

NETWORK

3.8. *In situ* and On-farm Conservation Network

Working Groups: On-farm Conservation and Management; Wild Species Conservation in Genetic Reserves.

The *In situ* and On-farm Conservation Network Coordinating Group consisted of seven members: Nigel Maxted, United Kingdom (Network Coordinator); Lothar Frese, Germany; Paul Freudenthaler, Austria; José Iriondo, Spain; Valeria Negri, Italy; Zdeněk Stehno, Czech Republic; and Jens Weibull, Sweden.

The project proposal for “Novel characterization of crop wild relatives and landraces resources as a basis for improved crop breeding” (PGR Secure, www.pgrsecure.org), under the EU FP7 funding scheme for Collaborative Projects, started its activity in March 2011. One of the goals of the project is to assist national PGR programmes to generate and implement conservation strategies for national crop wild relative (CWR) and landrace (LR) diversity. In joint collaboration with ECPGR, PGR Secure convened a workshop to discuss and agree on a strategic approach to European and national CWR and LR conservation that will result in the systematic conservation of these important resources across Europe—the first time a systematic approach has been taken to CWR and LR conservation at a continental level. The workshop, held on 7-9 September in Palanga, was organized by the University of Birmingham, University of Perugia, ECPGR and the Nature Research Centre (NRC), Lithuania and hosted by the NRC, and was attended by 102 participants from 38 European countries and the USA. National representatives were nominated by ECPGR National Coordinators – 36 members of the Wild Species in Genetic Reserves Working Group and 32 members of the On-Farm Conservation Working Group of the ECPGR *In Situ* and On-Farm Conservation Network were nominated, along with 30 *In Situ* National Focal Points (NFPs) and 31 On-Farm NFPs (some participants are members of more than one Working Group) (see also Section 3.7 Documentation and Information Network).

The main topics discussed at the workshop were:

- Revision / modification of already existing national CWR inventories (e.g. previously generated by the FP5-funded PGR Forum project)
- Creation of new national CWR and LR inventories where necessary
- Baseline threat assessment of CWR/LR extinction/genetic erosion
- CWR/LR diversity prioritization and *in situ* and *ex situ* gap analysis
- Creation/collation of desirable additional national data sets (e.g. distribution, threat status, use potential)
- Data quality and data standards
- Use of national CWR and LR inventories
- Traditional and novel characterization of CWR/LR diversity
- Development and implementation of national CWR/LR conservation strategies by the ECPGR Network members.

The workshop consisted of a series of presentations on the current state of the art of CWR and LR conservation in Europe and available approaches and methods for CWR and LR conservation, illustrated with case studies and followed by discussion sessions on the practical application of the approaches and methods, during which participants shared knowledge on current national activities and agreed on the way forward.

Participants agreed on the general approach to the development of national CWR and LR conservation strategies and the issue of funding the planning of the strategies was debated. PGR Secure will fully support the development of national CWR/LR conservation strategies in Finland, Italy, Spain and the UK and is also assisting Albania, Belarus, Cyprus and Czech Republic to develop national CWR conservation strategies. PGR Secure, via the project’s Helpdesk, agreed to provide a list of policy drivers that will help persuade governments to assist with formulating national strategies, along with guidance on identifying relevant national obligations and how to take them forward. The

workshop facilitators emphasized the need to design national strategies to suit individual countries, adapting the models discussed in the workshop in a flexible way according to available resources. For a full report of the workshop, visit www.pgrsecure.org/palanga_workshop.

In 2011 the project **AGRI GENRES 057 “An Integrated European *In Situ* Management Work Plan: Implementing Genetic Reserves and On Farm Concepts” (AEGRO)** co-funded by the European Commission, DG AGRI within the framework of Council Regulation 870/2004 ended. For further information see <http://aegro.jki.bund.de/aegro/>. This year also saw the publication of the proceedings from the AEGRO project final dissemination conference held in Madeira, Portugal in September 2010. The publication details are:

Maxted N, Dulloo ME, Ford-Lloyd BV, Frese L, Iriondo JM, Pinheiro de Carvalho MAA, editors. 2011. *Agrobiodiversity Conservation: Securing the Diversity of Crop Wild Relatives and Landraces*. CAB International, Wallingford.

This publication contains a multi-author paper that summarizes the State of the Art in European *in situ* and on-farm conservation (Chapter 43). It is hoped it may prove useful to the group not only in establishing a baseline for progress assessment but also in terms of providing a tool for lobbying national governments for funding for CWR and LR conservation and use. It was also agreed that the summary tables for CWR and LR conservation implementation would be put up on the PGR Secure Web site (<http://pgrsecure.org/>) and that the tables would be updated with State of the Art changes as they occur.

Finally this year saw the production of **the first Global Priority CWR species checklist** from which a European Priority CWR species checklist can be abstracted. The work was funded by the Norwegian Government and was carried out by the Global Crop Diversity Trust, in collaboration with CG Centres, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and the University of Birmingham. CWR are native or naturalized in 21 world regions; the region with the most CWR is Western Asia with 1142, the second richest region is Southern Europe with 1026 native CWR taxa. The Web-enabling of the database (<http://www.cwrdiversity.org>) provides an important tool to assist *ex situ* and *in situ* conservation and use, thus helping underpin future food security.

Outlook for 2012

Activities of the Network will continue within the framework of the PGR Secure project, with national CWR/LR conservation strategies becoming available for Finland, Italy, Spain and the UK, as well as national CWR conservation strategies for Albania, Belarus, Cyprus and Czech Republic

As part of the Sixth European Botanic Gardens Congress (EUROGARD VI) with the title “European Botanic Gardens in a Changing World”, to be held on Chios Island, from 28 May-2 June 2012, the Coordinator of the *In situ* and On-farm Conservation Network, Nigel Maxted, will organize a workshop on “Wild Species Conservation in Genetic Reserves”.