

Sugar, Starch and Fibre Crops Network

Working Groups: *Beta*; Fibre Crops (Flax and Hemp); Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAPs); Potato.

The **Sugar, Starch and Fibre Crops Network Coordinating Group** consisted of four members: Lothar Frese, Germany (Network Coordinator until October 2009); Roel Hoekstra, The Netherlands (Network Coordinator as of October 2009); Martin Pavelek, Czech Republic; and Ana Maria Barata, Portugal.

The **Network Coordinating Group held its third meeting in Quedlinburg, Germany on 8-9 October 2009**. The meeting reviewed the Network budget and workplans, taking note that the budget for actions in Phase VIII was directed to the *Origanum* project of the MAP WG instead of funding several small projects for all the crops. It was noted that methodologies and tools for the *in situ* management of crop wild relatives applied for *Beta* and other model crops by the AEGRO project (<http://aegro.bafz.de/>) will be of interest to the MAP Working Group, specifically a survey data recording tool that was developed to assist *in situ* management of *Beta* species using the software tool kit CyberTracker. This tool kit, as well as a crop-specific application is freely available (see also Section 3.8 below).

It was noted that cultivation of flax and hemp has decreased considerably in Europe during recent years due to imports e.g. from China. Moreover, at the Centro di Ricerca per le Colture Industriali, Bologna, Italy, research on hemp has ceased.

The European Cultivated Potato Database maintained by SASA, United Kingdom, is progressing well, also thanks to the possibility for collection curators to enter their data directly via an online tool for data input (http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/databases/Crops/potato_cult.htm). The Wild Potato Database was also recently updated and is available as a downloadable system:

http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/databases/Crops/potato_wild_tuber.htm

The NCG is convinced that although this Network deals with a very wide range of crops, synergies can be created by a stronger cooperation in the field of data documentation and *in situ* management.

The report of the meeting is available at:

http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Networks/Indus_crops/Sugar%20Starch%20Fibre%20Crops%20NCG%203rd%20meeting%20Quedlinburg%20final.pdf

The Fourth Meeting of the WG on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAPs) was held on 29 September-1 October 2009 in Kuşadası, Turkey. The finalization of the crop-specific characterization and evaluation descriptors for the ten target species selected by the WG was given high priority.

Documentation of *ex situ* collections will follow the EURISCO channels and procedures; for *in situ* populations, members will continue to use their own tools until a common ECPGR database is developed for this purpose at the regional level.

The workplan for the ECPGR Network project for “Conservation and characterization of oregano (*Origanum vulgare* L.) wild populations in Europe” was agreed and will include: sampling of oregano populations, study of their genetic and chemical variability; documentation; and distribution of collected data. The number of project partners reached 19, with the University of Veterinary Medicine in Vienna as subcontractor for molecular and chemical analyses. The data collected within the Oregano Project would contribute to the selection of oregano accessions to be included in a European Collection according to the AEGIS concept.

Plans were made to expand the priority list of MAP species and to produce a document showing the level of threat and the Red List status for MAP species in Europe.

Appropriate areas for future collaboration were identified with the need to increase the focus on *in situ* conservation of MAPs; the potential of *in vitro* or cryopreservation methods to improve the status of safety-duplication of MAP collections, which is insufficient; the usefulness of micropropagation methods for rare and threatened species, for conservation and reintroduction of species into former habitats and for commercial production of plants and MAP products.

The draft report is available at:

http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Workgroups/Med_aromatic/MAP_4_Kusadasi_updated%20draft%20Web%20181209.pdf

An ECPGR-funded Network project was completed at the Julius Kühn-Institute, Quedlinburg, Germany, to redesign an application for updating Multi-crop Passport Descriptors and for duplicate searches for the European Central Crop Databases, as well as for updating the International Database for *Beta*.

The following **Network reports were printed:**

- Report of a Working Group on *Beta* and the World *Beta* Network. Third Joint Meeting, 8-11 March 2006, Puerto de la Cruz, Tenerife, Spain
http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Workgroups/beta/09_47_ECPGR_BETA_WEB.pdf
- Report of a Working Group on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants. Second Meeting, 16-18 December 2004, Strumica, Macedonia FYR / Third Meeting, 26-28 June 2007, Olomouc, Czech Republic
http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Workgroups/Med_aromatic/MAP2_3.pdf

The Sugar, Starch and Fibre Crops Network submitted one **proposal for funding to the AEGIS Grant Scheme**. This was prepared by the partner from Slovenia (*Origanum* and *Gentiana*).

Outlook for 2010: activities planned by the Network include: the Second Meeting of the Fibre Crops (Flax and Hemp) Working Group on 7-9 July 2010, Šumperk, Czech Republic and the completion of the oregano project (Inventory, survey and molecular and chemical analysis of *Origanum vulgare* L. in Europe).