
IN SITU AND ON-FARM CONSERVATION NETWORK

4.8. 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.

Planned activities of the Network were primarily carried out within the framework of the EC FP7-funded 'PGR Secure project' (www.pgrsecure.org)¹. The project has made significant progress in the development of national crop wild relative (CWR) conservation strategies in Albania, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Finland, Italy, Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom. CWR conservation strategy development is also underway in Belarus, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey as a direct result of training and technical support provided by the PGR Secure project. Independently, Sweden has taken concrete steps in preparing a national conservation strategy for CWRs. Good progress has also been made in national landrace (LR) conservation strategy planning in Finland, Italy and the United Kingdom.

In addition to the training provided to national programmes in September 2011 at the joint PGR Secure/ECPGR workshop, *Conservation strategies for European crop wild relative and landrace diversity* (see www.pgrsecure.org/palanga_workshop), the 'PGR Secure' project provides a helpdesk (online and via direct email/Skype contact) (www.pgrsecure.org/helpdesk) and a specific 'PGR Secure' Web site for Spanish CWR has been created (<http://pgrseurespain.weebly.com/index.html>). The content of the 'PGR Secure' helpdesk Web pages includes conservation planning aids, data sources, Red List information and descriptors for information management, as well as useful publications, networks, Web sites and resources associated with past conferences and workshops. The project has also provided one-to-one technical assistance through in-country visits and the provision of researcher support.

A review of progress in national CWR and LR conservation in each European country was made available online (www.pgrsecure.bham.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/helpdesk/Progress_national_CWR_and_LR_conservation_Europe.pdf). The review was originally based on results of a horizon scanning exercise initiated at the Symposium *Towards the establishment of genetic reserves for crop wild relatives and landraces in Europe* in September 2011 (see www3.uma.pt/cem/aegro.ecpgr.symp/index.html) and is updated on a regular basis following communications with national programmes.

Issue 8 of the serial *Crop wild relative* was published in April 2012 with 'PGR Secure' project funding (www.pgrsecure.bham.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/newsletters/CWR_Issue_8.pdf) and includes contributions from several ECPGR WG members. *Crop wild relative* serves to highlight the importance of CWR as critical resources for the improvement of crops. It provides a medium to publicize information about the conservation and use of CWRs, including updates on CWR conservation project activities, national CWR conservation strategies, and the use of CWRs in crop improvement.

The inaugural issue of *Landraces* was also published with PGR Secure project funding in October 2012 (www.pgrsecure.bham.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/newsletters/Landraces_Issue_1.pdf) and includes contributions from several ECPGR WG members. *Landraces* is a medium to publicize various initiatives to protect landraces and to provide information on research activities focused on them.

¹ Project duration: March 2011– August 2014.

Other publications produced by the Network in 2012 include the report of the Joint PGR Secure/ECPGR workshop, *Conservation strategies for European crop wild relative and landrace diversity* (Kell et al. 2012) and the *Descriptors for Web-enabled National In Situ Landrace Inventories* (Negri et al. 2012). (full citations in Section 7.1, under 'Other publications (selective list)').

The latter publication includes the different types of information that were discussed at the workshop *Conservation strategies for European crop wild relative and landrace diversity* by the *in situ* National Inventory Focal Points, the ECPGR Documentation and Information Network members and the 'PGR Secure' team working on landraces, as well as the contributions of the ECPGR Secretariat and of Bioversity International, Rome.

As part of the Sixth European Botanic Gardens Congress (EUROGARD VI), *European Botanic Gardens in a Changing World*, held on Chios Island, Greece, from 28 May to 2 June 2012, the Coordinator of the *In situ* and On-farm Conservation Network, Nigel Maxted, organized a workshop on *Wild Species Conservation in Genetic Reserves* (Maxted and Kell 2012; full citation in Section 7.1 as above). The report is also published on the European Botanic Gardens Consortium Web site (www.botanicgardens.eu/eurogardwkshps.htm#wkshp5).

Outlook for 2013

Based on terms of reference developed by the Steering Committee (SC), two Task Forces will be set up to develop concepts for "*In situ* conservation of crop wild relatives" and "On-farm management and conservation of landraces". These concepts should be finalized by the end of 2013 and the SC will offer them to the European Commission for its consideration when developing a future EU *strategy for the conservation of genetic resources in food, agriculture and forestry*. The concepts will also be the basis for the conservation strategy of ECPGR for *in situ* conservation and on-farm management and will be offered to the European countries if they wish to use them for their relevant national strategies.