

# SAVE eNews 2/2004

Quarterly e-mail service of the European SAVE Foundation  
(Safeguard for Agricultural Varieties in Europe)



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## Agreement on Plant Genetic Resources becomes effective

The European Union and 9 of its member states joined the agreement on Plant Genetic Resources at the 31st of March 2004. With that, the number of signing countries exceeds 40, which is required so that the agreement may be put into force (now 47 signing countries). Now, the international contract can become effective at the 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2004. The contract was negotiated for 7 years, and it was decided on by the FAO-Conference in November 2001.

The agreement includes the most important agricultural cultivated plants and regulates the use of their genetic features. The parties to the agreement mutually guarantee free access to seed and reproductive material, and they share commercial and other ad-



vantages resulting from its utilization within the frame of a multilateral system. The international agricultural research centres are part of the system; they dispose of important collections of cultivated plants from all over the world.

As many officials emphasised, a new chapter of North-South co-operation is opened with the agreement becoming effective. The contract sets standards for the regulation of a compensation of advantages between users of resources and suppliers of resources, taking into consideration the breeding achievements of the farmers in the plants' centres of origin and in diversity centres, which sometimes date back centuries.

## Refuge for Sorraia horses established

The Sorraia is a primitive Iberian horse, named for the Portuguese river near which it was discovered in 1920 by the Portuguese zoologist Dr. Ruy d'Andrade. The Sorraias' status is debated; d'Andrade believed them to be a remnant population of an indigenous wild horse and preserved them as such, but the Portuguese today treat them increasingly like a domestic breed. With the help of a Portuguese landowner family, Hardy Oelke, Germany, succeeded in establishing a refuge for these horses.

Ruy d'Andrade believed the Sorraia to have been the ancestor of the Lusitano breed. Molecular genetic research, initiated by Oelke, proved their genotype to be unique\*). It was the Sorraia's wild behavior and instincts, compared with feral horses under similar circumstances, that convinced Oelke, a horse expert and author of specialized books and articles\*\*), of its status of a true wild horse. As he observed the Sorraias losing their wild behavior today due to the way they are kept and bred, and losing phenotypic characteristics due to Man's interference and selections, he had been trying for years to establish a refuge for these rare horses. This became a reality when in March 2004, a group of mares and a stallion were released in the "Vale de Zebro Sorraia Horse Refuge" in southern Portugal, not far from the town of Coruche. The area is ideal, five square kilometers in size, and offers grassland as well as forest, is fenced in, and it's



isolated by surrounding fenced in sections. Here, the Sorraia horses will be able to live unmolested, in a survival-of-the-fittest situation - a milestone in the preservation of the Sorraia horse, a rare gene pool, consisting today of possibly no more than 150 head.

\*) Jansen, Forster, Levine, Oelke, Hurler, Renfrew, Weber, Oelke: MITOCHONDRIAL DNA AND THE ORIGINS OF THE DOMESTIC HORSE. Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA 99 (16), pp. 10905-10910 (2002)

\*\*) "Born Survivors on the Eve of Extinction", ISBN 3-89118-096-9



## SAVE-Annual Meeting in Bled, Slovenia

The annual meeting of SAVE Foundation and SAVE network will take place from **2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> of September 2004**, together with DAGENE in Bled, Slovenia.

The tentative programme will cover the following issues:

### **Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> September**

- Day: Field trip: Plant Breeding
- Evening: Meeting of the SAVE-Project Commission

### **Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> September:**

- Morning: FAO/DAGENE-Workshop  
Meeting of the SAVE-Network (Council of Cooperation Partners)
- Afternoon: Field Trip: Animal Breeding
- Evening: Meeting of the Board of Directors

### **Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> September:**

- DAGENE-Symposium on "Specificity and influence of the autochthonous animal breeds on the quality of the local meat and milk products" with product exhibition and sample tasting.

The conference programme is soon available from: [office@save-foundation.net](mailto:office@save-foundation.net).



## Balkan Fair und Balkan Workshop

After the success of the first regional Balkan Fair „Agro-Biodiversity and Rural Heritage“ in autumn last year, the fair will be carried out for the second time from 24-25<sup>th</sup> of September 2004 in Serbian Dimitrovgrad. Again, numerous endangered breeds from the region will be shown. The Monitoring Institute and SAVE Foundation will use the opportunity to invite their regional partners and contact persons for a workshop, and to discuss the situation of rare and missing breeds of the Balkan, to set up a Balkan network and to evaluate the need for action. Information is available from Natura Balkanika [balkanika@ptt.yu](mailto:balkanika@ptt.yu) or [office@save-foundation.net](mailto:office@save-foundation.net).

## FAO-Meeting Rome

At the end of March, “Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Animal Genetic Resources“ had its 3rd meeting in Rome. The participants prepared the “State of the World-Report“ on animal genetic resources, which is supposed to be available in 2006. The report will base on more than 150 country reports. Interest was huge. Delegations from more than 134 countries participated in the discussion. SAVE Foundation was invited as observer.

