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To the
ECPGR Steering Committee

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Letter of the Cereals NCG to the ECPGR Steering Committee

31 July 2008

On behalf of the Cereals Network Coordinating Committee, I am requesting the ECPGR Steering Committee to make decisions on the following two topics.

1. Equal priorities for the three working groups (*Avena*, Barley, Wheat) in Phase VIII

During the full meeting of the ECPGR Cereals Network in Foça, Izmir, Turkey (21-24 April 2008), each of the three working groups requested equal priorities for ECPGR Phase VIII. This request is also being supported by the ECPGR Cereals NCG. In view of the emphasis on starting the implementation of AEGIS in all three groups it is considered necessary that each working group has the opportunity for a full WG meeting to particularise the crop-specific details of the implementation process, and to agree upon and coordinate AEGIS-related activities and timetable. Without the option of a full WG meeting, the non-prioritised group would very likely stay behind the others.

Therefore, the Cereals NCG is requesting the Steering Committee to approve equal priority to each of the three cereals WGs.

2. Fund allocation principles for crop working groups

The present principle of fund allocation to crop networks, which is proportional to the number of working groups per network (Table 1), without consideration of the size of the constituting working groups, appears inequitable.

Table 1. Network Budgets (Euro) for Crops Networks (from Report 9th Meeting ECPGR Steering Committee)

Network	WGs	5 year budget (Euro)
Oil and Protein Crops Network	1	27,709
Vegetables, Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Network	7	193,957
Cereals Network	3	83,125
Forages Network	1	27,709
Sugar, Starch and Fibre Crops Network	3	83,125
Fruit Network	3	83,125
TOTAL	18	498,750

Networks with smaller groups thus receive more funds per network member than those with larger groups, ranging from 710 (Forages Network) to 1058 Euro (Vegetables Network) available per member (cf. Table 2).

Table 2. Present situation (adjusted from the previous table according to the present affiliation of crop WGs to networks), and suggested budget per network based on the number of actual WG members per network. The numbers of WG members per network and the numbers of different WG members were derived from the ECPGR website (situation as of May 2008).

Network	WGs	basic five-year budget (Euro)	WG members	different WG members	actual budget per WG member (Euro)	suggested adjusted network budget¹ (Euro)	difference (Euro)
Oil and Protein Crops	1	27709	34	34	814,97	31172	3463
Vegetables	6	166250	157	117	1058,92	143941	-22309
Cereals	3	83125	107	83	776,87	98100	14975
Forages	1	27709	39	39	710,49	35756	8047
Sugar, Starch and Fibre Crops	4	110834	110	108	1007,58	100851	-9983
Fruit	3	83125	97	82	856,96	88932	5807
TOTAL/Average	18	498752	544	463	916,82	498752	0

¹ proportional to actual number of WG members

The size of each working group is defined by decisions of the ECPGR member countries on how to spend their country quotas, and ranges from 18 (fibre crops) to 39 (forages). Countries with lower quotas will usually strive to be represented in working groups for crops of high priority for the particular country, whereas crops with generally lower priority will rather be represented by countries having higher quotas. Thus, the size of a working group directly reflects the overall importance of the crop for Europe, and it is determined by the joint decision of all member states on how to use their quotas.

Therefore, working groups of crops with the highest importance tend to have the largest membership, and consequently but paradoxically, will receive the least financial contribution per WG member.

With the present situation, a "rich" network receiving only the basic 100% threshold would have more funds per WG member available than a highly-competitive, but larger and therefore "poorer" network receiving 125%. Thus, networks with more members per WG would need much higher efforts in reporting for Phase VII and suggesting projects for Phase VIII than smaller networks for getting the same level of funding per member.

This situation appears unjust, and, therefore, we request the Steering Committee to seek ways to increase the funding *per capita* for networks consisting of larger WGs, for example by providing funds to each crop network proportional to the number of members of the constituting WGs.

On behalf of the ECPGR Cereals NCG

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