

LEAFY VEGETABLES WG REPORT (2024–2025)

In preparation for the 18th Steering Committee Meeting, Tbilisi, Georgia, 2-4 June 2026

Compiled by WG Chair: Mariusz Chojnowski

Date of compilation: January 2026

1. CONTRIBUTION TO ECPGR OBJECTIVES

1.1. Achievements and success stories

- To efficiently conserve and provide access to unique germplasm in Europe through AEGIS and the European Collection
Since 2023, the number of leafy vegetables represented in the European Collection has increased by around 30%. Currently, more than 2,600 European accessions are part of AEGIS, including major leafy vegetables (lettuce, chicory, spinach) as well as minor leafy vegetables (rocket salad, lamb's lettuce, asparagus, artichoke) and their crop wild relatives (CWR). The genus *Lactuca* is the most represented, with 1,673 European accessions, followed by *Spinacia* with 284 and *Chicorium* with 325 accessions. Some new species of minor leafy vegetables and/or CWR have also been included in the European Collection, including *Blitum bonus-henricus*, *Brassica nigra*, *Cynara cardunculus*, *C. humilis*, eight species of *Lepidium*, *Portulaca oleracea* and *P. grandiflora*. The major contributing countries to the European Collection are, as in previous surveys, Germany, the Netherlands, the Nordic Countries and the UK. However, some other countries have also assigned accessions as European Accessions (e.g. Italy – *Asparagus acutifolius*, Romania – *Brassica nigra*, Slovenia – *Lactuca sativa*).
- To provide passport and phenotypic information of actively conserved European PGRFA diversity *ex situ* and *in situ* through the EURISCO catalogue
There are currently 12,524 accessions of main leafy vegetables with available passport data in EURISCO, comprising 9,431 lettuce accessions from 28 countries, 1,492 spinach accessions from 23 countries, and 829 chicory accessions from 24 countries. Additionally, there are around 1,000 accessions of minor leafy vegetables (artichoke, asparagus, lamb's lettuce, rhubarb, rocket salad) with passport data in EURISCO. Phenotypic information has increased for lettuce and its wild relatives, also due to additional funds available within the EVA lettuce project. This also enabled *Bremia* resistance testing and SPET genotyping in *L. serriola*. Information in the EURISCO catalogue is periodically updated by individual countries. Details on *in situ* data in EURISCO are provided below.
- To improve *in situ* conservation and use of crop wild relatives
The conservation and documentation of crop wild relatives (CWR) have been strengthened through the recent ECPGR project *CWR in EURISCO*, which involved contributions from 17 participating countries. The national CWR inventories for certain individual countries have been established and *in situ* CWR data were integrated into the EURISCO *in situ* CWR database. The database includes CWR of major leafy vegetables: lettuce (*Lactuca serriola*, *L. saligna*, *L. virosa*, *L. alpina*, *L. cicerbita*, *L. aurea*, *L. cyprica*, *L. tetrantha*, *L. tuberosa* - 170 accessions from North Macedonia,

Cyprus, Albania, Italy, Netherlands, and Romania), chicory (*Cichorium intybus* – 51 accessions from N. Macedonia, Netherlands, Romania, Poland, Lithuania), *Asparagus* (*A. officinalis*, *A. acutifolius* - 28 accessions from Albania, Netherlands, Italy, UK, Lithuania, N. Macedonia), spinach (*Blitum B. bonus-henricus*, *B. virgatum*) – 14 accessions from Netherlands), as well as CWR of minor leafy vegetables such as *Brassica nigra* (14 acc.), *Diplotaxis muralis* and *D. tenuifolia* (21 acc.), *Erucastrum galicum* (6 acc.), *Rumex acetosella*, *R. acetosa*, *R. crispus* and *Rumex thyrsoiflorus* (32 acc.), *Valerianella dentata*, *V. ramosa*, *V. locusta* and *V. carinata* (22 acc.), *Taraxacum officinalis* (1 acc.). The contributing countries of these species are Albania, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, North Macedonia and Poland. There are also species being identified in some countries but are not yet included in EURISCO (e.g. *Asparagus albus*, *A. aphyllus*, *Cichorium pumilum*, *C. monensis*, *Cynara minima*, *C. tournefortii*, *Diplotaxis siifolia*, *D. catholica*, *D. eruroides*, *D. ilorcitana*, *Eruca vesicaria*). The integration of *in situ* CWR data into EURISCO provides a foundation for future development and will facilitate further use of CWR of leafy vegetables.

