

Dear colleagues,

We have often discussed about a newsletter for our group to promote communication among partners between our meetings and to facilitate the exchange of information. If there is sufficient feedback on the first "Beta Short News" we are prepared to compile your contributions and to distribute the next issues. A newsletter is good means to share knowledge, to inform on ongoing and planned activities, to learn from each other and to mediate contacts. Suggestions for the next issue and helping hands are of course very welcome! For the time being the newsletter will have four sections: (1) Progress made since the last meeting, (2) news from research projects, (3) request for cooperation and (4) organisational matters.

Progress made since the last meeting



Participants of the fourth joint meeting of the ECPGR working group on Beta and the WBN, 20-22 June 2012, Cappelle-en-Pévèle, France (photo: company Florimond Desprez)

Meeting report and proceedings

Thanks to the excellent work of Elinor Lipman, ECPGR secretariat, the editing of the meeting report and the work plan approved during our meeting at Cappelle-en-Pévèle, France, June 2012, is almost finished. The preparation of the meeting proceedings is also progressing.

Work on *Beta nana* is progressing

Good progress was made by the Greek Gene Bank (GGB). Parthenopi Ralli had agreed to prepare a *Beta nana* project proposal during summer 2012. A project proposal titled "Population monitoring and genetic analysis for the enhancement of the conservation status of *Beta nana*" was submitted by the GGB in September 2012 and the project contract signed by Bioversity International. The Greek Gene Bank (GGB) sampled *Beta nana* plants at three sites located on the Olympus Mountain during a preliminary survey. The major part of the work will be performed in 2013.



New user interface of the International Data Base for Beet (IDBB)

Stefan Unger from the Institute of Breeding Research on Agricultural Crops (JKI) and Anja Wolck from the Information Centre and Library (JKI) and redesigned the user interface of IDBB (<http://idbb.jki.bund.de/idbb>). The system provides data on the genus *Beta* and *Patellifolia*. Therefore the system is now named "International Data Base for Beet". The homepage includes the following statement and explanations:

"The mission of the International Data Base for Beet (IDBB) is to promote the conservation, management and sustainable use of plant genetic resources of beets (*Patellifolia*, *Beta*). The IDBB is a joint undertaking of an international group of curators, researchers and users of beet germplasm. Our common goal is to ensure the long-term conservation of genetic resources required for the adaptation of the sugar, fodder, garden and leaf beet crop to changing production conditions. The mission will be achieved by combining the advantages of the *ex situ* and *in situ* genetic resources management techniques.

This internet site provides access to information systems suited to support the development of a complementary conservation programme for *Beta* and *Patellifolia*. The IDBB is an inventory of *ex situ* accessions maintained in an international, decentralised network of gene banks. This information system allows the search for passport, characterization and evaluation data on gene bank accessions. The crop specific Population Level Information System (CWRIS-AEGRO-PLIS) and Genetic Reserve Information System (GenResIS) have been developed to support the *in situ* conservation of *Beta* and *Patellifolia*. The (CWRIS-AEGRO-PLIS) as well as the GenResIS provide access to information on plant occurrences observed in the ecosystems and natural habitats where they have developed their distinctive properties."

Links on the website guide visitors to the Genetic Resources Information Network (GRIN) / National Plant Germplasm System (NPGS) of the USA and to the websites of the ECPGR Working Group on *Beta*, the International Institute for Beet Research (IIRB) as well as the European Commission, DG AGRI.

Lothar Frese reported on the functions and development potential of the IDBB during the meeting of the IIRB Study Group Genetics and Breeding on September 21, 2012 at Murten, Switzerland and during the annual meeting of the German Plant Breeders Association on November 7, 2012 at Bonn, Germany.

News from research projects

AKER project officially launched on September 26, 2012

Christian Huyghe, Scientific Director at INRA and scientific head of the project, officially launched the French research project AKER at a conference hosted by Florimond Desprez at Cappelle-en-Pévèle. The conference was attended by 140 persons representing all stakeholder groups of the sugar beet research and production community; amongst them were 80 scientists engaged in the implementation of AKER's work programme. For more information please see <http://aker-betterave.fr>.

