

# SAVE eNews 2/2009

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



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## Agrobiodiversity Conservation in the Carpathian Mountains: Final Report – Phase II, 2005 – 2008.

### Review

The Carpathian Mountains are home to numerous traditional agro-eco-systems in which old domestic breeds and cultivated plants have survived right up to today. This agrobiodiversity is at risk – particularly because of the rapidly accelerating switch to western intensive farming practices. Backed by the Swiss Environment Office (BAFU, formerly BUWAL) and the Basel-based Gsell Foundation, the first phase of the Carpathians project was completed in 1999. It culminated with a workshop in Suceava, Romania with 30 experts from five nations and the publication of a highly acclaimed report (Rare Breeds and Plant Varieties in the Carpathian Mountains – Monitoring and Conservation Strategies, ISBN 3-907866-60-6) containing the first available documentation on the need for action in the Carpathian region. With a small network of experts SAVE Foundation was involved in drafting the Carpathian Convention by UNEP, signed in Kiev in May 2003. Article 11 takes in agrobiodiversity conservation.



BAFU pledged further funds at the end of 2004 to enable the second phase of the project to go ahead. Interim reports documented activities in 2005 and 2006:

- **Identifying and contacting stakeholders and building a stakeholder network**  
In cooperation with its Slovakian counterpart AgroGenofond and Bioversity International, Rome (formerly IPGRI), SAVE Foundation and Monitoring Institute helped organise the international Traditional Agro-Ecosystems conference in Nitra, Slovakia, September 2005. The conference incentivised stakeholders to take further action.
- **Conservation of neglected fruit and berry varieties**  
A specimen collection of 50 old plum varieties and about 150 berry and wild fruit varieties were planted in the White Carpathians (South Moravia). This model project proved so successful that similar variety collections have since been planted in other Carpathian countries.
- **Register of Synonyms**  
To aid cross-border cooperation and ease language barriers a multilingual thesaurus was created. Pomologists in the respective countries were commissioned to collect the names and synonyms, group them and enter them into an internet database. Both Bioversity International and the GFU for Underutilized Species showed great interest in this new approach. Unfortunately, the web-based database ([www.fruit-net.info/synonym](http://www.fruit-net.info/synonym)) had to be taken offline recently following an attack by hackers. It will go online on a secure platform as soon as possible.

- **Monitoring of lost livestock breeds**

The situation of the Huzul Horses and the Carpathian Buffaloes were evaluated. In Carpatho-Ukraine and in Romania subsequent research was stepped up on lost breeds of Stocli pigs and Mocanitsa dwarf cattle (rasa de munte). The search for surviving Walachian dwarf cattle (resp. Tatra cattle) was halted, because the last animals in Slovakia's Osturna region in the 1990s had since disappeared. This situation again underlines the urgent need for action.

For language and logistical reasons, the Carpathian Mountains were divided into the Slavic-language northern region and the Romanian southern region. The Ukraine is the only Carpathian state that cannot rely on support from the EU, the work largely focused on Carpatho-Ukraine (particularly the Transcarpathian region to the south).

## **Activities 2007 and 2008**

### **Stakeholder Network**

In the frame of the SAVE annual meeting 2008, in Kozard in the Hungarian Carpathians, together with the Carpathian stakeholders the following points were stated:

- For Phase 3 of the Carpathians project (from 2009), priority will be given to develop a Project 3a to cover the more advanced activities in the Northern Carpathians. In line with the country's specific needs, a project 3b for Romania will be developed in parallel.
- To promote the Carpathian network, SAVE Foundation will create a Carpathians Network as part of the Regional Networks section of the AgroBiodiversity.Net website (see [www.agrobiodiversity.net/regional](http://www.agrobiodiversity.net/regional)).
- As an overarching, sustainable conservation model for endangered domestic breeds and cultivated plants, a network of Ark centres (Ark farms and variety collections) will be set up in the Carpathians.

