

Progress with the implementation of AEGIS



www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/AEGIS/AEGIS_home.htm



*Prunus, one of the AEGIS model crops.
Photo: J. Engels, Bioversity International*

Since May 2007 a number of activities were implemented by the various AEGIS partners and stakeholders, in particular the ECPGR Steering Committee, the AEGIS Advisory Committee, the Local AEGIS Task Force as well as the staff members of the Coordination Unit. The main achievements

can be summarized as follows:

- General agreement among the Steering Committee members on the key elements of the AEGIS approach. These are included in the Strategic Framework document that will be published in due course.
- The Local AEGIS Task Force prepared a first draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that is intended to provide the formal basis for agreements

between governments of the European countries and AEGIS on the operation of the latter. A first draft was shared with the AEGIS Advisory Committee for comments. The first part of the MOU is an agreement between the governments and AEGIS; the second part is the Annex consisting of a joint agreement and undertaking between the ECPGR National Coordinators and eligible institutions in the countries to become Associated Members of AEGIS. The MOU consists of the following articles:

1. Establishment of AEGIS;
2. Countries and regional organizations eligible for membership in AEGIS;
3. Objectives of AEGIS;
4. Relationship of AEGIS with the European Cooperative Programme for Plant Genetic Resources (ECPGR);
5. Responsibilities of members of AEGIS;
6. Responsibilities of ECPGR National Coordinators with respect to AEGIS;
7. General principles

applicable to European Accessions under AEGIS

8. Associate membership of AEGIS;
 9. The usual legal articles on entry into force, amendments, withdrawal etc. as well as the depositary of the MOU.
- The implementation activities undertaken by the four model crops have focused largely on defining a list of Most Appropriate Accessions, as well as on the development of a quality management system for each of the crops.
 - Several meetings were attended by members of the Coordination Unit to update the participants on AEGIS and to request feedback on specific topics. Meetings attended include EUCARPIA Genetic Resources Section, Planta Europa, a SEEDNet policy workshop and the ECPGR Vegetables Network and Forages Working Group. Where applicable, travel reports have been made available on the newly developed AEGIS Web site (www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/AEGIS/AEGIS_home.htm).

On-farm Conservation and Management Task Force meeting

The third meeting of the On-farm Conservation and Management Task Force (TF) was hosted in Ljubljana, 2-3 October 2007, by the Agricultural Institute of Slovenia, in collaboration with the Slovenian Institute of Hop Research. The meeting was attended by 21 country representatives, a larger group than ever before, testifying an increased interest in on-farm activities. The TF took note of the newly established dedicated Web site (www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Networks/Insitu_onfarm/OnfarmTF_intro.htm), where contacts, activities, bibliographies and related documents provided by the TF members were being uploaded. A new version of minimum descriptors for the documentation of on-farm conservation and management activities was proposed by the Suceava genebank, Romania and the University of Perugia, Italy. These were being tested in ongoing missions carried out on the Apuseni mountains and will be open for further refinement and suggestions by the Task Force.

The importance of unconventional information (grey literature) and guidelines to find these sources were described by Zdenek Stehno (Czech Republic) and Beate Schierscher-Viret (Switzerland), who also presented the Swiss database for the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, which is rich in historical and bibliographic information on Swiss traditional crops and varieties (www.bdn.ch).

Two case studies on "On-farm management of fodder beets in Germany" and "Common bean on farm conservation in Italy" were presented by Lothar Frese (Germany) and Valeria Negri (Italy) to serve as possible models for the preparation of similar studies in other countries.

Pedro Moreira (Portugal) presented possible options for promoting on-farm conservation in Europe. The status of progress of the approval of the so-called "Conservation varieties" directive was outlined by Paul Freudenthaler, Austria. This directive is expected to provide derogations for marketing of seed of landraces and varieties threatened by genetic erosion. Controversial points remain the geographical and quantitative restrictions for the marketing of seeds. The TF resolved to establish a sub-group to prepare a consensus position on this directive from the perspective of the genetic conservation of landraces diversity.

Among the plans made for future activities, the TF agreed to further strengthen the links between the TF and the ECPGR Crop related Networks and also to take on the role of developing landraces data structures for the creation of European inventories. The TF also agreed to undertake the preparation of a book describing, with a European perspective, some methodological approaches to conserve landraces on-farm, as well as methodologies to establish on-farm national inventories. It was considered important that the TF receive the inputs of plant breeders, farmer organizations, organic agriculture movements and NGOs in the future, and representatives of these categories will be invited to be associate members of the Task Force.

National experiences on on-farm conservation were described in 20 posters. Abstracts of their content will be included in the report of the meeting, which will be published by the ECPGR Secretariat in electronic form. V. Negri was reconfirmed as Chair of the Task Force.