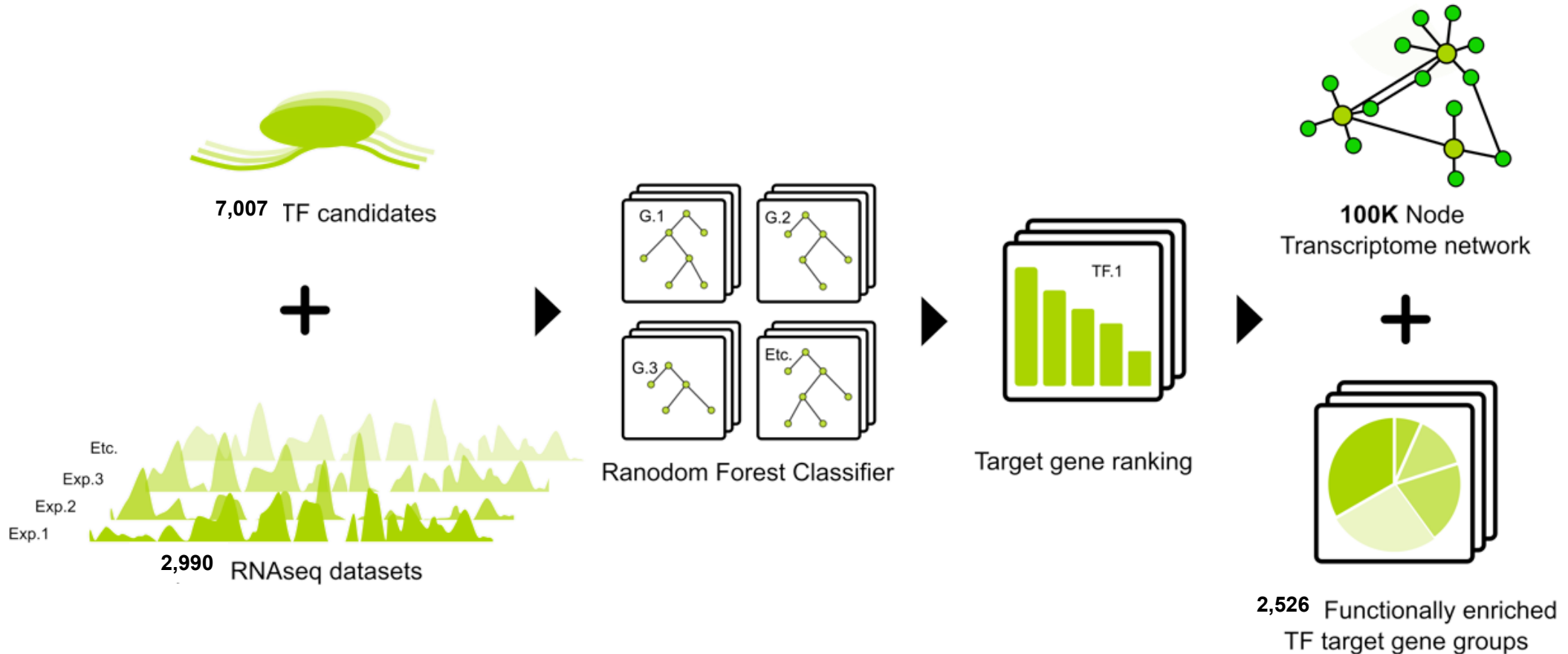


'shotgun proteome' (Express) – 8,525 proteins



# Regulatory Network Analysis

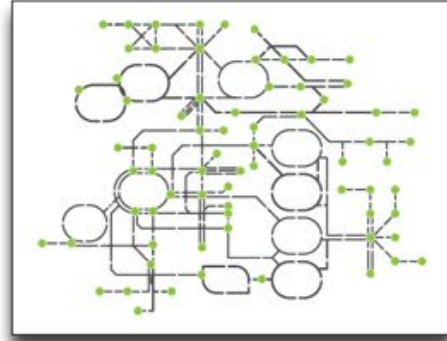
## Machine learning based Gene Regulatory Network (GRN) construction



# Metabolic Modelling

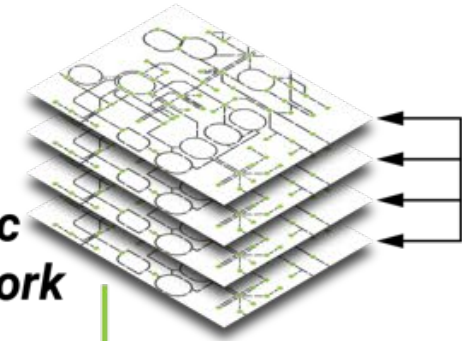
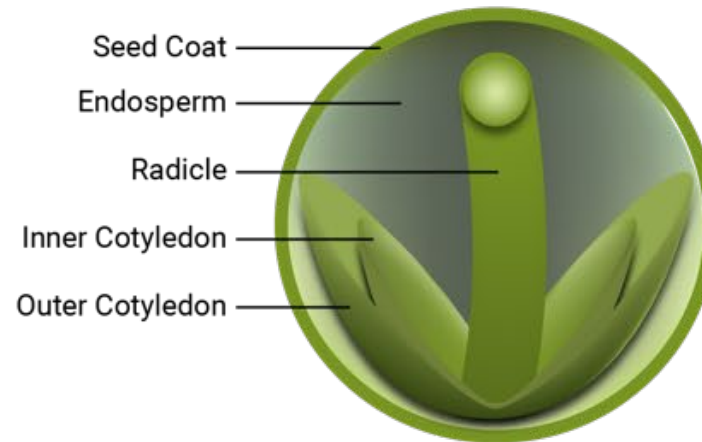
## Multi-Tissue Metabolic Model of Developing *B. napus* Seed