### **Fruit and Berries**

The Thesaurus (up to now 18'000 names and synonyms) shall be extended to include plums, damsons, greengages and mirabelle plums. It is already available in English, French, German, Czech, Polish and Russian. Slovakian and Ukrainian sections shall be added. A Romanian version is planned.

The variety collection held in Bojkovice in Moravia's White Carpathians will be completed with a comparative collection of common medlar (*Mespilus germanica*, see photo). About 12'000 trees of old varieties were cultivated and sold to interested people. A collection of old Transcarpathian fruit varieties is now being planted in Bakta, Ukraine. Poland, Hungary and Slovakia are each to receive at least one further collection of regional varieties.



### **Focus on Ukraine**

As a recently conducted fact-finding mission to the region revealed, about 30 of the 80 apple varieties and 20 of the 30 pear varieties are still in existence. Urgent action is also needed in respect of plums, cherry plums and walnuts. Besides the collection in Bakta (see above) two decentralized satellite collections will be established.

Hucul horses originate from the Ukrainian Carpathians. In contrast to those in neighbouring countries, these horses have been neither cross-bred nor rebred. They represent the original type, with partial Zebra-like markings on the legs and a dark dorsal stripe. The 120 animals of the Huzul association can now be officially registered

A first arc centre with argro-tourism services is under construction: besides Huzul horses also Carpathian buffaloes and Carpathian mountain sheep will be showed. A satellite collection of the fruit collection mentioned above will complete the setup.

Numbers of Carpathian buffalo are declining. The three existing breeding groups with 35 animals in total urgent need new blood with purebred buffaloes from the neighbouring Romania. The buffaloes will be used for grazing in a biosphere reserve. The Transcarpathian breeding programme will be integrated into the new South-East European Water Buffalo Network, which is part of the SAVE-Monitoring Institute Balkan Project.

### Focus on Romania

Romania possesses comprehensive pomologies. Currently inventory work at least partial areas of the region and on identifying the need for action is done. A specimen collection will be established similar to the one kept in Bojkovice.

Mocanitsa dwarf cattle (see photo), which were officially declared extinct, have since been found in the south-western Carpathian region. The search for Stocli pigs goes on.



### Ark Centre Network

In the northern Carpathians (CZ, PL, SK, HU, UA) at least one animal Ark and one cultivated plant Ark exists. The publicly accessible centres are listed in the European Arca-Net (<http://www.arca-net.info>). The creation of a rescue station network will be included in the ELBARN (European Livestock Breeds Ark and Rescue Net) project.

### Outlook / Sustainability

Phase II of the Carpathians project was successful in establishing a sustainable stakeholder network at all three levels: breeders, universities and administrations. Ideally, the network will be expanded and intensified in a third project phase. Great potential is seen in the Ark network, which should be integrated into breeding strategy planning

Collections of fruit specimen could be established. The sustainability is given through the proactivity of the breeders (selling of cultivated young trees). The thesaurus of variety names which was devised to assist cross-border cooperation activities is more or less complete as regards apple varieties and North Carpathian (Slavic) languages and provides users with a good working tool. The project has been well received in specialist circles.

In the livestock sector the logistics involved in establishing the Ark network helped active improvement of conservation work. The search for lost breeds should be intensified in future project phases.

Phase 3 will be used to lend more weight to the holistic nature of the project. Focus will be placed on rural regions and on halting rural exodus in remote areas.

=> Complete report see: [www.save-foundation.net/english/PDF/Carpathians\\_final\\_II.pdf](http://www.save-foundation.net/english/PDF/Carpathians_final_II.pdf)



## ELBARN Area Workshops: Interesting and fruitful discussions with stakeholders throughout Europe

The Spring of 2009 has been busy and productive for the SAVE Team and the ELBARN project partners. Four Workshops have been held: in Ghent, Belgium, and in Roznov, Czech Republic in March, in Legnaro, Italy, in April and in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria, in May. These workshops were attended by a wide range of stakeholders from nearly every country in Europe – from ministers and professors through to NGO workers and farmers. Each Workshop followed the same basic format and had the same goals – to lead discussions towards a plan of action for ELBARN in the area.



