

Report to the Ninth ECP/GR Steering Committee meeting (October 2003)

Working Group on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants

Progress made by the Group during Phase VI (1999 - 2003)

The *Medicinal and Aromatic plants (MAP)* WG was formally established during eighth meeting of the ECP/GR Steering Committee in October 2001. The first meeting of the WG was held in Gozd Martuljek, Slovenia, in September 2002. The work done on the conservation of MAP in 18 participating countries has been reviewed. Directives of the WG program have been set up during the meeting. After the meeting, the selection of 10-target species/genera that will be used as model species, enabling development of specific MAP descriptors, has been made. MAP descriptor list, harmonized with EURISCO descriptors, has been prepared and proposed to the members as a working scheme. The members, interested in the same species/genus, work on the evaluation of accessions in their genebanks. The reports will be presented during the next meeting of WG, likely in 2004. The WG members agree that development of relational database would advance the work on evaluation of MAP species, but this needs EU funding support. Members collect the scientific and vocational information for launching the project.

Specific objective	Achievements
Meetings	
First meeting of the Working Group on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants was held in Gozd Martuljek, 12-14 September 2002	WG members reported on the present status of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants in their countries. According to the country reports, a very high proportion of European MAP species on the market is gathered from the wild. The existing legislation at national and European levels does not prevent exploitation of MAP natural resources. The Group agreed that it should concentrate its short-term activities on a small number of species/genera of importance to all countries and considered as needing urgent attention. A list of priority species /genera will be elaborated. On the basis of the priority list species, each member of the WG should make all possible efforts to ensure that an exhaustive survey of natural populations of the selected MAPs is carried out in her/his country, in order to provide information for a European MAP genetic resources inventory. At the next WG meeting, WG members will report progress on surveys made in their country and responsible institute for compiling the European inventory will be defined
Documentation	
List of priority species/genera: <i>Origanum</i> spp., <i>Thymus</i> spp., <i>Salvia</i> spp., <i>Achilleas</i> spp., <i>Hypericum</i> spp., <i>Mentha</i> spp., <i>Artemisia</i> spp., <i>Carum carvi</i> , <i>Melissa officinalis</i> , <i>Chamomilla recutita</i> , <i>Valeriana officinalis</i> , <i>Acorus calamus</i> , <i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i> , <i>Gentiana</i> spp., <i>Hyssopus officinalis</i> , <i>Ocimum</i> spp., <i>Papaver</i> spp., <i>Primula</i> spp.	Vice-Chair compiled the proposals from the WG members and made a priority list of 10 model species/genera, taking into consideration following presumptions: - The species must be important from both biological and chemical diversity - The species must be important from the point of view of medicinal plant production (either from cultivation or/and collection) - There must be some common interest in the gene-bank conservation of the chosen species for different European regions (at least 1/3 of countries for each) - The conservation, characterization/evaluation result achieved could be used as model for reservation of other MAP species

Specific objective	Achievements
Characterization/evaluation	
Development of descriptors at genus level	The Group agreed that characterization is only possible when descriptors (at the genus level) are defined. A standard list of descriptors is important for harmonization of working methodology, to increase reliability of recorded data and to facilitate data exchange
MAP Descriptor List (updated passport-data, other descriptor data used in collecting, characterization and evaluation as well as management of MAP accessions)	<p>Descriptors, proposed for WG work on MAP conservation belong to 4 large categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General designation of the accession and its origin background information (passport descriptors); 2. Collecting/monitoring descriptors; 3. Management descriptors/protocols (multiplication, harvest, drying, seed storage) 4. MAP characterization/evaluation descriptors (morphological, chemical and cytological descriptors, abiotic or biotic stress susceptibility, molecular markers)
Inventory/survey of MAP natural populations	On the basis of the priority list species, each member of the WG agreed to make all possible efforts to collect available information on distribution of natural populations and/or survey of the selected MAPs in her/his country, in order to provide information for a European MAP genetic resources inventory. Reports will be presented on the next WG meeting
WG presentation on the EU level and contacts	
To present long-term and short-term tasks of MAP biodiversity conservation and to stress the importance of exhaustive survey of MAP natural populations and maintaining their genetic diversity	The Working Group recognized the need for the development of harmonized strategy for MAP biodiversity conservation on the EU level. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the WG are seeking for funds from relevant international institutions

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Plan of action for Phase VII (2004 - 2008)

Specific objective	Action	Timeframe	Request of support from ECP/GR for specific actions	
			Funding requested	Type of support requested
<u>Meetings:</u> MAP WG Meeting	Organization of the meeting, review of the work done within each of member countries, recommendations for future work	2004 and 2007	YES	- Logistic support - Technical support from IPGRI during the meeting - Technical support from IPGRI after the meeting
<u>Documentation:</u> - Preparation of technological protocols (multiplication, harvest, drying, seed storage) for maintenance of genetic material - Update the MAP database (MEDPLANT) with acquired information on survey of natural populations and evaluation work	- Compiling the existing information on technical conditions/requirements for conservation of germination rate (above 70 %) of MAP accessions, harmonization of methodologies between WG members - Continuing and proactive management of the database by Chair of the WG with the support of all members	2004-2006 2006	NO	NO
<u>Characterization/Evaluation:</u> - Definition of chemical descriptors - Definition of morphological, chemical and cytological for 10 model species/genera	- Harmonization of methodology and study of characteristics of the species within genus. In chemical evaluation usage-defined content of secondary metabolites should be followed - Refining the descriptor list for morphological and/or histological observation of model species	2004-2006	NO	NO
<u>Ex situ conservation – Regeneration:</u> Regeneration of autochthonous MAP accessions in each of the member countries	Study of pollination type of model species and implementation of harmonized methodology for cross-pollinated species	2004-2006	NO	NO

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			Funding requested	Type of support requested
<u>In situ – On-farm conservation:</u> Conservation of existing habitats and field crops of MAP on the national level	The Working Group members will follow the international/national legislation in the field of biodiversity conservation. They will influence the national policy to take precautions against genetic loss of MAPs in case of vulnerable, rare species or species that need other protection measure	2004-2008	NO	NO
<u>Collecting:</u> Provide specimens to the national herbarium collections	The Working Group members encourage the MAP collectors and launch national programs for survey of natural MAP populations	2004-2008	NO	NO
<u>Sharing responsibilities:</u> Collaboration between national programmes working on the same plants/groups of plants	The Chair and Vice-Chair of the WG will facilitate collaboration and coordination of target teams	2004-2008	NO	- Logistic support
<u>Submission of collaborative project proposal:</u> MAP biodiversity conservation in the Central and East European countries	Collaboration between member countries and other EU partners; submission of EU funded project	2005 or 2006	NO	- Logistic support

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