

More AEGIS MoUs signed and Grant Scheme launched



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As reported in the previous Newsletter (NL39, December 2009), the AEGIS Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was sent on 22 April 2009 to all the ECPGR National Coordinators for signature by the respective country authorities. Since the last update in December 2009 the following countries have signed the MoU: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, Poland and Romania, bringing the AEGIS members to a total of 21 countries.

As part of the MoU, National Coordinators are requested to conclude so-called Associate Membership Agreements (AMAs) with institutions that hold germplasm collections that a given country is prepared to designate to AEGIS as part of the European Collection. So far, Bioversity has received 17 signed AMAs from 9 countries. For a more comprehensive overview of these (and other) AEGIS developments please

visit the AEGIS website <http://aegis.cgiar.org/membership.html>.

On the more technical front the Secretariat, in close collaboration with a number of Working Groups (in particular with the *Brassica* and Forages WGs) and genebanks (IPK, NordGen and IGER), is in the process of finalizing a template that will guide genebanks in the process of preparing operational genebank manuals. This is one of the elements that the Steering Committee agreed upon as being a critically important component of the AEGIS Quality Management System, i.e. AQUAS. It is foreseen that this process as well as the actual genebank manuals will facilitate the generation of the generic genebank standards. The latter will form another important component of AQUAS.

One of the next steps for completing AQUAS will be the definition of crop specific

standards. The ECPGR Working Groups will be driving this process for each specific crop or group of crops.

The designation of the accessions that will become part of the European Collection, AEGIS' main output, is a process that still requires further fine-tuning and coordination between the respective national programmes and the various ECPGR Working Groups. Obviously this step is fundamental for the actual operation of AEGIS as it provides the foundation for the European Collection.

In 2008, the ECPGR Steering Committee in 2008 approved an AEGIS Competitive Grant Scheme with a total amount of €103 000 to be allocated to smaller project proposals that contribute to the implementation and effective operation of AEGIS. The first call for funding under the Grant Scheme assigned three grants for projects aimed at supporting activities that will directly contribute to the establishment and/or operation of AEGIS. The following projects were granted:

1. Assessment of unique material in the European collections of umbellifer crops, University of Warwick, United Kingdom (€10 580);
2. Towards comprehensive pea germplasm management for future use, Agritec Plant Research, Czech Republic (€10 450);
3. Cryopreservation of young inflorescence bases in bolting garlic for germplasm storage, Leibniz Institute of Plant Genetics and Crop Plant Research (IPK), Germany (€13 500).

A second call will be launched at the end of 2010 (for more information see http://aegis.cgiar.org/about_aegis/latest_news/aegis_grant.html).



A healthy tree of Prunus divaricata (plum) growing in Armenia. Photo: Ivan Gabrielyan, UNEP GEF Crop Wild Relatives Project, Yerevan, Armenia

ECPGR Stakeholders' Consultation Report

As commissioned by the Steering Committee at its 11th meeting in September 2008, an independent external review of the ECPGR Programme will be carried out to analyze its effectiveness in terms of its strategy, priorities, objectives, *modus operandi* and overall management aspects, including funding mechanism, hosting arrangements and impact for PGRFA in Europe. The independent external review will be carried out in Rome, during the month of July 2010, by a panel of three international experts, Thomas Gass, Marianne Lefort and Orlando de Ponti.

In preparation of the review, a Stakeholders' Survey was conducted, the results of which, together with an overview document on ECPGR's current status, issues and future perspectives, prepared by the ECPGR Secretariat, are available for download on the ECPGR homepage (www.ecpgr.cgiar.org).