

SAVE-News 4/2002

This newsletter is issued four times a year by SAVE Foundation (Safeguard for Agricultural Varieties in Europe)

International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources

Since 1983, there is an (legally not binding) obligation concerning Plant Genetic Resources in the UN Organisation for Food and Agriculture FAO (*International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources*). The focus is on the collection, conservation and investigation of the biological diversity of cultivated plants. The conservation of plant diversity is of utmost importance for plant breeding and future adaptation of agricultural production to changing conditions as well as for an environmentally friendly, diversified and site-adapted agriculture. To date, the principle of free access to plant reproductive material, including early cultivated plants and related wild plants, anchored in the obligation, has been the basis for international co-operation in this area. It is based on the basic assumption that this type of genetic resources is an inheritance of mankind.

During the course of time, conflicts with protective rights for plant breeding became obvious, and the obligation was repeatedly adjusted. At the same time, farmer's rights were recognised. During the course of time, farmers created a broad diversity of cultivated plants worldwide during the development of agriculture. They should receive a compensation for it. An international fund for Plant Genetic Resources was to be created to finance projects and programs for the conservation and enhanced utilisation of Plant Genetic Resources. The fund, however, has never taken effect.

After seven years of intensive negotiations, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA) was agreed upon by the conference of the FAO on the 3rd of November 2001. This is the first time that important principles of the Convention on Biodiversity have been put into a form allowing their global implementation. The treaty is the first comprehensive international agreement aiming to secure the availability Plant Genetic Resources available, in particular for farmers and plant breeding. The fair and just share of advantages resulting of the use of PGR is to be guaranteed. The treaty is an important step towards sustainable agriculture and worldwide food security. Within the deadline until the 4th November 2002, it was signed by 79 countries and ratified by 7 countries. The treaty will become effective as soon as 40 countries ratify it. The text of treaty is available in English (and in the other official European languages) in the Internet under the following address:

http://europa.eu.int/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexplus!prod!CELEXnumdoc&numdoc=502PC0197&lg=EN

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Scrapie

Scrapie is a slowly developing illness of sheep (and goats), caused by virus-like particles, the so-called prions. Scrapie has been known since the year 1750, it is harmless for humans. In connection with BSE, Scrapie resistance is increasingly focused on in sheep breeding, following the suggestion of a scientific Steering Committee of the European Commission. In the Netherlands, U. K. and France, breeding programs with the aim to conserve scrapie-resistant stock have already started. These programs aim at only using ARR/ARR-rams for breeding. Such narrowing of breeding aims could have disastrous impacts on the conservation breeding of endangered sheep breeds in Europe. An excessive increase of inbreeding rates and, consequently, the loss of genetic diversity of European sheep breeds has to be expected. In the autumn edition of the SAVE-Report (published soon), the topic will be dealt with in more detail.

Rare Italian poultry breeds

Associazione R.A.R.E. has published on its website a list of rare Italian poultry breeds. The site is accessible by: <http://www.save-foundation.net/RARE/razze/avicole.htm>

Change in the SAVE Head Office

Wiebke Bruen, dedicated project coordinator in the SAVE Head Office, has recently become a mother. She will now fully take care of her baby and has therefore left SAVE. We would like to thank her for her hard and fruitful work and wish her all the best for the future. The new project co-ordinator (beside Petra Gansneder as director) is Andreas Stamer, and Annette Marx works as project director in the Head Office. We would like to welcome them cordially, they are introduced shortly in the following (photos see in the SAVE website, page 'Contact' <http://www.save-foundation.net/english/contact.htm>):

Dr. Andreas Stamer

Born in 1963 in Pforzheim, Germany, he studied biology and tropical agriculture at Kiel, Tuebingen and Goettingen. He passed his PhD on the physiology of propagation of intensively bred fish. After that he worked as a project manager for an international aquaculture company in Great Britain. Former research opportunities led him to Baltic and East African coastal areas. Since the middle of August 2002, he is project co-ordinator for regional and europewide projects of the SAVE Foundation.

Annette Marx

Born in 1967, she studied administrative sciences at Konstanz University with emphasis on information management. She finished her studies with a diploma thesis on "methodical problems in internet inquiries". With her special knowledge on management tasks and processes in public administrations, she attends to especially sensitive projects and new project-areas (e.g. traditional domestic breeds and marketing).

Important dates (extract)

21-22 November: International Symposium on organic seed production and plant breeding, Humboldt University Berlin; ECO-PB in collaboration with Stiftung Ökologie und Landbau and Humboldt University Berlin; Contact: Klaus-Peter Wilbois, FiBL, Berlin; e-mail: FiBL@Berlin.de

21-25 November: "From Biodiversity to Genomics. Breeding Strategies for Small Grain Cereals in the Third Millenium". Salsomaggiore Terme, Italy. Organisation: EUCARPIA. Web: <http://www.eucarpia.org>

3-7 February 2003: 3rd World Congress on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants for Human Welfare (WOCMAP III); Chiang Mai, Thailand; Biodiversity prospecting and ethnopharmacology. Conservation, cultivation and sustainable use. Web: <http://www.wocmap3.org>

24-26 April 2003: European Workshop on National Plant Genetic Resources Programmes, held in Allnarp, Sweden. Organiser: Swedish Biodiversity Centre in collaboration with IPGRI, FAO and others. Web: <http://www.ipgri.cgiar.org/regions/europe>

5-7 June 2003: XII. Mediterranean Symposium: Animal Production and Natural Resources Utilisation in the Mediterranean Mountain Areas; Ioannina, Greece. Contact: andgeorg@agro.auth.gr

=> Further information is available from:
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