### Metabolic Network



Tissue-specific  
Objectives & Constraints  
based on Omic Data

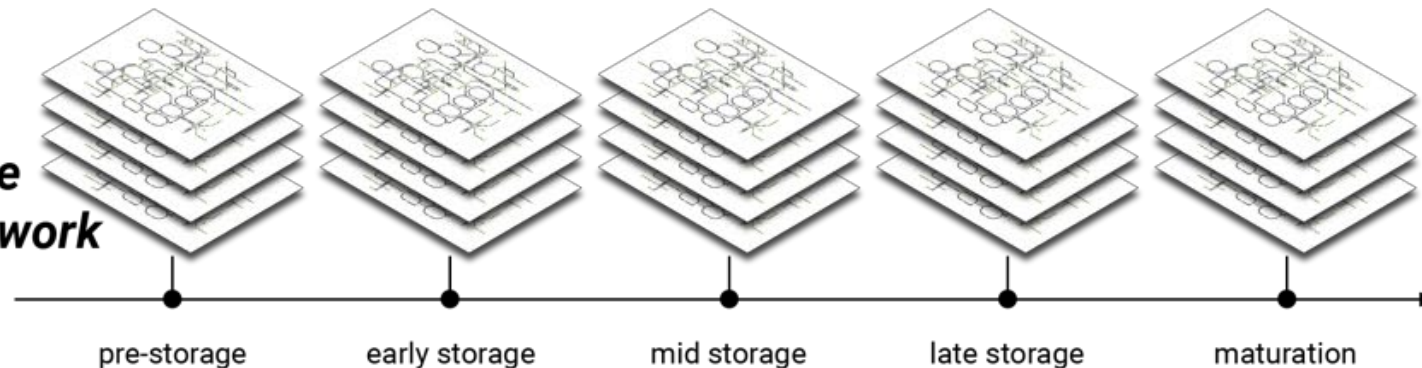
Tissue-specific  
Metabolic Network



Metabolic Network  
Reconstruction

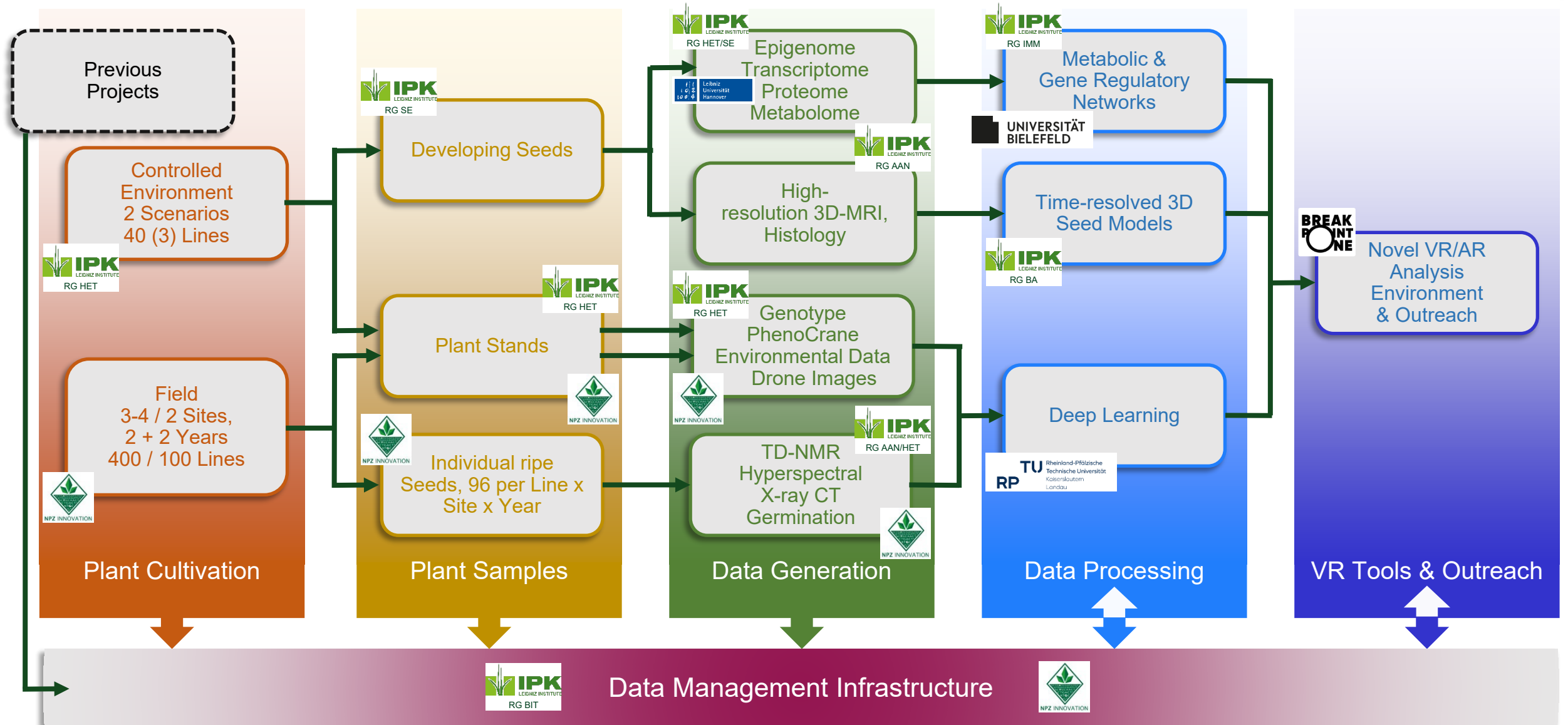
Prediction

Multi-tissue  
Metabolic Network



Stage-specific  
Objectives & Constraints  
based on Omic Data

# AVATARS – the Work Flows

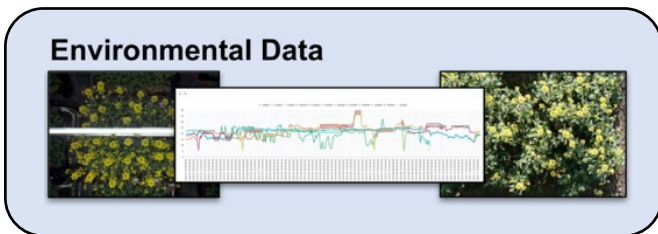
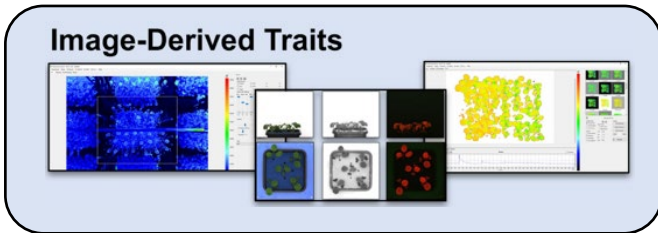
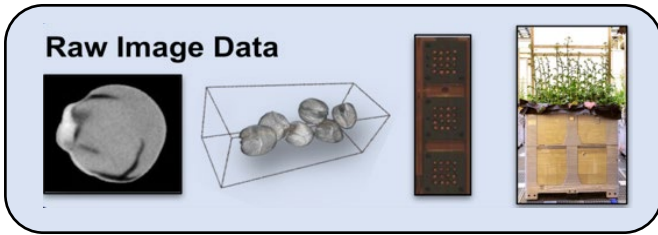