The Workshops began with an introduction to the project and the work that has already been undertaken. Most importantly, the Guidelines on Rescue, Breeding, Ark and Rescue Centres and Marketing were introduced. A summary of the interim results of the questionnaire was also presented, which often lead to interesting plenary.

Guest speakers also provided input into the Workshops – an overview of regulations and legislation in the context of “rare breeds” and diseases was provided by representatives from the World Organisation on Animal Health (OIE) and the EC Directorate General for Health and Consumer Affairs (DG SANCO). The information from these presentations was also presented at the other Workshops for the benefit of other Areas. Other guest speakers presented a variety of topics: experience with epidemics, state of conservation in their country, Ark Farms, product traceability, pro-conservation legislation, product marketing et cetera.



After the inputs of the guest speakers, the workshops split into work groups. These work groups covered the themes of rescue, breeding and sustainability. A list of questions was provided for each group, after lengthy discussions within the groups the work continued in the plenary. The work group and plenary discussions will form the basis of the Area Action Plans which are now being formulated by the ELBARN project partners.

The discussions in the work groups were lively. New ideas were shared amongst the participants. Definitions and/or solutions were arrived at that take both the project and the task of safe-guarding agricultural varieties a few steps further.

In brief some of the main impressions and pointers:

### **Theme 1: Rescue**

- Needs for rescue are diverse in the different areas of Europe. The concept of Rescue needs to be developed for each area and, ultimately, for each country.
- Contingency plans need to be drawn up for each country to deal with emergency cases such as epidemics – these plans need to include a “special case” for rare breeds.
- A network of individuals interested in helping with this topic is needed per country and also on a pan-European level.



### **Theme 2: Ark Centres**

- Ark Centres are well known and established in some areas but in others it is a new idea.
- Training courses – owners of Ark Centres and people planning on opening one would benefit from training sessions from experienced Ark Centre owners. This will help them plan their Centre and maximise the potential of aspects such as publicity, products, educational facilities, environmental programmes and so on.

### **Theme 3: Breeding**

- Some definitions were required in order to discuss properly – especially the terms “census” and “nucleus herd” where often interpreted differently, which leads to confusing statements being made.
- Census (register of all animals, per breed and holding), registers and well run and accessible herd books are a prerequisite of successful conservation breeding.
- The quality of data and the efficiency of breeding organisations needs to be checked and, if necessary, improved.

### **Theme 4: Marketing**

- For the Area Workshops this theme was renamed “Sustainability” as it concerns the long term existence of the Ark Centres.
- The differences between the Areas are significant – the idea of Ark Farms or Centres was often not known and also there were problems with market access for traditional products, economic barriers and generally the status of rural development.
- Different schemes need to be developed for various approaches such as tourism, traditional products, educational facilities in combination to offer an attractive programme.
- A general trademark for traditional products and a certification label for Ark Centres were considered necessary by the participants.

The ELBARN project is now entering its final year. In this year the Area Action Plans will be published and plans should be set in motion. A work plan for the final year will be discussed at the next meeting of the ELBARN partners in mid-June. One of the main tasks in the next year will be the verification of the data sent to us via the questionnaire but, also the completion of the breed descriptions, keeping in regular contact with the people who have shown their interest in the project to try to form work groups (by mailing list) on the topics identified as urgent, promotion of the action plans and the concept of Ark Centres and Rescue Stations. ELBARN has started as a three year project but it must be carried on into the future if the concept is to be translated into lasting action.

=> The ELBARN Guidelines and all presentations can be downloaded on [www.elbarn.net](http://www.elbarn.net)  
Print versions are also available.

