Report of a Working Group on *Beta* and World *Beta* Network

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Guidelines for inclusion of characterization and evaluation data into the IDBB

Data should be delivered to the IDBB in a state as original as available but in columns with clearly defined data format (numeric or text). Acceptable file formats are DBase or Excel.
Implementation of XML is under consideration. Measurement data in SI units are generally preferred. They should not be transformed into scores. The database will have algorithms converting original data into universal scores (ranges from 0 to 9 as indicated) and will provide these to the user, together with the original data and descriptive statistics.
Suggestions to improve these algorithms are welcome.
It is preferable to send raw data rather than already aggregated data. The database is able to extract and present simple descriptive statistics from the raw data and to import a wide range of statistical parameters for aggregated data. Raw data should be accessible for more advanced biometric analysis.
It is considered important to indicate the date of evaluation and the development stage of the evaluated plants for all delivered observations.
Transforming qualitative observations (colours, habit descriptions, site descriptors, etc.) into numbers only makes sense if this is intended as a step to quantification, e.g. along scales from bright to dark, low to high, sparse to intense soil cover or on a scale of economic value.
The definition of the scores should be consistent with these rankings. Thus the figures would be amenable to meaningful algebraic and sorting procedures. In any other case use of short words instead of scores avoids confusion and unintended quantification.
Scores should be restricted to figures (preferably 0-9) and not contain characters or special signs (0, 1 instead of +, - etc.).
All data provided to the IDBB should be delivered on an experiment-by-experiment basis especially if they refer to field observations. An experiment is defined by its dates (usually the growth period of the crop) and its location and the data should be accompanied by a detailed description of experimental site, design, descriptors and methods used for data acquisition.