# Data Management Infrastructure



## Multiple Data Domains & Formats

Partner Data Acquisition Pipelines & Historic Data

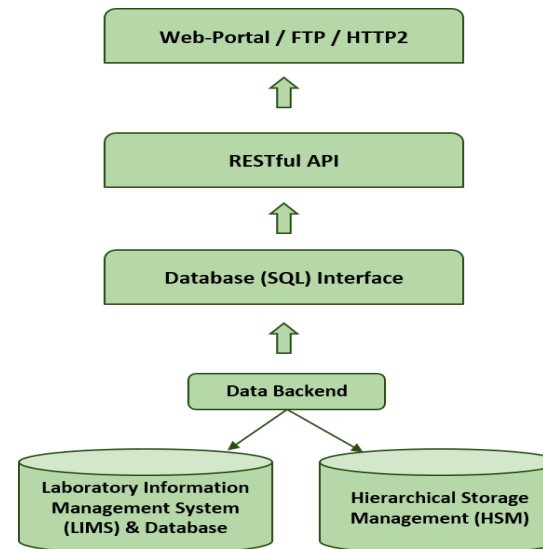


## AVATARS Integrated Data Hub & Gateway

Digital Twins: Connecting Digital Research Objects

1	MAT	DATA_TYPE	LOCATION_NAME	GENUS	SPECIES	SUBTAXA	NAME
8	L001HMOO20R01101T02	TD-NMR	MOO		Brassica napus L.	napus	L001
9	L001HMOO20R01101T02SS001	Single Seeds	MOO				L001
10	L001HMOO20R01101T02SS016	Single Seeds	MOO				L001
11	L001HMOO20R01N01	NPZ Seedbags	NPZI		Brassica napus L.	napus	L001
12	L001PHOH20R01	Field Phenotyping	HOH		Brassica napus L.	napus	L001
13	L001HHOH20R01101	IPK Seedbags	IPK		Brassica napus L.	napus	L001
14	L001HHOH20R01101T01	TD-NMR	HOH		Brassica napus L.	napus	L001
15	L001HHOH20R01101T01SS001	Single Seeds	HOH				L001
16	L001HHOH20R01101T01SS016	Single Seeds	HOH				L001