Amongst others, it was decided that the report is to contain a part on strategic action priorities, and that a follow-up mechanism is to be created to help countries to act according to their prioritised aims. An important part of the follow-up is the set-up of “regional networks“. NGOs, civil organisations and the private sector are to be integrated.



## **Franz Fischler: Welcome to the Europe of 25!**

I would like to welcome the 10 new Member States who are joining us in the European Union today, 1st May 2004. The political circumstances which kept many of us apart in the last century are now consigned to history. We can all begin again at the point before our enforced separation by wars and totalitarianism as members of one big European family.



As in all families, we can have differences of opinion, but the ties which bind us are stronger than the disputes which divide us. We have a wealth of shared culture and philosophy and, together, we have a European identity which can hold its head high anywhere in the world. If we look at the fruits of agriculture, we have a hugely varied cuisine and highly developed regional gastronomic traditions. Our rural landscape, shaped by countless generations of farmers, is a precious gift to all of us whether we live in town or country. As such, we have a common duty to protect it whilst ensuring its economic viability.

Together we will work to improve our environment, to provide security for farmers and the quality products which our consumers demand. We will have an internal market of some 450 million people and a place in the world economy which allows us to compete with the strongest and hold out a hand of friendship to the weakest.

To this enlarged and enriched European Union I welcome those members of the family who were kept for years outside the door by circumstances beyond their control and I invite the existing members to take up the new challenge of working together for a more prosperous and equitable enlarged European Union which will be to the shared benefit of us all.

EU Commissioner for Agriculture,  
Rural Development and Fisheries

## **The European Parliament is going to support local Varieties**

The European Parliament has presented a draft to change the Council regulation 2092/91 (ecological agriculture). This very progressive document demands under the topic "biodiversity" that small-scale local production on basis of local and "old" varieties should in future be distinguished from large-scale production with modern varieties as regards the support of ecological agriculture. This is aimed at within the sense of specific conservation of agro-biodiversity. The proposal is met with undivided consent of conservation organisations. SAVE Foundation also prepares itself for the future realisation of the proposal.

## Important dates (extract)

14-17 June: International Caucasian conference on cereals and food legumes, Tbilisi, Georgia; Web: <http://www.icarda.org/Events.htm>

5-7 July: First International Organic Seed Conference: "Challenges and opportunities for promoting organic agriculture in the seed industry", FAO, Rome/Italy; Contact: [seedconference@ifoam.org](mailto:seedconference@ifoam.org), Web: <http://www.organicseedconf.org>

2-4 September: Annual Meeting of SAVE Foundation and the SAVE Network at Bled, Slovenia, in collaboration with DAGENE; Contact: [office@save-foundation.net](mailto:office@save-foundation.net)



4 September: DAGENE Symposium "Specificity and influence of the autochthonous animal breeds on the quality of the local meat and milk products", Exhibition and tasting of Slovenian local products; Bled, Slovenia; Contact: [drago.kompan@bfro.uni-lj.si](mailto:drago.kompan@bfro.uni-lj.si)

5-9 September: 55th Annual Meeting of EAAP at Bled, Slovenia. With workshops to the topics: "Animal Genetic Resources" and "Sustainable Recultivation and land Use on Karst and Mountainous Regions by Use of farm Animals"; Contact: [eaap@eaap.org](mailto:eaap@eaap.org), Web: <http://www.eaap.org>

22-25 September: Conference: "The Alps of the next generation - from forecast to action", Kranjska Gora, Slovenia; Web: <http://www.forumalpinum.org>

24 September: 2nd Regional Fair "Balkan Agrobiodiversity and Rural Heritage", Dimitrovgrad, Serbia-Montenegro; Exhibition of indigenous Balkan breeds. Contact: [balkanika@ptt.yu](mailto:balkanika@ptt.yu)

24-25 September: SAVE Workshop "Rare indigenous breeds of the Balkan", Dimitrovgrad, Serbia-Montenegro; Contact: [office@save-foundation.net](mailto:office@save-foundation.net)



27-30 September: Congress of the Rare Breeds International (RBI) in Bloemfontein, South Africa. Contact: [KeithR@nda.agric.za](mailto:KeithR@nda.agric.za), Web: <http://www.rbi.it>

20-23 October: "Terra Madre - world meeting of food communities" (Meeting among peasants, producers and agribusiness operators. A new, different way of looking at food production).; Torino, Italy. Contact: [s.abbona@slowfood.it](mailto:s.abbona@slowfood.it), Web: <http://www.slowfood.com>

21-25 October: "Salone del Gusto", Slow Food International food and wine show; Torino, Italy; Contact: [s.abbona@slowfood.it](mailto:s.abbona@slowfood.it), Web: <http://www.slowfood.com>

3-5 November: 5th National Colloquium "Un dialogue pour la diversité génétique", Lyon, France. Contact: [BRG@inapg.inra.fr](mailto:BRG@inapg.inra.fr), Web: <http://www.brg.prd.fr>