

Report from the ExCo on progress made during Phase IX

Highlights and recommendations

Eva Thörn

Outcome 1 – AEGIS is operational. Accessions in AEGIS are characterized and evaluated

Slow progress in inclusion of Associate Members

- Those member countries which have not yet completed Associate Agreements with their national genebanks and/or other institutions managing germplasm that is or will be included in the European Collection on behalf of the National PGR Programme are encouraged to do so.

Slow progress in inclusion of accessions in the European collection

- Request NCs to take stronger and persistent action to promote the identification of AEGIS candidates in their respective countries.

Procedures for identifying AEGIS accessions seems not to be harmonized between WGs and NCs hampering the development of the system

- Ask NCs and WG Chairs to focus on the guidelines for identifying and flagging accessions in order to streamline the procedures between countries.
- Address AMs directly with a questionnaire regarding the implementation status of the AEGIS principles.

Outcome 1 cont.

Lack of development of genebank manuals by AMs

- NCs are encouraged to urge their respective AMs to finalize their genebank manuals.

Implementing AQUAS is slow due to lack of funding for adherence to agreed standards

- Currently there seems to be no source of funding for quality upgrading and prospects of receiving project funds from the EU are scarce. The NCs are therefore encouraged to look into internal funding sources and also use their own channels into relevant EU bodies to lobby for establishment of a funding structure for long-term funding of PGR conservation.

Sharing of conservation responsibilities between genebanks has not yet started

- WGs should bring the issue of service exchange into their agenda and actively inventory both needs and possibilities among AMs.

Outcome 2 – Quantity and quality of data in EURISCO, including *in situ* and on-farm data, have been increased. Functionality of EURISCO meets users' expectations

Training is essential for the inclusion of C&E data into EURISCO. The training has been instrumental for the progress of uploading of data from NIs.

- The SC should consider turning these training activities which are now applied for through the Grant Scheme, into a regular annual activity of the Doc&Info WG with a budget line of its own during the remaining part of Phase IX.

The planned survey of the user communities' expectations of EURISCO has not been carried out (Activity 2.4.1 of the ECPGR Objectives)

- The EURISCO Coordinator with the Doc&Info WG are encouraged to carry out a users' survey (Activity 2.4.1 of the ECPGR Objectives).

Outcome 3 – *In situ* conservation of priority crop wild relative (CWR) and landrace (LR) populations are implemented throughout Europe. Mechanisms are in place for more effective utilization of the conserved germplasm

The achievement on outcome 3 is very much depending on activities at the national level

- NCs and WG members are encouraged to promote related activities at country level.

Funds for subsequently implementing the regional CWR strategy are insufficient

- NCs are encouraged to (1) assist in mobilizing either national or EU funding for activities to be carried out through ECPGR, and (2) use established channels into relevant EU bodies to lobby for the endorsement of the ECPGR CWR strategy.

Outcome 4 – Commitment and regular resources of national governments are sustained or increased, and commitments and resources of the European Commission (EC) as well as other potential donors towards ECPGR are increased

Initiatives to establish a dialog to obtain funding from the EU has failed and competition for project funding has not been successful

- Since funding from current EU sources seems to be inaccessible for the type of activities which ECPGR is carrying out, there is a need for another type of funding structure within the EC. The NCs are therefore encouraged to bring this need up during relevant meetings at the EC and with EC representatives, and lobby for recognition of ECPGR as an EU platform for conservation and use of PGR, including policy development.

Outcome 4 cont.

The development of a communication and public relations strategy (Activity 4.4.1) has not yet been initiated

- a) Preparation of a communication and public relation strategy which includes developing information on the value of germplasm and that – based on the input from the members themselves – clearly presents the benefits of being an ECPGR member b) Requesting the members to prepare a short statement on why they appreciate the benefits of being a member, i.e. why they decide to continue their membership and why they want ECPGR to continue.

Outcome 5 – Relations with users of germplasm are strengthened

The communication between genebanks and breeders on needs and priorities seems to limit the use of germplasm

- When planning germplasm evaluation activities, WGs should focus on crop improvement needs and always consider including breeders in these activities.



Evaluation of the Working Group Chairs



Observations

Low percentage of responses, several newly appointed WG Chairs and recent changes in the WG structure

Expressions of dissatisfaction with the new ECPGR structure/policy and request for regular WG meetings

Lack of sufficient funding for WG activities and request for more flexibility in the Grant Scheme

More sharing of responsibilities and increased activities among WG members requested.

Recommendations

- Based on the evaluation results, no specific measures with regard to Chairs should be taken at this stage.
- Some WG Chairs have still not submitted their reports despite reminders from the Secretariat. All Chairs should be requested to report on time henceforth.
- WG members' evaluation results should be shared with their respective Chair.
- The specific comments regarding the low activity level of WG members and the need for WG meetings should be taken up for discussion with the SC when planning for the next Phase.
- All workload should not be put on the shoulders of WG Chairs. The NCs should encourage the WG members in their respective countries to be more active.
- Appointment of Chairs, WG structures and activities for the next Phase should be discussed together with the outcome of the Grant Scheme. A proposal should be presented by the ExCo to the end of Phase SC meeting.