Data Hub: FAIR Storage & Access

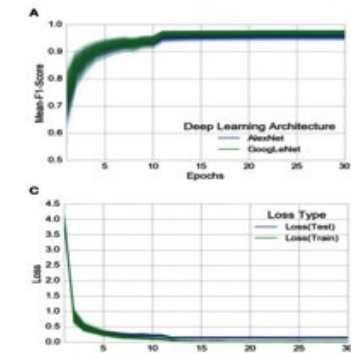


## Data Visualization & Analysis

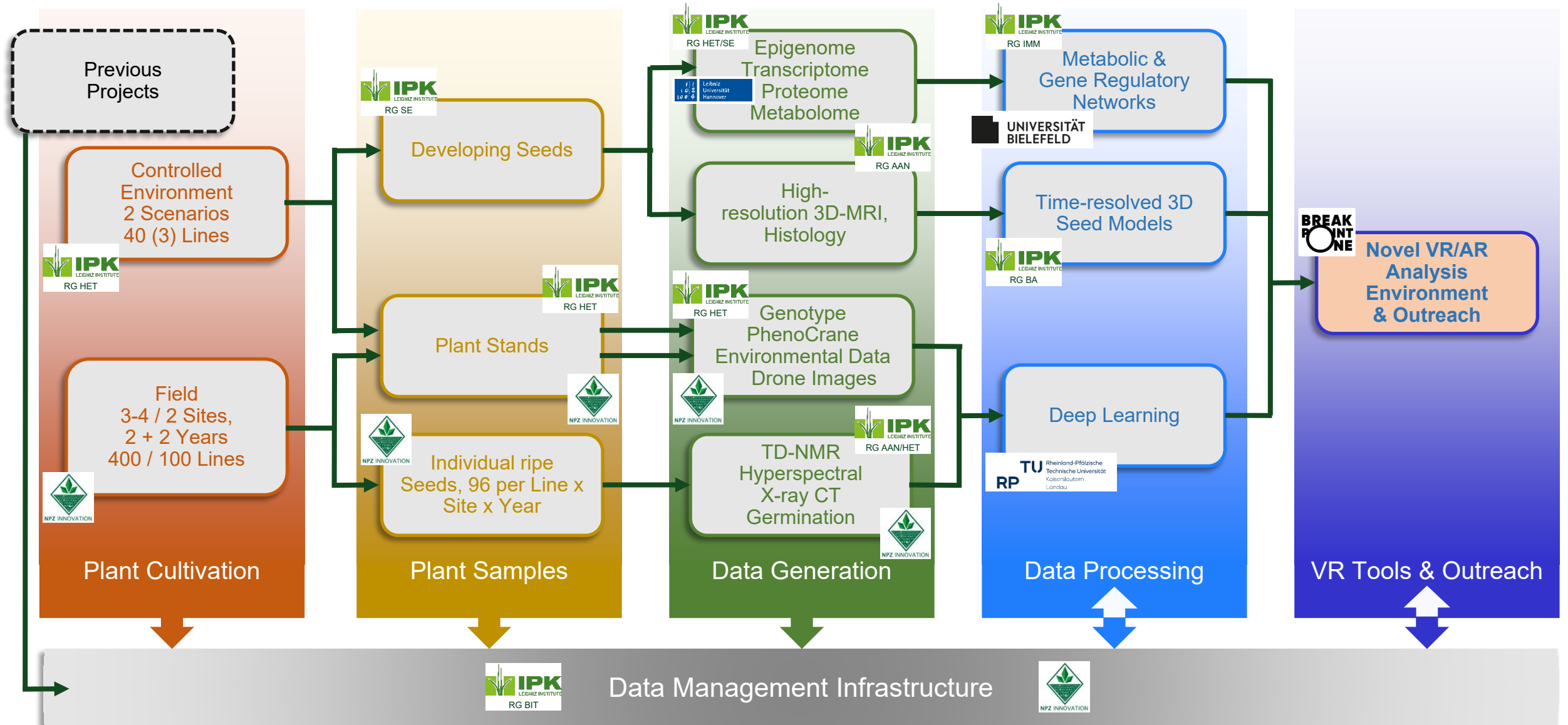
Explorative visualisation



Data analysis & model building



# AVATARS – the Work Flows



# VR for Science & Outreach



Research & Breeding



Education & Teaching

# Time-resolved 3D seed model – Virtual Seed



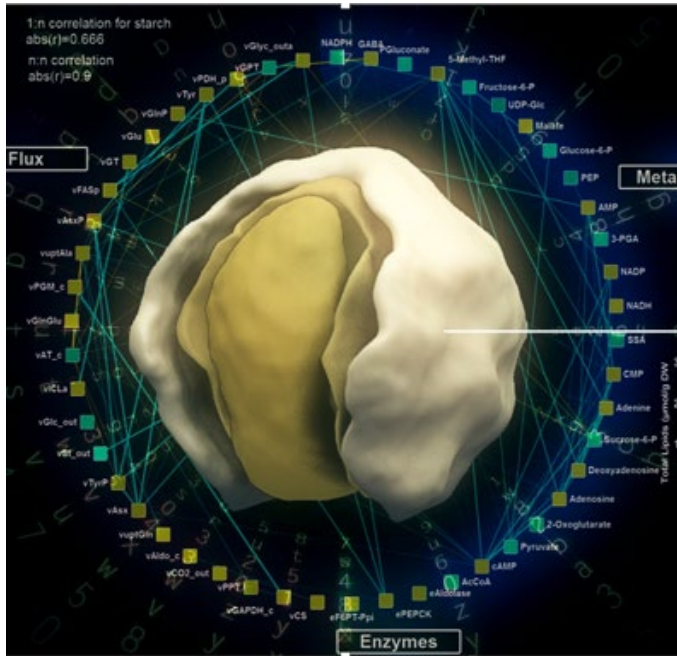
Center of a virtual and augmented reality environment for integrative and intuitive visualisation, evaluation, and exploration of complex data sets across multiple scales, domains and levels of processing



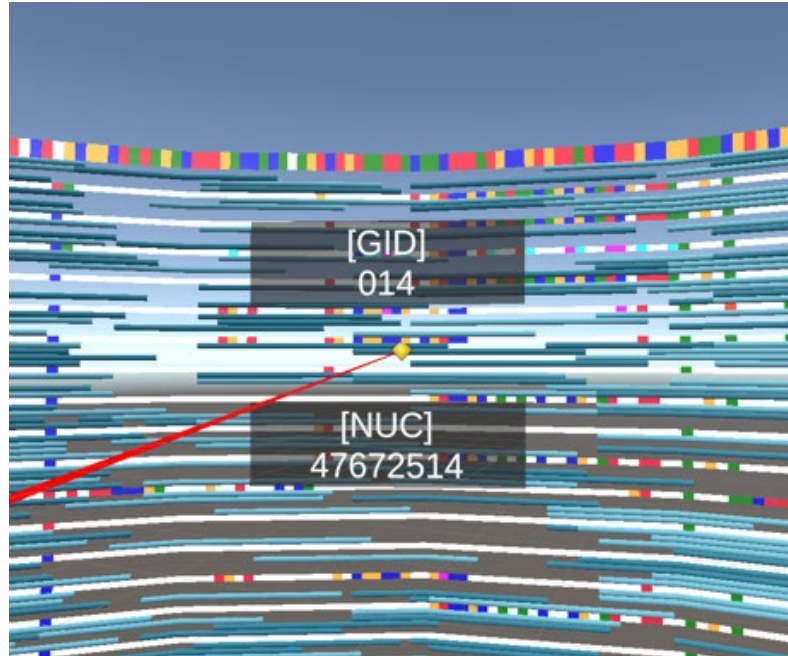
# Time-resolved 3D seed model – Virtual Seed



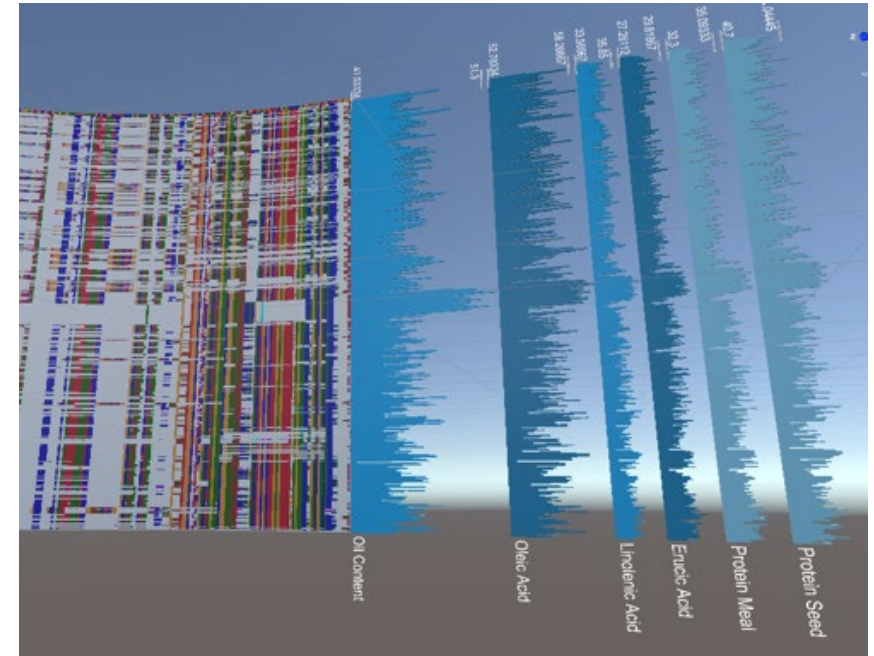
Center of a virtual and augmented reality environment for integrative and intuitive visualisation, evaluation, and exploration of complex data sets across multiple scales, domains and levels of processing



