

**Point of departure: 13<sup>th</sup> Steering Committee Meeting, Vienna, Recommendation 8**

*“The SC is suggested to consider the establishment of a Task Force that considers how the engagement of users in ECPGR activities can be enhanced. The mandate for this Task Force should be proposed by a small group (B. Bartha, J. Weibull, P. Coquin and M. Lateur) at the latest by the end of January 2013.”*

This recommendation recognizes the fact that one key pillar for a better and safer conservation of PGR is to develop much more activities that promote the use of them. Indeed the public and political impact of - as much as possible - PGR valorisation success stories is of tremendous importance. Following the outcome and recommendations of the Independent External Review, ECPGR should enter in a new phase where emphasis is given to develop such activities. With this goal in mind, it gives a clear orientation for setting up new strategic plans that aims at creating stronger links with potential users.

***Common definition of “user group”***

A user group is normally defined as a set of people that have similar interests, goals, or concerns. The members have regular meetings where they share and exchange ideas. From the point of view of plant genetic resources (PGR) we can identify several different user groups that are expected to have a range of different points of departure (e.g. farmers, researchers, breeders, policy makers, SME’s, amateur growers, etc.). Within the “PGR user community” the users have different aims regarding plant genetic resources: breeding activities, to maintain/develop diversity in the crop management, to maintain a level of biodiversity in the landscape, etc. And they have at least one common aim which is the well maintenance of those genetic resources to make them available and useful.

***Targeting of challenges***

In order to enhance user engagement in ECPGR activities – which in itself has been identified as a desirable goal – the following issues concerning potential users need to be clarified:

1. Clearly define which tasks are already covered by the existing and active members of ECPGR
2. Identify which tasks that could be done in addition to the existing core activities of ECPGR and which cannot be done because of lacking resources (time, personnel, finances)?
3. Depending on the identified tasks in (2), identify which users that could help to support or broaden the range of activities of the ECPGR? How should ECPGR and identified users preferably cooperate to obtain synergy?
4. Analyse whether this closer collaboration between curators and potential users could, and should, be carried out within the activities of the ECPGR WGs (i.e. is the current WG structure the right forum?)
5. Consider establishing other meeting forums

***Process and grouping***

Initially, we have defined the targeted working fields and user groups. The two following sub-groups represent broadly the users’ requirements and the current or future possibilities of the genebanks. Within the generic headline of “Sustainable and innovative use of PGR” we identify:

1. *Ex situ* and on farm conservation of mostly cultivated crops and related wild species

*Recommendation 8: improving the engagement of other user groups in the ECPGR activities*

→ genebanks, universities/research institutes (agronomy, horticulture, health science, culinary arts), breeding companies, farmers associations and food industry, environmental, regional and local associations, SME's (processing, seeds companies, plant nurseries, ...), consumer protection organizations, nature parks, open-air museums, ...

2. *In situ* conservation of mostly wild crop relatives and wild plants

→ genebanks, universities, agronomic research institutes, botanical gardens, nature protectionists, private and public foresters, protected area managers, ...

**Identification of tasks**

Group 1:

- Collecting, storing, describing, providing propagation material to collection holders and breeders, doing research
- Evaluating, holding decentralized collections, monitoring, national/regional/local production, lobbying (because public support is needed), producing propagation material of good quality and larger quantity, marketing (product and touristic), awareness building

Group 2:

- Describing, developing conservation strategies, monitoring, promoting public awareness, promoting activities/events of touristic interest

**Suggested Task Force mandate**

(1) Proposed composition

- a) tentatively 5 members, representing their respective fields of expertise (e.g. research, plant breeding, farming, food industry, rural communities/NGO) and as well as possibly representing all the sub-regions of ECPGR area (same sub-regions represented in the ExCo). NCs are invited to suggest names by mid-March to Secretariat who, based on this input, forwards a proposal to ExCo for comment and/or adjustment. Final decision is taken by SC according to RoP 6.3.
- b) the TF elects among themselves a Chair

(2) Proposed mode of work

- a) in addition to the targeted challenges (page 1, above), the overall issues could be formulated as follows:
  1. how can ECPGR be made more attractive to a wider range of user groups?
  2. in what way can interactions be established/enforced between ECPGR and these?
  3. elaborate on other, so far unexploited, user interfaces
- b) communication by electronic means
- c) a report to be submitted to ExCo and Secretariat by June 1, 2013

(3) Present suggested/expected outputs

- a) advice on suitable means and processes to improve ECPGR-user group interactions
- b) elaborate upon possible bridges between ex situ/on farm vs. in situ conservation from the point of view of interactions with users
- c) identify short-term priority areas, incl. longer-term desirable goals
- d) elaborate upon the possible implications for current ECPGR organisation, incl. that of Steering Committee and WG structure, and use of 'country quotas'
- e) discuss other forums for PGR<->user interactions within the framework of ECPGR
- f) review current log-frame, as appropriate