- To promote on-farm conservation and management of European PGRFA diversity
Although on-farm conservation is promoted in several countries, there have been no coordinated activities specifically addressing leafy vegetables to obtain comprehensive information on on-farm conservation and management.
- To promote use of PGRFA
The utilization of PGRFA of leafy vegetables is actively promoted within individual countries, with accessions made available to users under the terms of the SMTA.

1.2. Gaps or constraints identified

The representation of both main and minor leafy vegetables in the European Collection should be strengthened further, and their effective inclusion in AEGIS should be promoted in the European countries that have not yet assigned AEGIS accessions. The phenotypic information for the leafy vegetable species included in the EURISCO catalogue should be improved, too. Comprehensive surveys of the *in situ* conservation and use of crop wild relatives, and of the on-farm conservation of leafy vegetables in individual countries should be conducted.

2. GRANT SCHEME ACTIVITIES, WG MEETINGS AND EVA ACTIVITIES

- **Grant Scheme proposals (submitted:0; approved:0)**
- **Total number of partners involved in Grant Scheme: n/a**
- **Meetings held**
 - European Evaluation Network (EVA) – Lettuce Network:
 - 9 September 2024 (MS Teams): A review of the 2024 *Bremia* trials was presented, plans for *Lactuca serriola* genotyping with SPET were discussed and work planning for 2025 was presented.
 - 10 February 2025 (MS Teams): update on EVA Lettuce network 1.0 was given by Sandra Goritschnik ECPGR including EVA lettuce data management in EURISCO-EVA intranet. New EVA partners were introduced and plans for EVA Lettuce 2.0 project were discussed, including potential funding options (e.g. via ECPGR Grant Scheme). The EVA 2.0 project could involve adding new phenotypic data to the existing collection and expanding it by adding additional genotyping data.
 - 5 December 2025 (MS Teams): Results on *Bremia* screening and genotyping of *L. serriola* were presented. New chair of the ECPGR Leafy vegetables WG attended the meeting as well.

- 2025: on-line meetings of the new and ex chair of the WG for the handover of the work of the Leafy Vegetables WG.
- **Total number of partners involved in WG Meeting: n/a**
- **Reports and related data**
 - None
- **Funds mobilized**
 - None
 - In 2025 the EVA Lettuce network activities continued in kind under coordination of ECPGR Secretariat. Discussion has started to obtain funds for EVA Lettuce 2.0 (e.g. ECPGR Grant Scheme).

3. OTHER ACTIVITIES (CROSS-WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES, LINKS WITH OTHER NETWORKS, PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES)

- **Cross-Working Group activities:** WG chair and WG members collaborate with other working groups, either crop specific and/or thematic WG (CWR, Doc&Info, On-farm conservation).
- **Others:** In 2025 discussions started on possibilities to propose a next phase for the EVA lettuce network (EVA 2.0) which would enable the network to continue.

4. WORKING GROUP DOCUMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS

- None

5. EXPECTED ADDITIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The collaboration within the leafy vegetables WG will be strengthened. A meeting of the Leafy Vegetables WG will be organized in order to i) identify the current status of the leafy vegetable collections in all European countries and ii) define the strategy to contribute to the implementation of all major objectives of the PGR Strategy for Europe in individual countries (related to *in situ* conservation of CWR and WFP, on-farm conservation and management, *ex situ* conservation and sustainable use, information system and monitoring).