Choose stage and organ from dynamic 3D seed model



Display tissue-related transcripts aligned to genome tracks

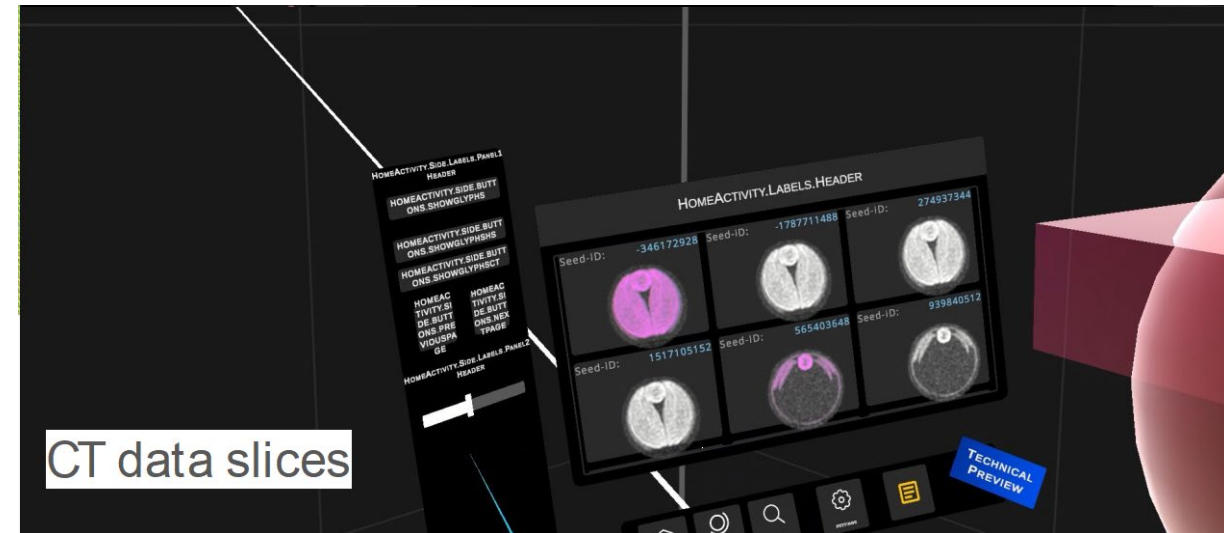
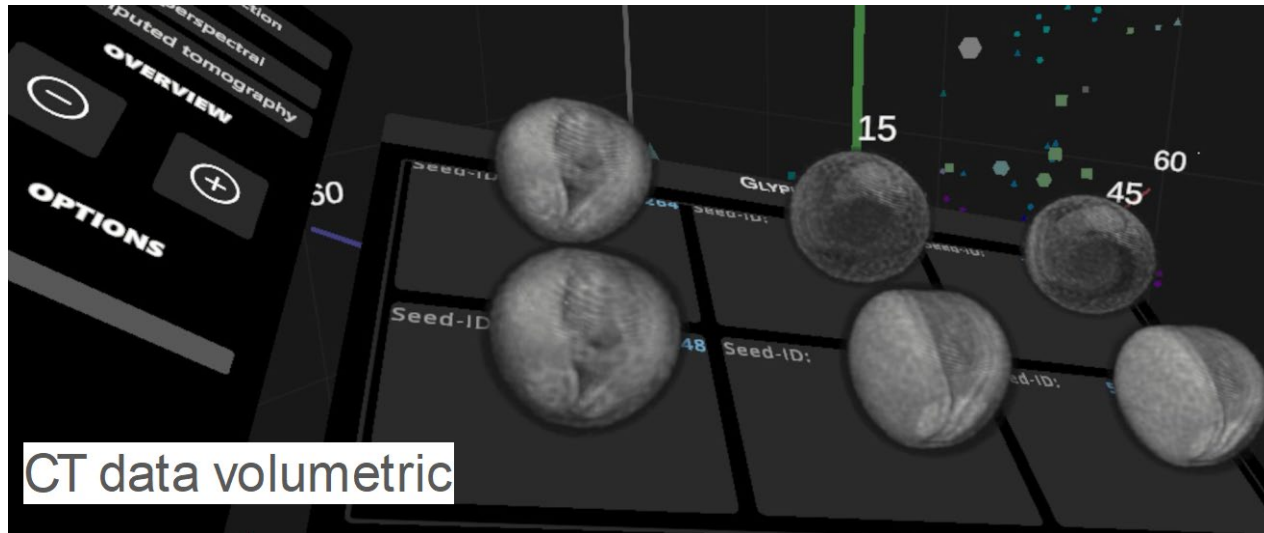


Relate several phenotypic trait values to genome tracks

# Exploration of 2D/3D seed data in VR



Center of a virtual and augmented reality environment for integrative and intuitive visualisation, evaluation, and exploration of complex data sets across multiple scales, domains and levels of processing



Visualization and exploration of x-ray CT images of seeds

# Exploration of 2D/3D seed data in VR



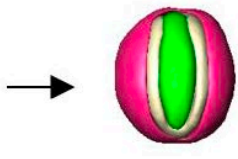
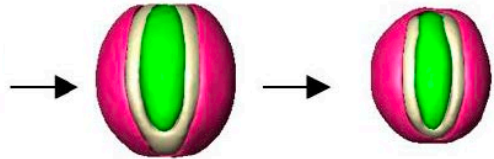
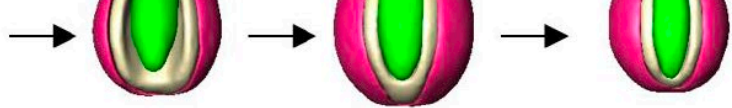
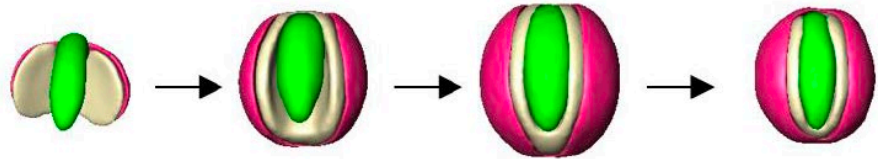
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3D structural organisation (organs) and changes:  
Average seed models across genotypes and stages

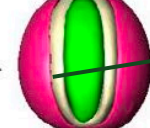
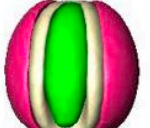
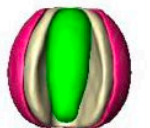
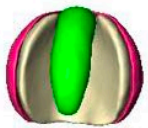
Organ-, stage, and genotype-resolved **multi-Omics data**

organ-specific mRNA expression  
 expressed (>1 tpm in 2 of 3 replicates)

