

## Designation of the first five crop wild relative genetic reserves in Germany and Europe

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On 4 June 2019 the designation of five genetic reserves in Germany was officially publicized on the occasion of the symposium “Genetic reserve for wild plants of socio-economic importance – a new module to strengthen species conservation”, which took place in Quedlinburg, a town located in the federal state of Saxony-Anhalt. The symposium was opened by the President of the Julius Kühn-Institute, Prof. Dr. Ordon. Dr. Müller, Head of the Department Forest, Sustainability and Renewable Raw Materials of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) described in her opening speech species protection as a general social goal. An improved cooperation between nature conservation and agriculture in the field of crop wild relatives is therefore only a logical consequence. Dr. Weber, state secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Agriculture and Energy (MULE) of the federal state of Saxony-Anhalt stressed the importance of wild species for plant breeding and offered support for the implementation of the genetic reserve concept within Saxony-Anhalt.

Governmental and non-governmental nature conservation agencies, countryside management associations and engaged landowners support the establishment of genetic reserves and agreed to assume a role in the active management of the genetic reserve sites. Representatives of these stakeholder groups (see photo) were honoured in the form of a genetic reserve certificate during a festive ceremony attended by 70 experts.



Photo: The six representatives of stakeholder groups receiving a certificate signed by the President of the Federal Office for Agriculture and Food, Dr. Eiden, acknowledging their active role in the management of the genetic reserves.

The following genetic reserve sites of celery wild relatives have been identified through a process combining elements of the monographic (genepool) approach with principles of participatory planning of nature conservation projects. After signature of declarations of consent regulating the cooperation between local partners and the competent agency charged by the BMEL with the management of a genetic reserve network for four native wild celery species, genetic reserves sites were officially designated.

<b>Species</b>	<b>Site</b>	<b>Supporter</b>
<i>Apium graveolens</i> L. subsp. <i>graveolens</i>	Sülldorf, Saxony-Anhalt	Lower nature conservation agency, district Börde Countryside management associations "Green Environment"
<i>Helosciadium repens</i> (L.) W. D. J. Koch	Lake Hohennau, Brandenburg	German Society for Nature Conservation, Regional Office Westhavelland
<i>Helosciadium repens</i> (L.) W. D. J. Koch	Großer Schwerin, Mecklenburg-Pomerania	Foundation for Environment and Nature Protection Mecklenburg- Pomerania
<i>Helosciadium inundatum</i> (L.) W. D. J. Koch	Nature Reserve Venne, North Rhine-Westphalia	German Society for Nature Conservation, Nature Protection Station Münsterland
<i>Helosciadium inundatum</i> (L.) W. D. J. Koch	Nature protection area, Celle, Lower Saxony	Landowner

The network will be extended to 45 sites during the next months. This is the first time that crop wild relative genetic reserves are officially recognized in Europe. It is an important step forward to the implementation of the "Concept for *In Situ* Conservation of Crop Wild Relatives in Europe" endorsed by the ECPGR Steering Committee in March 2015. Partners of the project "Genetic reserves for wild celery species (*Apium* and *Helosciadium*) as component of a network of genetic reserves in Germany" and many stakeholders consider the designation of the first five genetic reserve sites as a breakthrough which will hopefully be sufficient to spur a positive snowball effect in Europe.