

ECPGR Leafy Vegetables Working Group

Progress report for the period June 2006 – June 2008

(Based on the work plans developed at the WG meeting in 2005 and 2007 in Olomouc (CZ))

I. RESULTS			
a. Comparison of workplan (milestones) versus results obtained			
Workplan (milestones)	Which results have been obtained?	Which aims/goals have not been (fully) reached?	Completeness ratio (%)
Update ILDB	Near completion, to be launched in 2008		95%
Development spinach database	Near completion, to be launched in 2008		95%
Development chicory database	Near completion, to be launched in 2008		90%
Update national databases	For the databases mentioned under the previous points, updates were received from the majority of European collections		80%
Safety duplication	Status overview near completion; Work plan designed within EU GENRES project	Actual arrangements differ strongly between countries	50%
Long-term storage	Status overview near completion; Most countries store between -10 and -20°C	Some countries still store above 0°C	90%
Regeneration protocols	Status overview near completion	Protocols for some minor crops still missing	90%
Collaboration in regeneration	Dutch-French collaboration in 2007; Dutch-Czech collaboration under discussion		75%
Conservation cultivars dropped from national lists	Confirmed by some countries	Progress for many countries still missing	10%

Minimum descriptor lists minor LVs	Developed for <i>Valerianella</i> , <i>Eruca</i> and <i>Diplotaxis</i>	Still missing for <i>Asparagus</i>	75%
Collecting missions	Completed in Ukraine and Romania; New initiative for spinach in Central-Asia in 2008	Plans for North-Africa still pending	70%
Collaborative research in chicory	Carried out within EU GENRES project	Plans within WG still pending	50%
Bilateral funding agreements	None	No agreements established	0%
Characterization and evaluation	Characterization of 1283 LV accessions and evaluation of 817 LV accessions within EU GENRES project; These data will become available via the website of the new databases		50%
Overview tables of regeneration(protocols), characterization and safety duplication	All near completion		90%
Publication descriptor list LVs	Minimum descriptor lists for lettuce, spinach and chicory available on ECPGR website; More elaborated lists for lettuce published in international journals (wild <i>lactuca</i> : PGR newsletter 2003, 134: 1-9	Minimum descriptor lists for minor LVs developed within EU GENRES project to be made publicly available	90%
Identification collection gaps	Included in the work plan of EU GENRES project	All, activity is planned at the end of EU GENRES project	0%
Improve WG communication	Improved insight in affinity of members to the WG	Establish full communication	20%

<p>b. Contribution to the four ECP/GR priorities for Phase VII</p> <p>1. Characterization/evaluation (including modern technologies) Minimum descriptor lists for <i>Lactuca</i>, spinach and chicory were completed by the ECPGR Working Group (Report of a Working Group on Leafy Vegetables. First Meeting, 13-14 October 2005, Olomouc, Czech Republic – available on the ECPGR Web site at http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Workgroups/Leafy_Vegetables/Leafy_Vegetables.htm). Within the GEN RES project minimum descriptor lists have been developed for the minor leafy vegetables lamb's lettuce (<i>Valerianella</i>) and rucola (<i>Eruca</i> and <i>Diplotaxis</i>). Characterization of 1283 leafy vegetables (LV) accessions and evaluation (pests and diseases, utilization aspects) of 817 LV accessions was initiated in 2007 within the GEN RES project. All accessions are characterized for at least the minimum descriptors agreed upon within the ECPGR Working Group. The development of common molecular characterization protocols for lettuce is planned for the future.</p> <p>2. Task sharing In 2007 about 25 French lettuce cultivars were regenerated by a consortium of Dutch and French breeders. This consortium indicated their willingness to be more helpful in regenerating genebank material in order to improve the access to genetic resources. The Centre for Genetic Resources, the Netherlands (CGN) acted as intermediary to initiate contacts between the consortium and the Czech genebank in order to remove backlogs in regeneration (plans under construction). In addition, a total of 1254 accessions of leafy vegetables are being regenerated by the project consortium within the GENRES project.</p> <p>3. In situ/on-farm conservation and development Thus far, this topic has received no high priority by the Working Group.</p> <p>4. Documentation and information Within the GENRES project the International <i>Lactuca</i> Database (ILDB) is being updated and databases for spinach, chicory and minor leafy vegetables are being developed. Requests for passport data started in early 2007 and database structures for spinach, chicory and minor leafy vegetables were constructed. Launching of the four new databases (with a common entry page) is planned for 2008. Characterization and evaluation data generated within the EU GENRES project will be made available via the website of the databases.</p>
<p>c. Relevance (regional / international)</p> <p>Did your work and/or outputs have inter-regional dimension? (if it did, give precisions) For the new databases it was tried to include also the main collections from outside Europe. Apart from the US collections, this appeared difficult to achieve due to lack of appropriate contacts and response. Plans for collections missions in North-Africa are still pending.</p>
<p>d. Lessons learnt (recommendations)</p> <p>Which lessons learnt are also relevant for other Working Groups? Breeding companies often complain about the fact that accessions of their interest are often unavailable due to insufficient seed quantities. Therefore, breeding companies are often willing to assist in regeneration as input in kind. This willingness could be more exploited by genebanks. Achievements in the plans of the WG have increased substantially because of the EU GENRES project. This is because the commitment increases when the activities of project members are sufficiently compensated financially. To speed up progress, developing joint project proposals that can be submitted for funding should be given the main priority within WGs.</p>

II. ANALYSIS	
a. Bottlenecks	
What were the experienced bottlenecks?	How do you plan to solve the bottlenecks?
Lack of communication and commitment by part of the WG membership. Approaching WG members by phone revealed that some are unable to communicate in English, some indicated that the main LV collections of their country are in another institute, and some do not have any affinity with the WG at all because their country does not have LV collections. It can be questioned why such persons have been nominated as WG member by their national coordinator.	Because the WG chair has no influence on the nomination of WG members, ECPGR should reconsider the current procedures in order to make sure that the most appropriate country representatives become WG member.
Low attendance of WG members at last WG meeting.	Related to the previous bottleneck, but also to the fact that representatives are often member of multiple WGs, making it impossible for them to attend WG meetings that are organized in parallel. Parallel WG meetings should be avoided in the future.
The fact that NCGs are strongly encouraged to prioritize WGs in the next phase is considered a threatening development. The budget of non-prioritized WGs will be insufficient to organize even a single meeting. This is expected to hamper the monitoring of progress, the development of joint project proposals and the implementation of the AEGIS philosophy. A worst case scenario may be that WGs that have not been prioritized will die a silent death.	A formal request not to prioritize WGs within the Vegetables network was send to the SC last year, but no definitive answer was received. A formal request will again be send to the SC in 2008.
b. Internal support needed (Secretariat, Steering Committee, other Working Groups, etc.)	
Support will be welcomed in the establishment of appropriate contacts with main LV collections outside Europe in order to further develop the databases and in the organization of collecting activities in North-Africa.	
c. External resources needed (collaboration, external funding)	
For the rest of phase VII no external resources are needed because part of the WG plan is carried out within the framework of the EU GENRES project.	