



European Cooperative Programme for Plant Genetic Resources (ECPGR)

AEGIS section extracted from:

2007 Progress Report

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

With the decisions made by the ECPGR Steering Committee during its Tenth Meeting in Riga in 2006 and the part-time appointment of the AEGIS Coordinator in December 2006 it was foreseen that AEGIS would be able to start being implemented. Many of the achievements are the result of joint activities with AEGIS partners and stakeholders, in particular the ECPGR Steering Committee, the AEGIS Advisory Committee and the Local AEGIS Task Force at Bioversity International. Progress made during 2007 can be summarized as follows:

- The ECPGR Steering Committee endorsed the revised Terms of Reference of the newly formed AEGIS Advisory Committee and appointed the following persons as members: Sergey Alexanian (VIR, Russian Federation), Béla Bartha (Pro Specie Rara, Switzerland), Frank Begemann (IBV/BLE, Germany), Eliseu Bettencourt (EAN/INIAP, Portugal), Walter de Backer (EC, Brussels), Erling Fimland, later replaced by Jessica Kathle (NordGen, Sweden), Gert Kleijer (ACW, Switzerland), Andrée Sontot (BRG, France), Silvia Strajeru (Suceava Gene Bank, Romania), Ayfer Tan (AARI, Turkey), Eva Thörn (SEEDNet, Sweden – she was elected as Chair), Garlich von Essen (ESA, Belgium), Jan Engels and Lorenzo Maggioni (ECPGR Secretariat). Additionally, an FAO representative has been invited, but this designation remained pending.
- Through an intensive correspondence process the Steering Committee members agreed on all the key elements of the AEGIS approach, whereas some issues were identified for requiring further discussion. The results are reflected in the final version of the Strategic Framework Discussion Paper (http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/AEGIS/Docs/AEGIS_DiscussionPaper.pdf).
- Participation in a number of meetings (Oats Global Conservation Strategy meeting at VIR in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation; EURALLIVEG Project Initiation meeting at IPK in Gatersleben, Germany; EUCARPIA Genetic Resources Section Meeting in Piešťany, Slovakia); Planta Europa Conference in Cluj Napoca, Romania; SEEDNet Policy Workshop in Banjaluka, Bosnia and Herzegovina; Second Meeting of the ECPGR Vegetables Network in Olomouc, Czech Republic; Ninth Meeting of the Forages Working Group in Piešťany, Slovakia) provided opportunities to create more awareness about AEGIS and to obtain feedback on the planned activities. In addition, a seminar about AEGIS was given to Bioversity staff.
- Participation in ECPGR-related meetings allowed discussion on the next steps of the AEGIS implementation process, in particular with the participating members of the two above-mentioned AEGIS Model Crop Groups. Special attention was paid to the development of the selection criteria to identify the Most Appropriate Accessions (i.e. the European Accessions) for each of the gene pools and to the role of the Crop Working Groups in this identification process.
 - As part of the long-term conservation strategy of the European Accessions, a safety-duplication strategy was developed and shared with partners for comments. Discussions were also initiated with colleagues from the Global Crop Diversity Trust and NordGen regarding the use of the Svalbard Seed Vault for safety-duplication of European Accessions.
- The Secretariat has been working on the revision and updating of the AEGIS Web pages (www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/AEGIS/AEGIS_home.htm).
- The Local AEGIS Task Force prepared a first draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that is intended to provide the formal basis for agreements between governments of the European countries and AEGIS on the establishment and operation of the latter. The first part of the MoU is an agreement between the governments and AEGIS; the second part is an Annex consisting of the joint agreement and undertaking between the ECPGR National Coordinators and eligible institutions in the countries to become Associate Members of AEGIS.

- In July 2008, a meeting of the model crop curators will be organized in Radzików, Poland, to advance the definition of criteria to select MAAs, the procedures to establish the list of MAAs and to discuss a Quality Management System. An economic study is also being carried out in collaboration with IFPRI, with the aim to develop an appropriate preliminary methodological framework and a tool to gather data with which to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of collection management in AEGIS. Endorsement of the MoU by the Steering Committee is expected to be the key decision to enable AEGIS to be formally established