

SAVE eNews 1/2008

Quarterly e-mail service of the European SAVE Foundation
(Safeguard for Agricultural Varieties in Europe)



SAVE Head Office:
Josef-Belli-Weg 5, D-78467 Konstanz/Germany

Web: <http://www.save-foundation.net>
E-mail: office@save-foundation.net

European Livestock Breeds Ark and Rescue Net (ELBARN) Central Workshop, Kutna Hora, CZ



The long-awaited launching Workshop of the ELBARN Project took place in Kutna Hora 8-10 February 2008. The first work towards a “European Network of Rescue Stations” already took place after the establishment of SAVE in 1994. After years of lobbying the EU, at last there is a chance to put the dream of a networked system of ark and rescue stations into the reality of a European Livestock Breeds Ark and Rescue Net (ELBARN).

The Workshop had 35 participants, representing 15 countries, from a range of European institutions and organisations – governmental, NGOs and universities. The participants brought with them expertise in the four major ELBARN themes: Rescue and Quarantine, Characteristics of the potential Ark and Rescue Centres, *in situ* Breeding and, Marketing of Products and Services.

After an initial welcoming session and an introduction to the ideas behind ELBARN (see: [SAVE eNews 1/2007](#)), followed an overview of the state of animal genetic resources in Europe, summa-

Why do we need ELBARN?

The *in situ* conservation of endangered livestock breeds is often faced with the danger of losing important stock through the outbreak of epidemics or if the owner of an important herd can no longer keep animals – both cases may lead to the slaughter of stock that is vitally important to conservation. The ELBARN project will provide a pan-European infrastructure, through the network of Ark and Rescue Centres, to deal with this worst case scenario.

rised from reports submitted by the participants prior to the Workshop. This led into a good discussion of the issues facing the ELBARN team in establishing the network. During this discussion it became clear that the Workshop was going to bear fruit.

It was on the second day of the Workshop the participants split up into four Work Groups in order to work on guidelines and policy for the four ELBARN themes mentioned above. Some of the liveliest discussions happened on this second day as participants strived to find definitions to discuss the problems they were faced with. There were also many interesting presentations of the experience of the participants and important inputs into the project. The afternoon saw a second plenary session, to present the



“story so far” from the Work Groups. In this session, the Work Groups were able to benefit from the invaluable contributions from all the participants. In this way the concept “ELBARN” took a number of steps forward towards becoming a reality.

However, these steps are still the steps of a new born calf: hesitant and shaky. The Work Groups went back to work with a number of points that needed to be worked on and, often, more questions to answer than they had started with! Thankfully, the participants showed dedication to the process and went back to work to try and iron out some of the problems raised, in order to present them to the plenary the next morning. This showed that, though the Workshop had consolidated knowledge and had begun the forming of ELBARN, there is still much work to do. Each theme needs to be consolidated into to a clear set of guidelines that can be used to establish the network. There are a number of issues that need to be resolved in order to complete this task – from the clarification of legal issues through to the tightening up of definitions. This work is to be completed by the participants of the Work Groups by the end of May 2008.

Kutna Hora itself is both a unique and beautiful town, parts of which are UNESCO protected. It was once an important town due to its silver mines. Its history has many similarities to the histories of the breeds and varieties protected by SAVE – globalisation in the form of cheap silver from America led to the decline and neglect of Kutna Hora. It was only in the 1990s that the importance of this cultural heritage was recognised and a process of restoration began. Luckily, there have always been enough dedicated people to rescue these aspects of cultural heritage before it is too late.

ELBARN intends to turn away from luck and the chance that the right person may be in the right place at the right time. Through the concept and guidelines now being finalised, a clear network and process will be established that will ensure the conservation of the variety of livestock, so that future generations can also benefit from their valuable cultural heritage. The next step in the project will be the Area Workshops, taking place early 2009.

More information on: <http://www.save-foundation.net/ELBARN>

Annual Meeting of SAVE Foundation and the SAVE Network 12-14 June 2008 at Kozard, Hungary

The next Annual Meeting of SAVE Foundation and the SAVE Network will take place at Kozard, Hungary. Kozard is a small but active village in the hills of the Hungarian Carpathians some 80 km Northeast of Budapest. It will be a joint Meeting with our partner organisation DAGENE (Assoc. for the conservation of animal breeds in the Danubian region) and organised by our Board member Dr. Pal Hajas of Euragro, Kozard.