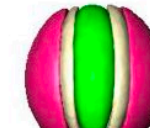
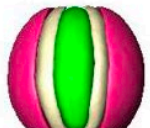
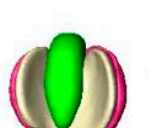
Express



AV1



AV2

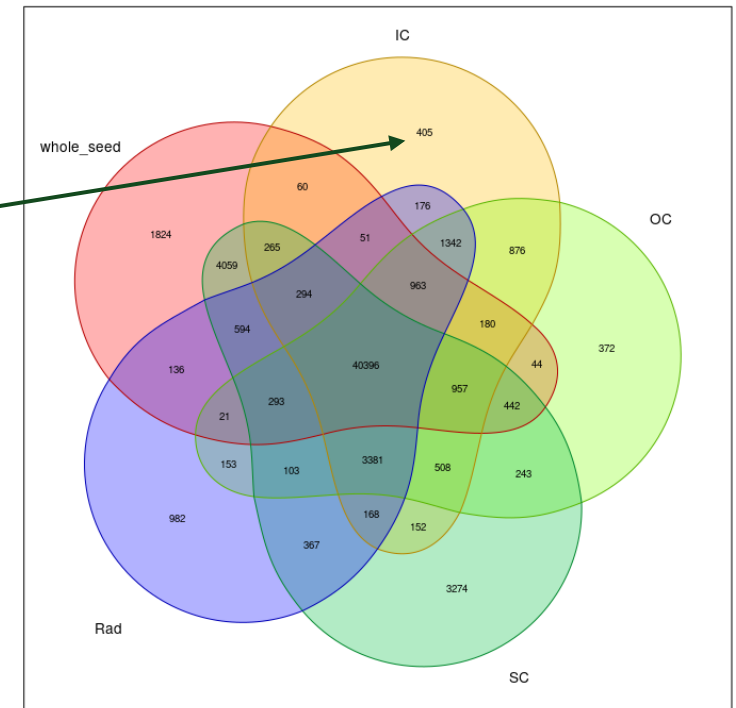


S2

S3

S4

S5



# Exploration of 2D/3D seed data in VR

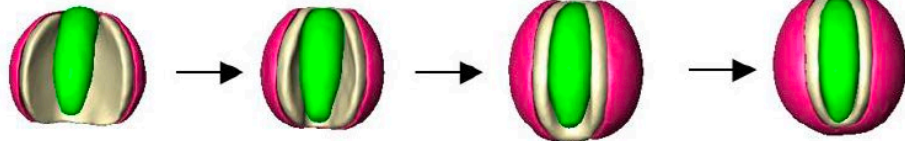
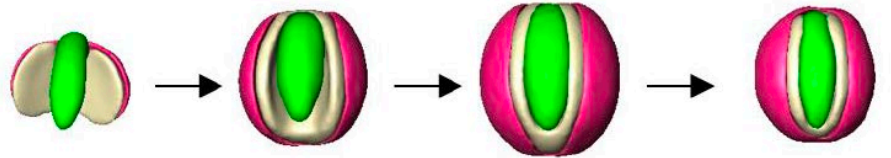
Center of a virtual and augmented reality environment for integrative and intuitive visualisation, evaluation, and exploration of complex data sets across multiple scales, domains and levels of processing

3D structural organisation (organs) and changes:  
Average seed models across genotypes and stages

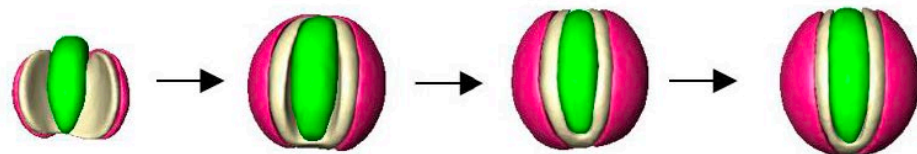
Organ-, stage, and genotype-resolved **multi-Omics data**

**fuzzy c-means clustering**  
(Express | inner cotyledons)

Express



AV1



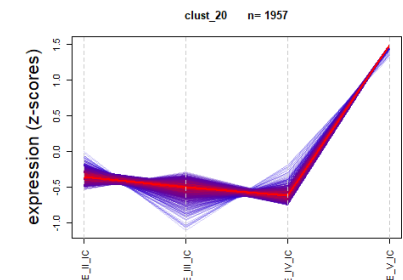
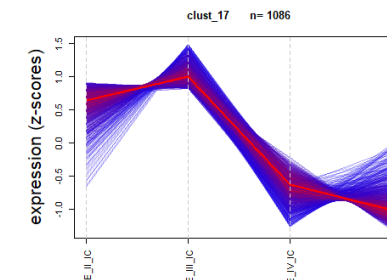
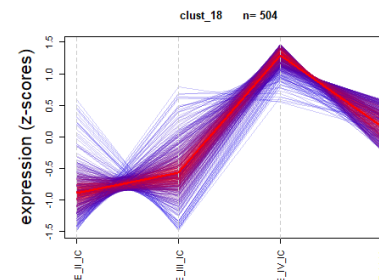
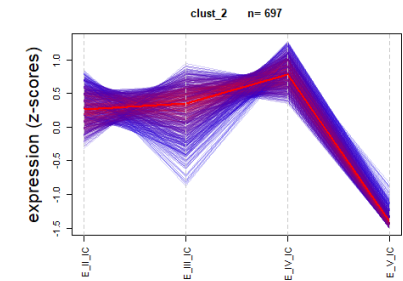
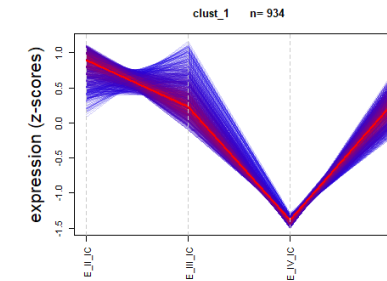
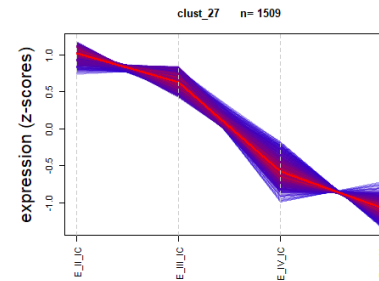
AV2

