



Completion of the Feasibility Study: Agricultural Species Diversity in the Alps – Conservation and Use of Traditional Knowledge



Cereals in the alps

The feasibility study “Agricultural Species Diversity in the Alps – Conservation and Use of Traditional Knowledge” undertaken by the SAVE-Monitoring Institute shows that the current, publically available systems for recording data about agricultural praxis are very rudimentary. Approaches to collecting experiences, traditions and customs are, if undertaken at all, only for limited subjects or local or regional in nature.

The interest in collecting information and knowledge about livestock breeds and cultivated plants in the Alps is, however, large. Nature conservationists seek interdisciplinary cooperation with agriculture. Within agricultural production, niche products with regional or local identity are increasingly of interest. Young, motivated farmers in the Alps notice often that it is not so easy to work with the traditional varieties. Knowledge about, for example, growing winter cereals in the mountains was nearly lost. Interested laymen but also farmers are often not aware that the robustness of the old breeds and varieties is tightly bound to

knowledge and use of the correct cultivation and husbandry. The goal of an information platform for traditional knowledge is, therefore, to bring this knowledge back into use. It is useful for farmers to know that some apple varieties were brought to the Alps and grafted by the Romans, that frost protection irrigation of fruit plantations to prevent blossom damage can be conducted using simple methodology or when mountain cereals should be planted out.

The feasibility study of the use of traditional knowledge in the Alps showed clearly that, in order to build up a lively, useful system, the commitment of many people will be necessary. The basis of a future project would be a wiki content management system within which authorised people could make entries and changes. Alongside text entries, pictures, animated clips, graphics etc can also be integrated. Test runs have shown that, particularly the necessary research in old annuals, calendars etc requires a large capacity. Direct interviews will probably only be rarely used, as the generation that still farmed traditionally is gradually dying out.



A further, important pillar of a successful main project will be the collaboration and interest of experts who are prepared to contribute their experiences. If you are interested in reading more, the full report (in German language only) can be read here http://www.save-foundation.net/pdf/Bericht_AlpWissen2011.pdf. Sources of funding are currently being sought for a future main project with the name

“Fundus Agri-Cultura Alpina”.

Please contact the SAVE Team (office@save-foundation.net) if you have any suggestions, comments, questions or are in need of further explanation.

(The feasibility study was supported by Swisslos St.Gallen and Sur-la-Croix Foundation, Basel)