## SAVE Annual Meeting with International Seminar 20<sup>th</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup> August, in Ghent, Belgium

The next Annual Meeting of SAVE Foundation and the European SAVE Network will take place in Ghent, Belgium, organised by the Belgian rare breeds organisation Steunpunt Levend Erfgoed (SLE). The meeting will begin with a presentation at the EU-Commission in Brussels before moving to the historic and attractive city of Ghent. This year we will incorporate a seminar on the topic of “**Innovative Aspects for In-Situ Conservation**” with guest speakers. Once the SAVE bodies have met, it will be possible to enjoy the SLE-Expo at Wachtebeke. The Expo brings together a large selection of livestock breeds and a wide variety of old fruits. Several thousands of visitors come to see and admire the prestigious animals and taste the fruits. Transport between the venues will be provided.

### Provisional agenda:

#### - Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> August

16.00 Brussels: Presentation at European Union  
*Transfer to hotel in Gent, dinner*

#### - Friday 21<sup>st</sup> August

9.00 Registration

#### **Internat. Agrobiodiversity Seminar: “Innovative Aspects for In-Situ Conservation”**

Combined meeting of the **Project Commission** and **Council of Cooperation Partners**

Discussion of SAVE project activities and recommendations to the Board of Directors.

*Evening: Restaurant Tour of Ghent with regional products*

#### - Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> August

9.30 Closed Session: **Board of Directors**

Visit to farms of local rare breed keepers and breeders

*Dinner*

#### - Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> August

Visit to the "Living Heritage Park" which is situated in Wachtebeke near Ghent. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August they celebrate the annual “Living Heritage Exhibition” in Wachtebeke



=> Link for information & registration: [www.save-foundation.net/pdf/SAVE\\_2009.pdf](http://www.save-foundation.net/pdf/SAVE_2009.pdf)

## European Agrobiodiversity Day (EAD): 29<sup>th</sup> September 2009

“**Arca-Net – the European Ark-Network**” is the theme of this year’s EAD. Under the banner of this theme the SAVE Foundation wishes to promote all the city farms, working farms, parks, nature reserves and so on which work so hard to promote agrobiodiversity by showing it to the public.

Public awareness is important! There is still little awareness of the enormous diversity of breeds & varieties found in European agriculture - public awareness of our subject helps on all levels: it helps producers of traditional produce find a market for their products or,



it reminds our politicians about their international obligation to create strategies to protect the national agrobiodiversity.

Arca-Net has been established by SAVE Foundation as an online guidebook to provide information about all such “Ark Institutions” throughout Europe. The present version, which is already online, can be found under [www.arca-net.info](http://www.arca-net.info). As a part of the ELBARN project Arca-Net has been improved and many new institutions have been identified. All the locations are shown on a Google map (with zoom) under column “Ark-Network” on URL: [www.elbarn.net](http://www.elbarn.net). The new version of the website will be available online shortly.



=> Link to EAD dossier 2009: [www.save-foundation.net/EAD/EAD\\_en.htm](http://www.save-foundation.net/EAD/EAD_en.htm)

## Newsflash

### **European Environmental Bureau: Biodiversity Seminar May 15, 2008, Brussels**

At the beginning of 2009 the EEB, together with the Trade Unions body ETUC and the Social Platform, launched the Spring Alliance. It is a civil society initiative aimed to develop and launch a comprehensive new sustainability agenda for the new Commission. The protection of ecosystems and biodiversity as the natural capital of a more sustainable and resilient economy is one of the key themes of this initiative. In close cooperation with other organizations, the EEB has developed ideas for new targets and policies to better protect and manage this natural capital. A new biodiversity target and policy framework will also be developed by the next Commission and the target can be expected to be presented and discussed in the Council during the Spanish Presidency. The EEB is currently preparing its input for this discussion. The aim of this seminar was to present and discuss the draft manifest of the Spring Alliance as well as the EEB's biodiversity discussion paper with the EEB's biodiversity and agriculture experts as well as to discuss with a number of expert speakers some of the key (sectoral) issues linked to these two initiatives. SAVE was pleased to be invited to provide input on the subject of agricultural biodiversity at this interesting seminar and hopes to collaborate with the EEB in the future. [www.eeb.org](http://www.eeb.org)

### **„Landscape Management, Local Varieties and Genetic Conservation” – Parliamentary Open Day in the Senate's Room of the Hungarian Parliament, May 22, 2009**