S2

S3

S4

S5



# Exploration of 2D/3D seed data in VR

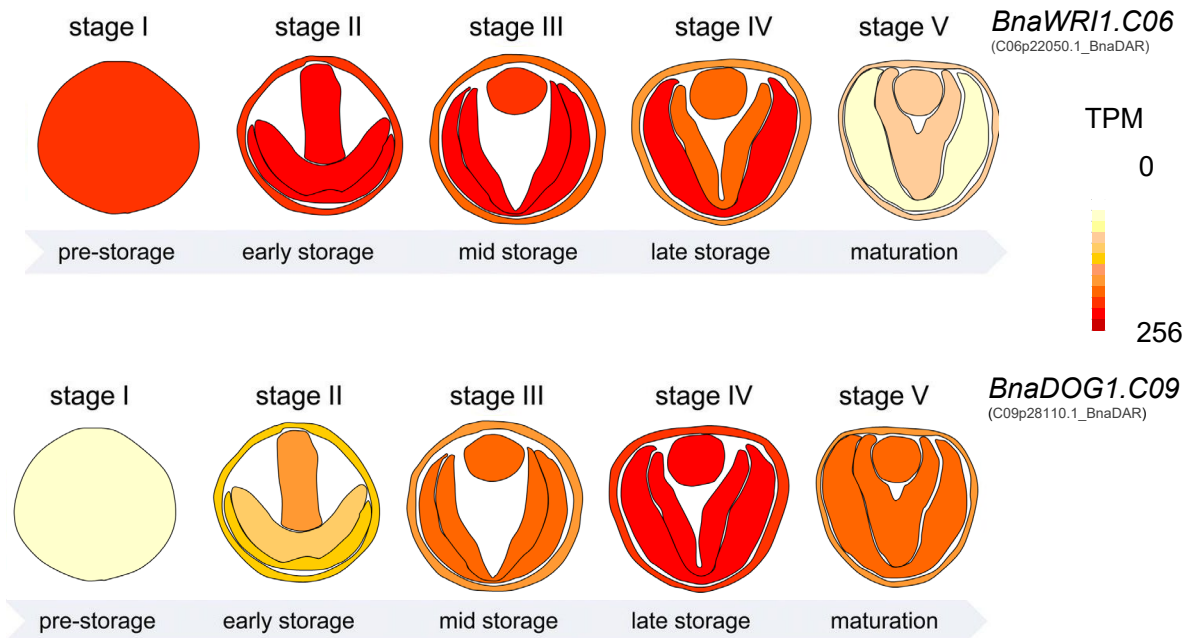
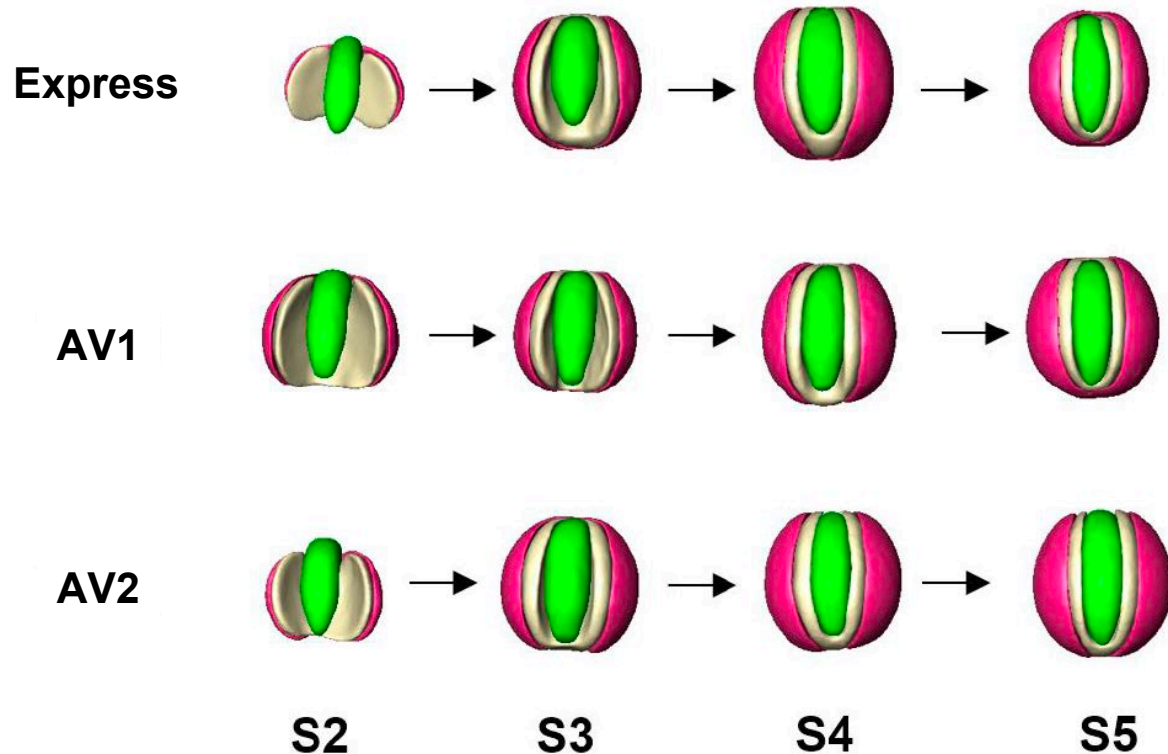


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3D structural organisation (organs) and changes:  
Average seed models across genotypes and stages

Organ-, stage, and genotype-resolved multi-Omics data

False color displays of organ-/stage-specific gene expression values



# VR for Science & Outreach



Research & Breeding



Education & Teaching

# VR Experience Plant Journey



The "VR Plant Journey" is a 15 minutes long room scale virtual reality edutainment experience

Federal Minister for Education and Research Anja Karliczek:  
*"This VR Plant Journey should be experienced in every school."* IdeenExpo 2019, Hannover