As last time in Guastalla, the Meeting will be combined with an international Conference. The topic in Kozard will be: "Use of rare breeds and plants for genuine food in rural tourism". Accommodation will be in private guesthouses. We are sure to offer again an attractive event and hope to meet you at the very nice Kozard.

Provisional agenda:

Thursday, June 12:

- Project meeting (special invitation)
- Afternoon: Arrival of participants
- Evening: Open meeting of the SAVE Project Commission

Friday, June 13:

- Conference "Use of rare breeds and plants for genuine food in rural tourism"
- Evening: Social Event, with traditional food for dinner and folklore



Saturday, June 14:

- Excursion to farms, tourism sites, vineyards

Sunday, June 15: farewell

=> Accommodation will cost 20-30 Euro/person. Some of the guesthouses are only accessible by car, within a distance of 2-15 km. Please note, booking is performed on the "first come-first served" basis. So register asap, if you like to stay in the village or close by.

=> Link for information and registration: <http://www.save-foundation.net/pdf/Kozard.pdf>



Continuous Monitoring of Agricultural Biodiversity in the Alpine Region: The Alpine Delphi

Background: Agriculture in the Alps

The Alpine Region provides a unique environment for agrobiodiversity. Over centuries, animals and plants have been developed by farmers to suit the very different landscapes of the Alps. Animals were bred for hardiness, fertility and sure-footedness. Plants were selected that could cope with the harsh conditions of the Alps: high altitude, intense sun and short vegetation periods. However, this did not lead to a homogenous "Alpine" agrobiodiversity, each valley and region had its own breeds and varieties.



Small scale agriculture in mountain areas, R.Vonmoos

Robust animals and crops are still essential in the Alpine Region. Although Alpine farmers are also interested in high yields and large profit margins, there is also value in good average yields and for regional products. A consistent yield and a quality regional product can allow the farmer to sell in the growing "gourmet" market. Finding a place in a niche sector of the market can be far more profitable than selling standardised, over-produced products. Many Alpine farmers, due to the harsh conditions of mountain farming, can never undercut the prices of the intensive lowland farms.

Due to the frugality of the traditional plants and animals in the Alpine region, traditional agricultural systems use less imported fodder and fertiliser. The traditional agrarian system of the Alps has a small "ecological footprint" and its unique climate and altitude provide genetic resources adapted to harsh conditions, which may be essential for future food security in areas outside of the Alpine region.

Today it is still true in the alpine region that robust characteristics in animals and plants are of primary importance. In order to be armed against dry or wet, cold or hot years, great diversity, especially among cultivated plant varieties, is significant even today. In the mountains, it is not superior performance, but reliable average yield, that matters. Extensive cultivation of locally adapted breeds and varieties is moreover important toward the preservation and sustainable use of the alpine agricultural landscapes. Working from this realisation, the St.Gallen office of ProSpecieRara, stimulated by the Alpine Commission CIPRA, compiled the study "Agricultural Genetic Resources of the Alps (ISBN 3-905209-03-9)". This was published in 1995 and successfully updated between 2000 and 2001 by the Monitoring Institute for Rare Breeds and Seeds. The update was published in 2003 (ISBN 3-258-06669-8). Both studies were generously financed by Bristol Stiftung, Zurich.

Developing the Alpine Delphi:

In the above mentioned studies it became apparent that there was an urgent need to create a permanent, simple monitoring infrastructure equipped with an early warning system. However, it is clear that a study on a similar scale to the two previous ones cannot be repeated every two years. The aim of monitoring the Alpine Agrobiodiversity is to monitor the whole agrarian system. Data on stock numbers and cultivated areas is important but it is not the only factor that needs to be taken into account. After extensive research and testing of indicators had been carried out it became clear that the data that is generally accessible for long-term monitoring of trends in agrobiodiversity is not sufficient. Due to this, a completely different approach was taken: using the Delphi Method to survey expert opinions. By using the Delphi Method, the tasks of networking organisations and institutions, documentation and up-dating of relevant data and the establishment of an Early Warning System for critically endangered livestock breeds and cultivated plants could be better met.

