



Report of the ECPGR Activity “LINKAGES” Kick-off Meeting 12 January 2017, Maccarese, Italy

The “Linkages” activity led by Rete Semi Rurali was launched through a small kick-off meeting which took place at Bioversity International, hosted by the ECPGR Secretariat, on 12 January 2017. The meeting gathered the project partners (Riccardo Bocci and Gea Galluzzi – Rete Semi Rurali, Béla Bartha – ProSpecieRara, Theo Van Hintum – CGN, Centre for Genetic Resources), Petra Engel from the Italian Fruit Tree Institute (CREA-FRU), an external self-funded partner, and Lorenzo Maggioni from the ECPGR Secretariat. The meeting’s objective was to start outlining the survey instruments that will be used in the project to assess the extent to which genebank materials are accessible to direct users such as farmers, amateurs and seed custodians/savers.

Rete Semi Rurali, ProSpecieRara and CREA-FRU gave short introductory presentations on their own positions and views about direct access from genebanks, while CGN orally discussed elements of their policy about distributing to amateurs and users not engaged in some form of formal or informal collective research process. The exchange of challenges, points of view, opportunities and experiences continued, allowing an interesting exchange between more *ex situ* and conservation-oriented stakeholders and more on-farm, sustainable use-oriented actors.

The late morning and afternoon were devoted to outlining the main questions the project would like to ask the *ex situ* (survey 1) and the on-farm (survey 2) communities. It was agreed that Rete Semi Rurali would take the lead in developing a first draft of both questionnaires and circulate them for revision and inputs by partners by the end of February. Regarding the technicalities of how to disseminate the surveys, reach a good number of relevant stakeholders and maximize the response rates, the following solutions were suggested:

- for the *ex situ* survey, Theo Van Hintum and/or Lorenzo Maggioni will take lead in contacting National Coordinators of the ECPGR in all member countries, and ask for their support in either sharing names and contacts of curators of important collections in their countries, or in directly disseminating the survey to them. The project would allow one or two weeks for the National Coordinators to respond to this request for support, before considering another strategy. The latter would be to gather names and contacts through the ECPGR webpages, support from its Secretariat, and other formal or informal contacts project partners have;
- for the on-farm survey, respondents can be identified through Rete Semi Rurali’s and ProSpecieRara’s contacts in Europe, also thanks to their participation in the Let’s Liberate Diversity coordination and in Diversifood, a Horizon2020 project. In addition, a list of relevant on-farm movements can be consulted in the EU Preparatory Action for Genetic Resources. It was decided to follow a two-tier strategy for the on-farm questionnaire, i.e. to first identify and reach out to representatives of on-farm/seed saving associations or networks, and then to reach out to individuals within these networks, to cover the entire range of potential “direct users” who may be interested in genebank materials.

Finally, partners agreed that ideally, preliminary drafts of the survey instruments could be shared during the Diversifood annual meeting at the end of February 2017, as a means to test the strategy and approach with relevant stakeholders gathered in this project.