

European Cooperative Programme for Crop Genetic Resources Networks (ECP/GR)

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AEGIS section extracted from:

2005 Progress Report

Summary

Within the AEGIS project for the establishment of a European Genebank Integrated System the four groups working on the model crops (*Allium*, *Avena*, *Brassica* and *Prunus*) have reached an advanced stage of preparation of their reports. The AEGIS Steering Committee convened in June and held a meeting with the project partners and with representatives of the Global Crop Diversity Trust. A local Task Force was established at IPGRI in order to give enhanced support to the coordination of the AEGIS project. The Task Force initiated the formulation of a "Vision Paper", describing the objectives and the advantages of a future integrated system, and proposing a mechanism and a process for its implementation. With the help of the evolving "Vision Paper", the concept of AEGIS was presented in several circles and on different occasions.

6. AEGIS project for a European Genebank Integrated System

In order to give enhanced support to the coordination of the AEGIS project, a Local AEGIS Task Force was established at IPGRI in March 2005, composed of Birgitte Lund (AEGIS project manager), Ehsan Dulloo, Jan Engels, Jozef Turok and Lorenzo Maggioni.

The first task of the Local AEGIS Task Force at IPGRI was to formulate a draft "Vision Paper" of a European genebank integration system, with input from the AEGIS Steering Committee.

Several meetings were then held in June 2005 at IPGRI headquarters, in order to present and discuss this paper with project partners and other actors:

- The AEGIS Steering Committee met on 20 June to discuss the draft of the "Vision Paper" presented to them by the Local AEGIS Task Force and agree on how to present and discuss this with the Project Partners;
- On 21 June a joint meeting between the AEGIS Steering Committee and the Global Crop Diversity Trust took place at FAO. The main purpose of this joint meeting was to share information, discuss collaboration and establish an effective link between the two bodies. The Trust is interested in collaboration with AEGIS and the ECP/GR. In particular, AEGIS may play a role on technical issues related to conservation strategies such as developing standard quality management systems in genebanks. It was agreed that the ECP/GR Networks could be helpful to ensure involvement of European institutions in the development of global crop conservation;
- The Project Partners had their mid-term meeting on 23- 24 June. The four crop subgroups *Allium*, *Avena*, *Brassica* and *Prunus* revised their workplans in order to meet the goals set out in the AEGIS Project Document.

Following circulation to the ECP/GR Steering Committee in October, the "Vision Paper" was thoroughly revised and turned into "A Strategic Framework for the Implementation of a European Genebank Integrated System". This document was resubmitted to the ECP/GR Steering Committee early in 2006 for endorsement.

Following the recommendation of the AEGIS Steering Committee, a proposal for concerted action, with IPGRI as the action leader and coordinator of six partners, was prepared and submitted at the end of September to the EU under the first call for proposals of Council Regulation (EC) No 870/2004. Due to higher costs than expected in the implementation of the AEGIS feasibility study so far, this type of fundraising has become necessary to enable the fulfillment of this study. The objectives of the proposal are: a) to improve the coordination activities and prepare the final report of the ongoing feasibility study on the four model crops; b) to improve exchange of the existing data of *ex situ* collections among all the ECP/GR member countries in order to be able to clarify the concept and indicate lists of the Most Original Accessions / Most Appropriate Accessions; c) to organize a seminar with the purpose of disseminating to a larger group of stakeholders the AEGIS "vision" and recommendations resulting from the feasibility study. A total amount of euros 95 964 was requested from the European Commission with this proposal.

A regular meeting of the ECP/GR *Prunus* Working Group (December 2005) and two *ad hoc* meetings of the *Allium* and *Brassica* Working Groups (January 2006) included discussion focused on AEGIS. During these meetings, the respective Groups were able to compare their views with the "Vision Paper" and to better formulate their proposals and their needs, as part of their reports for the AEGIS feasibility study.

The next steps of the AEGIS feasibility study include, in 2006:

- Preparation of four crop subgroup reports by the respective project partners;
- Preparation by the ECP/GR Secretariat of a draft of a Collaboration Agreement that countries would need to adhere to in order to join AEGIS;
- Compilation of the final AEGIS project report by the ECP/GR Secretariat;
- Final AEGIS project meeting during summer 2006;
- Submission of AEGIS project report to the ECP/GR Steering Committee, as an agenda item for the meeting in September 2006.

A **Web Site on the AEGIS project** contains all the information, relevant documents, meeting reports and updates on activities (<http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/AEGIS/AEGIS.htm>).