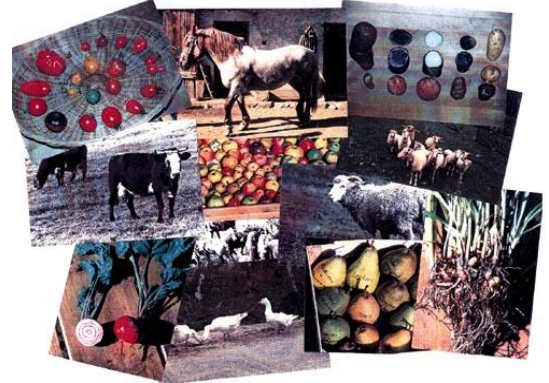




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Agro-Biodiversity is Important

Biodiversity is not only about wildlife, it is about also the richness of agricultural breeds and seeds. Today both wildlife and agro-biodiversity are endangered. This agro-biodiversity is essential for our food security. Agro-biodiversity is endangered because many old breeds have been replaced by high performance breeds, which produce more meat and milk. Old species of plants are replaced by high yielding crops. This process was considered economically necessary but has led to the critical endangerment of many traditional breeds. Some breeds have even become extinct, others have only a few living examples still in existence.



Even though many of the old breeds and varieties are not as productive as their modern counterparts, they possess qualities such as high fertility, hardiness and resistance against harsh weather conditions and disease, all of which could be very important in a changing economic and climatic situation. The traditional breeds and varieties have been adapted over generations to satisfy the needs of farmers and the conditions of their local environment. They are not only genetically interesting, they also are a piece of cultural heritage.

In order to conserve endangered breeds and seeds even in only small populations, it is necessary to act before it is too late. In many countries in Europe, there are organisations supporting and promoting the conservation of Agro-Biodiversity. The SAVE Foundation, founded in 1993, acts as a European umbrella organisation for these organisations. It promotes and coordinates activities to conserve endangered breeds of domestic animals and cultivated plant varieties. The SAVE Foundation also acts practically, in areas where there is, as yet, no national organisation in existence. The SAVE Foundation and its Partners make up the European SAVE Network. The Monitoring Institute was founded in 1995 with the aim of providing a scientific foundation for the work of SAVE. The Monitoring Institute collects data, both historical and from the present. It also assesses conservation work, raises the alarm where conservation work is lacking and facilitates cross-border monitoring of old and endangered rare breeds and cultivated plant varieties.

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