

**Report about the progress made by the Flax and Hemp Working Group during
the first part of Phase IX (2014-2015)
(M. Pavelek, Chair of FHWG)**

A.1. AEGIS-related tasks

History

The first mention concerning "A European Genebank Integrated System" (AEGIS) was discussed during the second meeting of FHWG held in Velké Losiny, Czech Republic on 7-9 July, 2010. This was the first exposure of the WG to AEGIS, then no formal workplan had been drawn but the following recommendations and decisions were agreed upon:

- it was recommended that all members familiarize themselves with the available documentation (<http://www.aegis.cgiar.org/>)
- the participants agreed to suggest Most Appropriate Accessions (MAAs) to the European collection. However, since the information on hemp was very scarce, the WG decided to concentrate first on flax
- after the meeting a "List of selection criteria for flax accessions" has been spread among the WG members by the WG chair
- various aspects of the practical implementation of AEGIS were taken into the consideration, such as:
 - Value of the European Collection (EC): since the accessions selected for the European Collection will be available freely, some of the most valuable accessions (e.g., higher yielding) may not be selected since they could potentially be a source of income. This entails the risk of ending up with an EC that contains only the less valuable accessions, while the best ones would be available only from the private sector and on payment.
 - Cost issue: it was cautioned by the participants that the selection process of the MAAs will be time-consuming and involve costs that cannot be supported by the institutes. There should be a financial contribution from ECPGR/AEGIS. It was reiterated that participation is based on the principle of "input in kind" for the benefit of all.
 - It was also noted that WG members have limited power and their decisions have to be confirmed by higher management levels. This issue might be critical in particular for countries that have not yet signed the MoU for AEGIS.

Present

The set of 395 accessions chosen by the WG chair for AEGIS from the Czech National Collection (CNC) and International Flax Data Base (IFDB) was sent to Bioversity International and also

all FHWG members were invited to contribute with the respective appropriate accessions chosen from their national collections. However this process was not adopted by the Bioversity International due to not keeping the right procedure. It means the chosen candidates have to be approved by the National Coordinator at first. It was carried out the next year in 2014. Unfortunately despite of all the effort of the WG chairman any feedback between the chairman and the WG members was not mentioned and any progress in AEGIS development was not stated. Now the whole situation stagnates I think and I have not any information how is the progress in the individual countries in this task.

A-2 Other tasks:

During the period 2014 – 2015 the FHWG chair spent many times to contact by e-mails or personal contacts the FHWG members in order to inform them about the ECPGR proposal calls, new rules for the organisation of ECPGR activities, various ECPGR events, initiatives, opportunities.

The chairman himself was involved to the project of bilateral co operation with Russian Federation for flax genetic resources evaluation and characterization. A part of Czech National Collection and two Russian Collections placed in Torzhok and St. Petersburg were evaluated especially from the point of qualitative characters of the seed view. There were evaluated fatty acid content, content of lignans and cyanogenic glycosides as well and detected appropriate genotypes for breeding programmes of both countries.

Among FHWG members the templates for orthodox seeds and field genebanks standards in the framework of AQUAS were spread in order to start mutual discussion and two rounds of revision about the standards generally used. The process is still in progress now. Unfortunately it seems the feedback is very poor and the reaction was received from three countries only, Latvia, Poland and Germany. It is supposed to finalize this process till the end of April 2016.

The chair has also involved the members of WG to take part in international conference on Natural Fibres “From nature to market” held in Azores, Portugal, on April 27-29, 2015. whose some aims were in line of the scope and objective of ECPGR. The chair himself gave a lecture “Yielding parameters of stem and fibre of hemp (*Cannabis sativa*) in the Czech Republic.

General comments and conclusions

Like in other working groups only few members deal as pro-active members while the most of them are non active and do not react or respond to any stimulus. Most of the activities still remains on chair's shoulders. I am really disappointed with this situation and I am surprised with very low level of interest. I am convinced that lot of activities in the branch of flax and hemp is carried out outside the Flax and Hemp Working Group on national level of countries involved into the WG. In addition I found out that the composition of WG still changes, now there is 48 members from 24 countries (ALB, AUT, AZE, BLR, BIH, BGR, CZE, FRA, GEO, DEU, GRC, HUN, LVA, LTU, POL, PRT, ROU, RUS, SRB, SVN, SWE, SWZ, TUR, UKR). I do not know some of them personally and finally I was informed that most people who deal with flax or hemp are admitted into the Group automatically. My question is:

“Why ?” if they do not want to work actively and to share responsibility for the WG speaking and acting why should they be adopted in the group ?. I waste a lot of time and spend a lot of energy still to send reminding messages, hoping to receive answer/results in due time ! It is not motivation for the chair´s work.

My proposal as the chairman of Flax and Hemp Working Group is:

- 1) to reduce the number of members and to leave only those who are willing to co operate actively
- 2) to ask the staff of ECPGR to prepare a questionnaire connected with above mentioned and to spread it among the FHWG members in co operation with the chair
- 3) to conduct a survey among the members of FHWG in order to found out their real interest to work in the WG
- 4) based on the received results to create a new composition of FHWG
- 5) further to adopt only those members who want to be active
- 6) for future to evaluate not only the work of chairman but also the work and activities of WG members

Venue : Šumperk, Czech Republic
Date : March 24, 2016

Chairman of FHWG : Martin Pavelek