



The Fruit-Net project

Whereas conservation efforts for wide-spread species of fruits (mainly apple and pear) were quite successful in many European countries and co-operation across the national border are well networked, there was almost no information available about initiatives for rarer species of fruit, berries and “wild” or minority fruits. A co-operation and networking on European level hardly existed, an exchange amongst the few conservationists and breeders rarely took place. The Fruit-Net project was created to save the genetic variety of these “forgotten” fruit and berry species for the future, to network the existing initiatives and to provide information to everybody using the Internet.



To take advantage of the Internet (the possibility to keep the information up-to-date and to enlarge the database step by step) we established a database-driven web presentation. The NGO-Zoom Fruits from June 2001 served as starting basis. The data were extended with numerous information and many new additional addresses of NGOs, governmental institutions, nurseries and private individuals were researched and recorded.

The data base consists of three registers: detailed address data and – as far as available and meaningful – information about the goals, aims, types of activity, fields of responsibility and proposals of the organisation (detail information) and about the collected or propagated species with the number of varieties (species list). Additionally web links to variety lists or order address can be included. All data can be changed and updated any time by the user organisations themselves via Internet. They each have an individual login for their user site. This is crucial to keep the information up-to-date.

The main structure of the web site is built up and available on URL: <http://www.fruit-net.info>

Up to now some 400 addresses from 43 countries are included, 91 of them of governmental institutions. Visitors can search the data using various criteria: country, category of organisation, type of activity, proposal, field of responsibility, any species etc. Any combined search is possible.



The numerous addresses and information will facilitate contacts between the upholders - people who collect, grow, propagate or sell old varieties of fruit and berry plants, classify varieties or study old pomologies.

It is a part of European networking of NGOs and other organisations, institutions and individuals, dealing in any way with old, local, forgotten, neglected and endangered varieties. It should improve the exchange of information, propagating material, know-how in conservation and discourse between interested professionals and hobby breeders.

The Fruit-Net is online and its main functions are available. Enlargement and updating are ongoing. Most notably in the peripheral parts of Europe - where initiatives are barely known yet - we will search for additional, yet not mapped organisations.

Another ongoing project connected to the Fruit-Net, started within the effort for conservation of endangered varieties of fruit and berries in the Carpathians, is a multilingual online register of variety names and synonyms. This "dictionary" will significantly facilitate the communication and the co-operation across the language and country borders.



New participants have to fulfil at least one of the following criteria:

- NGO, dealing with old, local or endangered varieties of fruits or berries – and/or
- a collection of more than 100 varieties (most of them endangered, local or rare) – and/or
- specialised organisations or individuals, preserving a large number of varieties of few species or
- governmental or private institution, researching, breeding or selling a wide selection of old varieties of fruits and berries and/or
- collection is open for public => in this case it can be additionally integrated in "Arca-Net" (Arca-Net Network), an online travel guide to rare breeds and historical plants (<http://www.arca-net.info>).

There are no costs or long term commitments, the service is free of charge. The project was fully financed by Margarethe and Rudolf Gsell Foundation, Basle, Switzerland; and for the service we are looking for long term sponsors.



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Links:

- GFU: <http://www.underutilized-species.org>

- Bioversity Europe: <http://www.bioversityinternational.org/Regions/Europe>