

## INTER-REGIONAL COOPERATION NETWORK

### 4.9. Inter-regional Cooperation Network

The **Inter-regional Cooperation Network Coordinating Group** consisted of four members: Frank Begemann, Germany (Network Coordinator); Petra Engel, Italy; Silvia Străjeru, Romania; and Ayfer Tan, Turkey. After changing job, Merja Veteläinen, Finland left the Group at the beginning of 2012.

Despite a number of interactions between ECPGR and the Treaty Secretariat during 2012, opportunities were not identified for joint workshops between ECPGR and other regional networks.

#### Outlook for 2013

The Near East and North Africa (NENA) Plant Genetic Resources Network planned a PGR Workshop on the *Implementation of the Regional/Near East North Africa Plant Genetic Resources Network Strategy: National, Regional and Global Roles* in Muscat, Oman from 18 to 20 February 2013. ECPGR was invited with the request to make a presentation on *Experiences of ECPGR with EURISCO as a Regional Platform for PGR Information Management* and to discuss opportunities for future collaboration, including a capacity building workshop, tentatively planned for the last quarter of 2013.

### 5. AEGIS INITIATIVE FOR “A EUROPEAN GENE BANK INTEGRATED SYSTEM”

Possibly the most significant development during 2012 was the formal creation of the European Collection with the inclusion of 143 garlic accessions maintained by Germany and the Czech Republic. The proposal *Plant Gene Access*, submitted in November 2011, passed the threshold of the European Union but was not ranked highly enough to receive funds in the Framework Programme VII Research Infrastructure scheme. Despite this disappointing news, a number of activities were undertaken towards the development and implementation of AEGIS and these as well as major achievements during 2012 are summarized below:

#### • AEGIS Membership

By the end of December 2012 the 33 countries listed below had returned their signed MoU to Bioversity International, compared to 30 in 2011. A total of 46 AEGIS Associate Membership Agreements between institutions holding *ex situ* accessions and the respective National Coordinators were concluded in 19 AEGIS member countries, compared to 30 Associate Members and 18 countries respectively in 2011. The numbers in brackets behind the corresponding member countries below indicate the number of Associate Members in those countries:

Albania (0), Austria (0), Azerbaijan (2), Belarus (9), Belgium (1), Bosnia and Herzegovina (0), Bulgaria (1), Croatia (1), Cyprus (1), Czech Republic (8), Denmark (0), Estonia (3), Finland (0), Georgia (1), Germany (3), Hungary (1), Iceland (0), Ireland (0), Latvia (0), Lithuania (0), Montenegro (0), The Netherlands (2), Norway (0), Poland (0), Portugal (0), Romania (1), Slovakia (1), Slovenia (5), Sweden (1), Switzerland (1), Turkey (1), Ukraine (0) and the United Kingdom (3).

#### • European Collection

- a. Based on the simplified procedure for the selection of European Accessions that was proposed in 2011, several Working Groups produced candidate lists of European Collection accessions.
- b. The first 143 (garlic) accessions were included in the European Collection in 2011–2012 through the acceptance of the conditions for their long-term conservation and continued availability by the German and Czech National Coordinators. These accessions have been flagged in EURISCO as the first European Accessions.
- c. IPK, Germany, offered approximately 20 000 accessions of its crop collections that had been identified as unique German accessions or Most Appropriate Accessions maintained at IPK for consideration by the respective Working Groups for their inclusion in the European Collection. Also CGN, The Netherlands, indicated their intention to take a similar approach in early 2013.

#### • AEGIS Competitive Grant Scheme

The outstanding final reports of two out of five selected projects of the First Call of the AEGIS Competitive Grant Scheme were received and placed on the AEGIS Web site. From the Second Call,

which was published at the end of 2010, five proposals were selected and funded. Two projects were concluded, their final reports received and placed on the AEGIS Web site. Two projects were granted a no-cost extension and will be concluded during 2013.

- **AQUAS (AEGIS Quality System)**

- a. The template for an operational genebank manual has been used so far by three AEGIS Associate Members (IPK and JKI, Germany, and CGN, The Netherlands), which have completed the manuals and made them available through the AEGIS Web site. Several others are in the process of finalizing their manual.
- b. As the process of revising the FAO *Genebank Standards* coincided with the AEGIS process, it was agreed with the SC to use, if possible, the revised FAO *Genebank Standards* rather than developing new standards. Thus, ECPGR experts and the Secretariat participated in the process (expert consultations and commenting on drafts) to revise and develop new standards for the following three components: 1) orthodox seed germplasm, 2) field genebank and 3) *in vitro* cultures and cryopreservation. This resulted in a final draft document *Revision of the draft genebank standards for PGRFA* which was discussed by the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on PGRFA at its Sixth Session in November 2012 (<http://www.fao.org/agriculture/crops/core-themes/theme/seeds-pgr/itwg/6th/en/>). The Working Groups reviewed the document *Revision of the Draft Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* and recommended that the Commission endorse the Draft *Genebank Standards for PGRFA (Draft Genebank Standards)*, as amended by the Working Group.
- c. Considering the fact that several Working Groups had already initiated the development of crop-specific standards prior to the revision of the general genebank standards, a harmonization process of the crop-specific and general standards has become necessary. This process is ongoing and a number of WGs have already decided to either accept the FAO standards as they are or to add a few crop-specific standards to the FAO list.
- d. The Secretariat drafted an *AEGIS Safety-duplication Policy* for the accessions that will be included in the European Collection, under the guidance of the AEGIS Advisory Committee. This was circulated in November 2012 for approval by the SC.

- **Web site**

The AEGIS Web site (<http://aegis.cgiar.org/home.html>) has been revised and kept up to date. The growth of the European Collection is displayed in real time, thanks to a routine which establishes an automatic connection with EURISCO.

- **Meetings attended**

The Secretariat attended several WG and other meetings, including Solanaceae, *Malus/Pyrus*, Wheat, *Beta* and *Vitis*, and made presentations on the concept and the status of the European Collection as well as on genebank standards. These presentations are available on the AEGIS Web site.

- **Publication**

Engels JMM, Maggioni L. 2012. AEGIS: A regionally based approach to PGR conservation. In: Maxted N, Dulloo ME, Ford-Lloyd BV, Frese L, Iriondo JM, Pinheiro de Carvalho MAA, editors. *Agrobiodiversity Conservation: Securing the Diversity of Crop Wild Relatives and Landraces*. CAB International, Wallingford, UK. pp. 321-326.

### **Outlook for 2013**

As already done during 2012, also in 2013 special attention will be given to the further selection and designation of accessions for the European Collection. Efforts toward defining crop-specific standards and the preparation of genebank manuals by AEGIS Associate Member genebanks will be given due priority. Efforts to formulate the reporting and monitoring components of AQUAS will continue in 2013. After the successful conclusion of the *AEGIS Safety-duplication Policy* it has been decided to draft an *AEGIS Germplasm Distribution Policy* to facilitate a common approach by all genebanks participating in AEGIS.