# VR Experience Plant Journey

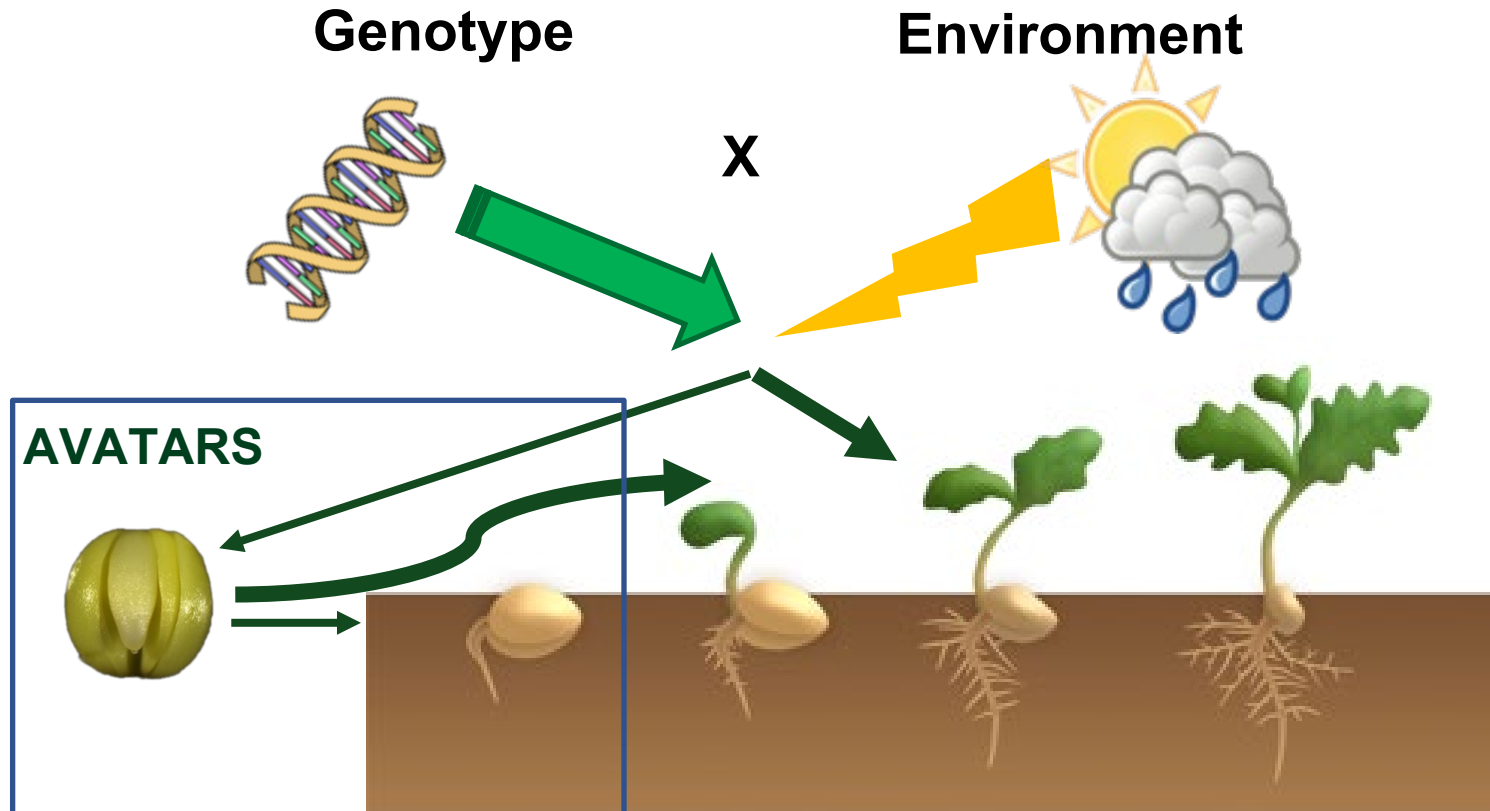


# AVATARS – outlook



## ‘AVATARS II – the next level’

an **integrated data science** project on seed germination, seedling growth, and crop establishment addressing **environment resilience** to mitigate consequences of **climate change**



# Acknowledgements



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**Lothar Altschmied**  
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**Evgeny Gladilin**  
IPK, RG BA

+ many technicians  
and gardeners!!

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**Stefan Ortleb**  
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**Peter Keil**  
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IPK, GS

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**Hans-Peter Braun**  
UHann

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**Gergö Kovács**  
**Sebastian Tusk**  
**Olaf Sacher**  
BPO





# Thank you!

[www.avatars-project.de](http://www.avatars-project.de)



@AvatarsProj



NPZ INNOVATION





# AVATARS – an integrative Data Science project



Genotype X Environment

**G x E !!**

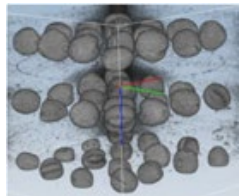
**Seed Quality**  
 Winter Oil Seed Rape  
 viability germination ability



**Field Cultivation**  
 Plant & Environmental Data  
 400/100 Lines  
 11 env. genotype  
 15k SNPs phenotype  
 weather data



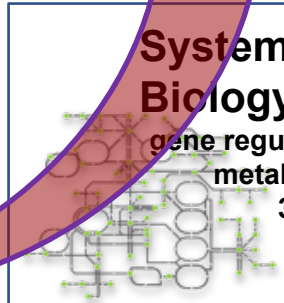
**Single Seed Data**  
 > 350.000 seeds  
 TD-NMR hyperspectral images  
 X-ray CT germination



**Deep Learning**  
 neural networks using ultra high-throughput data



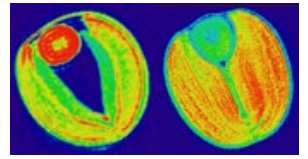
**Systems Biology**  
 gene regulatory network  
 metabolic networks  
 3D seed model



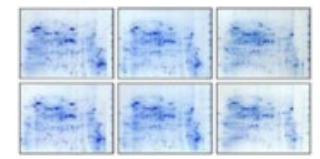
**Controlled Environment**  
 40/3 Lines  
 2 env. scenarios



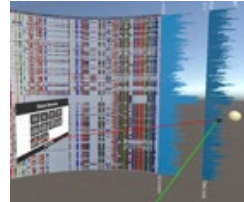
**Time-resolved Seed Architecture**  
 MRI Histology



**Time- and Space-resolved Multi-Omics**  
 DNA methylation  
 mRNA / sRNA  
 proteins  
 metabolites  
 phytohormones



**VR visualization**  
 improved human access to Big Data and support of efficient exploration and Science Outreach



**Plant Breeding 4.0**

**Seed Systems Biology**