Measuring the *State* of agricultural genetic resources is the most used monitoring device. This device is extremely important but there are pitfalls, which make the data produced less than reliable:

- => Constraints in data availability. Databases often have gaps.
- => Inconsistencies between data disseminated at the international level. Not all data is collected and recorded in the same manner. This means that data entered into an international database may be unusable.
- => Data sources. Data sources may be unreliable.
- => Data fatigue. Data duplication and lack of collaboration in data collection.

Even though there is constant improvement in this field, as long as there are gaps and inconsistencies, this form of monitoring, whilst undoubtedly essential, is not enough to ensure conservation of agrobiodiversity. The majority of experts working on the subject of conservation of Alpine agrobiodiversity strive to achieve good data on the *State* of agrobiodiversity in their specialist field. However, knowing the *State* does not guarantee future conservation. The *State* may show the positive or negative consequences of *Pressure* and may give an indication towards *Response*. A good monitoring system will explicitly make use of all three levels of *Pressure-State-Response*.

Experts from the various sectors of Alpine Genetic Resources were invited to take part in the Delphi research. The research was based on three questionnaires, which the participating experts were able to fill in online using a personal username and password. Each expert filled out a first questionnaire especially tailored to his or her expert knowledge. The second questionnaire was a more general one, based on the results of the first. The third questionnaire presented the participants with a rough draft of the final report and asked questions based on the results of the second questionnaire and the conclusions of this report.

Through a system of coding, the results of the first questionnaire were divided into themes. The second questionnaire was based on these themes. For each of the four themes identified, statements were created that reflected the results of the first ques-

tionnaire. The participants in the second questionnaire were then able to say if they agreed or disagreed with these statements. In this way a broad picture was built up of the state of Alpine agricultural genetic resources and of the institutions working for its conservation. Last but not least, trends that will influence the future of Alpine Agrobiodiversity were also identified.

Conclusions:

The three rounds led to the identification of two factors that need urgent attention:

- a) Cooperation between experts
- b) Research into the whole field of agrobiodiversity: from farmer through to consumer.

In general, the recommendations on the theme "The task and general situation of experts" are:

- There must be better cooperation between institutions including cross-border cooperation
- Inter-institutional and international definition and goal setting is urgent
- Monitoring and documentation of the State of agricultural genetic resources should be improved
- Knowledge of subsidies should urgently be improved.

Subsidies relate to the sectoral agricultural and land-use policy of the eight Alpine states and the EU. Through studying the subsidy structure, it is possible to find out if conservation of Alpine agrobiodiversity is really considered desirable or necessary by policy makers and politicians.

The fact that the Protocol on Mountain Farming remains unratified by three of the Alpine states can be seen to show that there is not only a lack of commitment to it in those three countries but also in the neighbouring countries. A lack of commitment to mountain farming in general leads to a lack of commitment to the conservation of Alpine agrobiodiversity. An exact overview of the policies of the eight Alpine states, the subsidy structures and the commitment to the Alpine Convention is considered necessary. Additionally, lobbying is required to achieve complete ratification and implementation of the Protocol on Mountain Farming.

Also on the theme of "Subsidies and other financial support" it is clearly felt by the majority of the participants in the project that financial support to ensure conservation is not just required by the farmers. Money is needed by breed organisations to finance running herdbooks, researchers into Alpine Agrobiodiversity need more money to aid their research and the running of databases. Research into Pressure and Response, not just the State of agrobiodiversity should be supported.

On the theme of "Public Awareness, Tourism and Consumers" there are three main recommendations:

- Investigations into creating a label that identifies products as made from autochthonous Alpine breeds and plants should be undertaken; this would also partly fulfil the obligations of the Protocol on Mountain Farming.

- The traditional agro-eco-systems and traditional animals and plants of the Alps should be actively promoted to tourists; this too would also partly fulfil the obligations of the Protocol on Mountain Farming.
- The question of meeting consumer quality standards with the products of traditional Alpine livestock breeds, whilst preserving their breed characteristics, should be further researched.