The Hungarian decision-makers have currently undertaken the examination and the renewal of the legal and institutional framework of an important issue, namely the conservation of local varieties, national crop and livestock genetic resources, which constitute an invaluable part of our national heritage, and can play a significant role in implementing a qualitative structural change in our agricultural system, ensuring nutritional and food security as well as expanding rural employment and market opportunities. The general public has limited information about these issues and decision-makers themselves might be unaware of their importance in sufficient depth. SAVE was invited as an international speaker to take part in the wide public participation in the legislative process with an integration of the considerations of science, economy and civil society organizations. More details can be found under <http://www.essrg.hu/parlament/indexen.html>

## Important dates (extract)

9-10 July: International Conference "The future of mountain farming concerns us all!" at Krün (Bavaria), Germany. Web: <http://www.konferenz-zukunft-berggebiete.de/en/>

12-16 July : IALE Conference 2009: "European Landscapes in Transformation: Challenges for Landscape Ecology and Management", Salzburg. Austria. Contact: [secretariat@iale2009.eu](mailto:secretariat@iale2009.eu); Web: <http://www.iale2009.eu/>

20-23 August: International Seminar „Innovative Aspects for In-Situ Conservation“. Annual Meeting of SAVE Foundation and the SAVE Network at Ghent, Belgium. Visit of the EU institutions in Brussels and the Living Heritage Expo of the Belgian partner organisation SLE (see next line). Contact: [info@monitoring.eu.com](mailto:info@monitoring.eu.com)



23 August: 12th Rare Breeds Expo in the "Living Heritage Park" in the Provincial Domain Puyenbroeck in Wachtebeke, near Gent, Belgium. All Belgian rare breeds will be present. Contact: [staf.vandenbergh@skynet.be](mailto:staf.vandenbergh@skynet.be), Web: <http://www.sle.be>

24-27 August: 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the European Federation of Animal Science (EAAP) Barcelona, Spain. Web: <http://www.eaap2009.org>

2-3 September: 2nd Summer University on Draft Horses (Universités d'été du Cheval de Trait), Institut Lasalle de Beauvais dans l'Oise (60), France. Web: <http://www.equiterre.fr>

8-10 September: "Responding to the challenge of a changing world", Second World Seed Conference at Rome, Italy. Web: <http://www.worldseedconference.org>

17-20 September: EFCF Conference "The importance of animals in our modern society" at Hilvarenbeek, the Netherlands. Web: <http://www.cityfarms.org/events.html>  
Contact: [pvandervalk@skbn.net](mailto:pvandervalk@skbn.net),

21-22 September: 11th Annual BIOECON Conference on "Economic Instruments to Enhance the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity", Venice, Italy. Contact: [ughetta.molin@feem.it](mailto:ughetta.molin@feem.it), Web: [http://www.bioecon.ucl.ac.uk/04\\_11\\_ann-conf.htm](http://www.bioecon.ucl.ac.uk/04_11_ann-conf.htm)

25 September: 7th Regional Fair "Balkan Agrobiodiversität and Rural Heritage" Dimitrovgrad, Serbia; Exhibition of indigenous Balkan breeds. Contact: [balkanika@ptt.yu](mailto:balkanika@ptt.yu)

29 September: European Agrobiodiversity Day (EAD). PR event for Agrobiodiversity. Various activities of the SAVE Network organisations and other stakeholders in their respective countries. Contact: [info@monitoring.eu.com](mailto:info@monitoring.eu.com)



2-4 October: International Conference "Donkey and Mule Culture: Fighting for survival in the modern era". Island of Hydra (near Athen), Greece. Contact: [arsenosg@vet.auth.gr](mailto:arsenosg@vet.auth.gr), Web: <http://www.geocities.com/DonkeyConference/>

10-12 October: Europom 2009 at Bilzen/Limburg, Belgium; Web: <http://www.europom.be>  
Contact: [info@boomgardenstichting.be](mailto:info@boomgardenstichting.be)