



**European Cooperative Programme for Plant Genetic Resources  
(ECPGR)**

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

During 2008, “A Strategic Framework for the Implementation of a European Genebank Integrated System (AEGIS) – Discussion Paper” was published in hard copy and was also made available electronically. During the 11th ECPGR Steering Committee meeting in Sarajevo in September 2008 a revised draft was endorsed and published as a Policy Guide by the Secretariat (see below).

The draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), that will provide the formal basis for the operation of AEGIS, was proposed for endorsement at the aforementioned 11th Steering Committee meeting. A discussion paper on the development of a quality management system for AEGIS was prepared for the meeting of curators and database managers of the four AEGIS model crops (*Allium*, *Avena*, *Brassica* and *Prunus*), that took place in Radzików, Poland, 1-3 July 2008 (see model crops progress reports on the AEGIS Web site: [http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/AEGIS/AEGIS\\_home.htm](http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/AEGIS/AEGIS_home.htm)).

An economic study was 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. Participants in the Radzików meeting discussed key aspects of their progress, such as the identification of Most Appropriate Accessions (MAAs) and the establishment of an AEGIS Quality System. These experiences were then reported during the Steering Committee meeting, where an entire session was dedicated to AEGIS.

Major agreements and developments that resulted from the two aforementioned meetings are listed below:

- The outstanding issues that hindered a full consensus on “A Strategic Framework for the Implementation of AEGIS – Discussion paper” were resolved and an updated policy document version was then published on the ECPGR Web site ([http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/AEGIS/Docs/AEGIS\\_StrategicFramework\\_PolicyGuide.pdf](http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/AEGIS/Docs/AEGIS_StrategicFramework_PolicyGuide.pdf)).
- The development of a quality system for the management of dispersed accessions of the European Collection was given due attention. The formulation of an agreement on so-called minimum technical standards by the partners concerned was felt to be one of the cornerstones of the quality system. Furthermore, an appropriate system of record-keeping of activities performed, as well as the development of an effective guiding and advisory approach (and not of “policing”) of the AEGIS partners were identified as key elements of the quality system. The SC requested that the authors of the discussion paper “Quality Management System for AEGIS” revise the draft accordingly.
- The so-called primary selection criteria to identify European Accessions were discussed and approved, and the term “selection requirements” was coined for these criteria as these are binding for the countries when accepting responsibilities for the long-term conservation. The previously named “secondary selection criteria” that are intended only for guidance of the selection process, especially of possibly unwanted duplicates, were renamed “selection criteria”.
- National Coordinators (NCs) were encouraged to ensure that all relevant non-confidential collection data were included in the National Inventories and transferred to EURISCO as soon as possible, thus facilitating the selection process of European Accessions.
- The SC noted the importance of establishing a clear road map for the establishment of AEGIS. The text of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the establishment of AEGIS was also adopted by consensus, subject to further consultation with the Nordic countries concerning the wording of one article related to non-Annex I crops. This document will provide the formal foundation for the establishment and operation of AEGIS and was planned to be sent as soon as possible to the respective NCs for signature of membership to AEGIS. Each of the NCs will conclude so-called Associate Membership Agreements with all institutions and organizations in their respective country that plan to participate in AEGIS activities.
- As defined in the MoU, AEGIS members will present lists of identified Most Appropriate Accessions for all plant genetic resources for food and agriculture to the respective ECPGR Working Groups. All the ECPGR Working Groups were expected to actively engage in establishing AEGIS.
- Specific budget lines dedicated to AEGIS were agreed for Phase VIII, including the cost of a Coordinator (50% time) and support for activities to be carried out by the Networks under a

competitive grant scheme. This opportunity is expected to facilitate the establishment of the European Collection and the management of the European Accessions.

During the year, the AEGIS and ECPGR Coordinators also participated in a number of the aforementioned (as well as non-ECPGR) meetings, to further increase awareness on AEGIS, to discuss the less well understood principles with participants and to receive feedback on the practicability of some of the concepts.