The AKER project was supplied with accessions from genebanks in Europe and overseas. The GGB (Greece), the IPK (Germany) and the NPGS (USA) provided the majority of the approximately 2600 accessions of which 2016 accessions will be investigated during the first phase of the project.



Mid-term meeting of the PGR Secure project

The EC Programme Officer, Annette Schneegans, said during the meeting of the project team at Larnaca (Cyprus) on September 23-25, 2012 that commercial plants breeders are one of the most important beneficiaries of the PGR Secure project (www.pgrsecure.org). The team of work package 5, titled "Engaging the user community" is composed of the DLO/CGN, Wageningen, The Netherlands; JKI, Quedlinburg, Germany and NordGen, Alnarp, Sweden. JKI searched various genebank information systems in Europe and overseas, selected accessions with low to intermediate scores for disease susceptibility (BYV, BMYV, Rizomania, *Rhizoctonia solani*, *Cercospora beticola* and *Heterodera schachtii*) compiled the information in a spreadsheet. The objective is to stimulate the re-evaluation of the accessions which in turn may result in a wider use of crop wild relatives, landraces and former breeder's varieties in breeding research and breeding. The list will be distributed to breeding companies, soon. The list will be provided by JKI to any interested person on request.

Request for cooperation

From Yasmina El Bahloul: Future Research projects

To start with I would like to tell you about my story on beets. Before I became the representative from Morocco in the WBN, very little was known about the exiting wild beet species. I have started my project on the inventory and taxonomic determination of Moroccan wild beet species in 2005. It was not just difficult ... IT WAS A CHALLENGE. Despite the great interest in *Beta* / *Patellifolia* species in fundamental and applied breeding research it was hard to get a project funded and to make this group of crop wild relatives to one of the national research topics.



Patellifolia occurrence in southern Morocco (photo: Y. El Bahloul)



One sentence was repeated to me very often: *Are wild beets a priority in our country?* The answer was not easy. But encouraging results were obtained with the help of many colleagues from the “beet community”. The first results were presented during the 3rd meeting of the ECPGR and WBN in Tenerife, Spain in 2006. Many contacts have been established during and after that meeting. Thanks to this, research on wild beet relatives became more popular at INRA – Morocco.

At our last meeting in Cappelle-en-Pévèle, France, I had a short discussion with Arnaldo Santos Guerra about elaborating a project for *Patellifolia* evaluation, including Moroccan and Spanish collections. A *Patellifolia patellaris* population growing in the south of Spain is severely attacked by rust. This highly susceptible population is perhaps the extreme in a range of more or less susceptible populations. Would screening for rust resistance in *Patellifolia* be of long-term interest? Suggestions from researchers are very welcome.

From Lothar Frese: Logo for our network

If you are an artist in addition of being a scientist (or friend of an artist), please draft a logo and send it to lothar.frese@jki.bund.de. During our next ECPGR and WBN meeting we will select the best design. The price winner will be awarded with the Golden Beet.

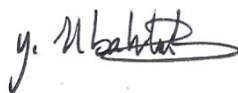
Organisational matters

Please start thinking about the election of the next chair person of the ECPGR Working Group on *Beta* and the World *Beta* Network as well. Lately, during a discussion on this issue with Sonia Dias (Bioversity International, Rome, Italy) an interesting idea emerged of how the work load among the working group / network members can better be shared. We could establish a system of future head, acting head and past head. In this system the acting chair person is supported by the past head while the future chair person is introduced into his new job. This system has several advantages. Two of them are: The experience / background knowledge is maintained over a longer period in a small group and if the ECPGR working group / network accepts a rotating system then everyone will once become chair and get the chance of steering the group.

With kind regards



L. Frese



Y. El Bahloul

