



Balkans-Network

Estimation of the need for action for agro-biodiversity of livestock Set-up of a network of conservation initiatives and measures

Background

The Balkans are, to a large part, a mountainous region and thus subdivided into numerous small regions. Because of these small landscape structures, and the numerous different ethnic groups using very different production forms, a large agricultural diversity has developed, parts of which have survived till the present day. The political and economic restructuring has far-reaching impacts on agriculture, too. In order to be able to catch up with the West, new techniques and methods and new breeding material is introduced that replaces the old one. In order to be able to conserve the diversity of livestock as cultural heritage of the region at least in parts, it is urgently called for to evaluate the actual status and the need for action for different breeds, to initiate projects and to set up a network.

Demarcation of the area

The Balkan peninsula stretches across South-East Europe, from the Black and Aegean Sea to the Adriatic Sea. This geographical demarcation makes little sense for recording, conservation and networking of old livestock breeds and their breeders/keepers. Basing on history, other demarcations have proven to make more sense for the intended projects. In this case, the Balkans are demarcated as follows: Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Albania, FYR Macedonia and Bulgaria. Greece is dealt with separately, but will be well linked to the other regions. Romania has already been dealt with within the frame of the study on the Carpathians, Slovenia within the study on the Alps.



Aim of the project

Numerous very characteristic livestock breeds are known that occur in the Balkans, such as tough mountain horses, undemanding dwarf cattle or primary pigs. Many of them occur in several countries. There is no reliable information available about these breeds at present, particularly not about the development in the former war zones. It is therefore necessary to elaborate completely new basics. Aim of the planned Balkans-networking is furthermore the exchange of know-how of involved circles. This includes mutual assistance and support in practical conservation work, project concepts etc., promoted by regular meetings, e-mail conferences and other forms of exchange.

It is the aim of the project to create basics, and to deliver basic data, analysis of situations (need for action) and methods for solutions (Management Tools, Rescue Stations). The former war zones (Disaster-Areas) need particular attention. It has to be taken into account that acutely endangered stocks of old breeds will be found within the frame of these activities. In those cases fast, unbureaucratic action is necessary, e.g. to move animals and to thus prevent them from being slaughtered. An emergency fund will facilitate those rescue activities.

Project structure

The Monitoring Institute, and SAVE-Foundation as its partner, has long-term experience with conservation work in the Balkans: One of the first individual projects was the rescue and conservation of Turopolje pigs in Croatia. As the most recent rescue project for the livestock of the Karachan nomads in Bulgaria, supported by the Liechtenstein foundation "Fondation pour les Animaux du Monde" has shown, it is possible on the Balkans to undertake considerable steps with relatively low financial expenses. Basing on this background and because of the complexity of the situation and the matter as such, the project is divided up into different phases:

Phase I: Model Project, Prospecting Journeys, Workshop

The successful project for the conservation of Karakachan breeds in Bulgaria, with its exemplary linking of agriculture and nature protection, is to be developed and put on its own feet. This project, soon self-supporting, is to serve as model and reference project and will be an important pillar of the network. Its rescue station in Vlahi will be tested and evaluated.

In September 2004, a preliminary workshop with potential stakeholders is planned. Prospecting journeys in the region to prepare the actual monitoring are already conducted during Summer 2004, too. The Sonnenwiese Foundation, Vaduz, finances this part of the activities and the above mentioned model project. Phase II will then be financed by SBB Foundation, Stuttgart.

Phase II: Monitoring, Need for Action, Set-up of a Network

Data and information recording

Investigation

The contacts made and stabilised during the workshop made in phase I are used to get an overview on the situation in the Balkan countries. Investigations using literature, the Internet, databases and on-site libraries as well as other sources still to be opened up allow a well-funded data analysis.

Search tours, verification

In several one to two-weeks-tours, on-site investigation will be carried out. Supported by local experts and the results of the preparatory work, already existing data will be verified, further breeds and stock will be searched for and found. This approach has proven very successful in the Carpathian Mountains.



*Specimen of a Siska-typed pig in Albania.
Do they still exist?*

Evaluation

Data are recorded, descriptions of the breeds are drawn up, and populations and recent area of distribution are determined. Basing on this information, an assessment of the need for action to conserve old livestock breeds will be possible. The interim report will be sent to all actors (possibly on CD ROM).

Set-up of a network, seminar

Set-up of a network

Besides further investigations and rising of awareness, networking is given priority treatment. Network points are set up under the logistic management of SAVE Foundation. SAVE is the turntable of the new network. Within its frame, close contacts between other supraregional organisation partners such as the Focal Points of the FAO, DAGENE, EAAP, etc and the network points will be entertained. The set-up of an online service to facilitate networking is pressed ahead with. Besides, support of the network through fund-raising is planned.

A consolidating seminar will be carried out with the meanwhile known stakeholders, possibly with nature protection experts and others. Participants are local organisations, institutes and breeders as well as representatives of the government. The location of the seminar will be determined by its good infrastructure and accessibility.

Aims of the seminar are:

- 1) Discussion of the already gathered information about number and distribution of still existing breeds in the individual countries (particularly also those with international distribution). Description and demarcation of the breeds (e.g. of individual types), description of breeding institutes and organisations. Discussion of the need for action and of concrete measures.
- 2) Seminars on the topics „Conservation of agricultural livestock breeds in small populations“, horizontal and vertical “Know-How-Transfer“.
- 3) Linking of organisations, institutes and breeders, capacity building
- 4) Development of conservation strategies (management, Rescue Stations etc.)

Phase III: Evaluation Rescue Stations; urgent Measures

Phase III builds up directly on phases I and II: According to the defined need for action, 1-2 Rescue Stations per country will be evaluated, which are able to take up endangered stock in the case of emergency. It is also expected that measures have at least to be initiated right now (e.g. herdbook keeping and set-up of breeding; analysis of genetic distances to counteract inbreeding problems). The stakeholders receive a final report with recommendations for action on CD ROM as working basis for practical conservation work. Phase III can be defined and budgeted more specifically when first results of phase two are available.



Illyrian dwarf, Busha, Rodopi cattle...