Under the theme “Farming and its environment” there are two main recommendations:

- Agricultural schools should be encouraged to teach traditional farming practise to students. The curriculum of agricultural schools in the Alpine states should be examined. This is also an opportunity to fulfil the Protocol on Mountain Farming.
- Hobby farmers and gardeners should be encouraged to take their part in conserving Alpine agrobiodiversity. Possibilities to include data about their efforts into the relevant databases should be explored.

It seems clear, from the responses given, that the conservation of Alpine agrobiodiversity must extend from the farmers through to the consumers, with the experts acting as guides. Without this strategic ‘whole-system’ approach to conservation, all attempts to conserve Alpine agrobiodiversity *in vivo* are futile. Lack of co-ordination between actors can lead to duplication of work and organisations and institutions working with different objectives or even against each other. The lack of cohesion in the conservation efforts can lead to inefficiency, a lack of transparency and a lack of usable data. Cooperation between experts encourages a process of social learning within which experts stand to gain further knowledge and understanding through collaboration with their peers. This process thus creates an epistemic community for the conservation of Alpine agrobiodiversity.



Klauser, Hans Peter, Alpabfahrt, Appenzellerland 1944
<http://www.fotostiftung.ch/>

A regular repetition of this exercise based on the themes that have been brought up in this first Alpine Delphi should enable successful monitoring of the Alpine Region for many years to come. The study was supported by the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) and Swisslos.

=> Full report see: http://www.save-foundation.net/pdf/ALM_Final_Report.pdf

Important dates (extract)

27 April - 2 May: Symposium "Plants for People & Places" at Lindley Conference Centre, Westminster, London. Contact: horthalls@rhs.org.uk, Web: <http://www.rhs.org.uk>

12-16 May: "Planet Diversity", World Congress on the Future of Food and Farming. Bonn, Germany. Contact: info@planet-diversity.org. Web: <http://www.planet-diversity.org>

19-21 May: "IN SAFE HANDS - communities safeguard biodiversity"; Diversity Fair (during COP 9) in Bonn, Germany. Contact: Ursula.Groehn-Wittern@bukoagrار.de, Web: <http://www.bukoagrار.de>

19-30 May: 9th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP-9), Bonn, Germany. <http://www.cbd.int/doc/meeting.aspx?mtg=COP-09>



6-8 June: Worldmeeting of the friends of donkeys, ASYNODAYS at Salvarano di Quattro Castella (Reggio Emilia), Italy. Show of 600-1000 donkeys, Conferences on the future of donkeys and on milkproduction and milk-exploitation. massimo_montanari@iol.it, Web: <http://www.asinodays.org>

9-12 June: Conference "Biodiversity and animal feed – future challenges for grassland production" in Uppsala, Sweden. Web: <http://www-conference.slu.se/egf2008/index.html>, Contact: egf2008@slu.se

12-14 June: Annual Meeting of SAVE Foundation and the SAVE Network at Kozard, Hungary. Joint Meeting with DAGENE. Conference "Use of rare breeds and plants for genuine food in rural tourism". Contact: info@monitoring.eu.com, Web: <http://www.save-foundation.net/pdf/Kozard.pdf>



24-27 August: 59th EAAP Meeting with satellite workshop "Linking Conservation NGOs with the Professionals", Vilnius, Lithuania. Contact: rbi_office@agro.auth.gr

8-12 September: Conference "Ecological Restoration"; exchange of knowledge, experiences and good practices in ecological restoration in the Natura 2000 framework. Ghent, Belgium. Contact: ser2008@semico.be, Web: <http://www.ser2008.be/>

14-18 September: 7th RBI Global Conference on the Conservation of Animal Genetic Resources. Hanoi, Vietnam. Contact: rbi_office@agro.auth.gr

5-14 October: 4th IUCN World Conservation Congress "A Diverse and Sustainable World", Barcelona, Spain. Web: <http://www.iucn.org/congress/2008/congress.htm>, Contact: congress@iucn.org,

15-16 November: 8th International Meeting on Pomology; Regensburg, Bavaria, Germany. Contact: josef.wittmann@gmx.de