



“Milina Organic“ Agrobiodiversity Conservation Project in Serbia

History

The Milina project is the result of an initiative raised in October 2008 and primarily planned only as a generous act for conservation of Serbian traditional heritage in agriculture, without a commercial component. Two Belgrade financial experts Mr. Milutin Nikolic and Mr. Pavle Kavran were interested to invest a certain amount of money for small farm breeding of local endangered breeds in a traditional way. After two meetings with farmers from “Natura Balkanika” Nature Society they decided to buy two middle sized farms in the area of Stara Planina Nature Park where the Serbian Ministry of Agriculture and “Natura Balkanika” Nature Society started first agrobiodiversity conservation steps in Central Serbia in 2002. At the same time, this new “agrobiodiversity conservation group” started with identification of animals belonging to Busha breed, Balkan Donkey, Pirot Zackel, Karakachan sheep and Balkan Goat. “Natura Balkanika” activists and their associates from Dimitrovgrad, Pirot, Babusnica, Trgoviste, Bosilegrad and Bujanovac municipality discovered many animals of these breeds at the last moment, some of them were even planned to be sold for slaughtering. The financial experts mentioned above bought these animals and they were transported to Milina farms in Gornji Krivodol village and Smilovci village. Shortly after that “Milina Organic” d.o.o. company was established, dedicated to ensuring financial sustainability for farmers breeding rare local breeds and for farmers having small scale organic production based on local breeds and local plant varieties. Today, the so called Milina project is the most important initiative in Central Serbia in the field of agrobiodiversity conservation (in terms of number of animals and breeds involved).



Farms managed by “Milina Organic”

There are two farms that are owned by “Milina Organic” (Mojinsko Farm and Rudina Farm) and few others which are Milina partners (one of them, Vlada Farm, breeds more than 100 Moravka and Mangalitza pigs in Central Serbia, near Arandjelovac). Milina Organic possesses 23 ha of arable land, 10 ha of meadows, 4 ha of pastures plus 167ha of rented land. Rudina and Mojinsko Farms are situated in Dimitrovgrad municipality.



“Rudina” Farm is situated 30km from Dimitrovgrad, near Gornji Krivodol village, in the Stara Planina “Nature Park” – the biggest Serbian nature protected territory, 2km from the border between Serbia and Bulgaria. The village has only 14 inhabitants and only 50 years ago it was one of Serbian sheep breeding centers, having more than 12000 of sheep. The “Rudina” Farm breeds **Busha Cattle** - more than 90 mother cows and more than 30 calves which is 20% of Busha population in Serbia. There are going to be probably more than 110 mother cows in 2010. The

Farm has almost all varieties of this breed – there are animals belonging to black, brown, red, grey, yellow, white and tiger (which is the rarest) type of Busha cattle. At this moment there are only 2 bulls (black – brown bull and tiger type bull), and the plan is to start breeding inside the varieties in next two years. All farm facilities were built 60 years ago, but were renovated in traditional style few months ago (using local, natural materials – clay, straw, stone and wood). The farm possesses a building which used to be a state owned cooperative dairy 30 years ago. This building, having 200m², is going to be used for accommodation of farm guests and groups wishing to know more about traditional farming and Balkan rare breeds. “Milina Organic” has plans for setting up a rural tourism product based on autochthonous breeds and their typical products as an additional tool for adding value to these endangered animals.

The “Mojinsko farm” is situated 14km from Dimitrovgrad, near Smilovci village and near the Stara Planina Nature Park. This used to be state owned cooperative farm for sheep breeding, built in 1983. There are 4 endangered breeds on this farm: Balkan Donkey, Karakachan Sheep, Pirot Zackel Sheep and Balkan Goat. Today this location has 75 donkeys of **Balkan Donkey** breed which is the second Serbian population after Zasavica Special Nature Reserve. It also has the biggest flock of **Karakachan sheep** in Serbia - 120 sheep, 4 rams, 25 female lambs, which is 90% of identified Karakachan sheep in Serbia. Officially this breed was not registered in Serbia till 2005 when “Natura Balkanika” activists discovered a Karakachan sheep flock in remote village in Chemernik Mountain, Crna Trava municipality. Karakachan Sheep is the most primitive sheep breed of South East Europe, it is very small and belongs to the Karakachan nomads and pastoralists which used to use Central Balkan pastures for their flock during the summer up to the first World War . “Mojinsko Farm” breeds the black wool type of Karakachan sheep.

The farm has also 110 sheep, 4 rams and 25 female lambs of **Pirot Zackel sheep** which is the most endangered strain of Zackel sheep in Serbia, originating around the Pirot and Dimitrovgrad area. Unfortunately, this is the only flock of this sheep strain in Serbia.

“Mojinsko farm” also breeds **Balkan Goat**. It has 75 females and 4 males of the red, black and grey type of Balkan Goat, 30% of the officially registered Balkan goats in Serbia.



Present and future products of “Milina Organic”

“Milina Organic” is in an early stage of increasing flock/herd size, but it has delivered some quantity of products during this year.

The most important products of Milina farms are:

- **Meat products:** lamb and sheep meat of Karakachan and Pirot Zackel sheep; Busha Cattle beef meat; Balkan Goat kid meat; sausages of Balkan Donkey and Mangalitza an Moravka pig meat;
- **Milk products:** white cheese made of sheep and goat; donkey milk (for cosmetics and ethno medicine purposes);
- **Wool products:** wool hand knitted socks, jackets etc;
- **Services:** planned use of donkeys in zotherapy purposes; planned use of sheep flock in maintaining Stara Planina Nature Park mountain grasslands

Marketing approach

Milina is preparing a **special shop** in the centre of Belgrade where these and products of other Serbian farms breeding rare breeds are going to be offered to customers.

Shortly after establishing the herd of Busha cattle and flocks of Karakachan and Pirot Zackel sheep, Milina organized a very promising

presentation of autochthonous breeds products in the “Zaplet” Restaurant, Belgrade, in cooperation with the Slow Food movement in Belgrade, which was the first public event, organized by the Slow Food movement in Serbia. It was a special dinner where many leading individuals representing Serbian financial, food and media sector were invited. “SVA” Belgrade Marketing Agency was engaged to help the success of the event. More than 80 participants had opportunity to taste for a first time more than 10 small portions of meals prepared from rare breeds products, cooked by the skilled chef of the Zaplet Restaurant. Every guest had a menu map showing the origin of production (farm and its position on the map), the content of the meal and description of every breed with a product was present on the table. In addition, there was a simple evaluation formular for every meal. It's important to say that meals made with Busha beef was evaluated with the highest mark. Many magazine and newspaper articles proved the necessity of this kind of event for promotion of rare breeds conservation.



So, if you ever visit Belgrade – the Serbian capital, please ask for the restaurant “Zaplet” – the place where you can taste delicious meals made of autochthonous breeds products (Karakachan lamb meat, Pirot Zackel lamb meat; Busha Cattle beef meat, Balkan Goat kid meat etc...), or just visit the Milina farms.

With thanks to Dr. Sergej Ivanov

Annual Meeting of SAVE Foundation and SAVE Network 2009 August 20th-23rd in Ghent, Belgium

The SAVE Annual Meeting 2009 was organized by the SAVE network organization "Steunpunt Levend Erfgoed, SLE, in Ghent, Belgium. In the historic ambience of the hotel "Monasterium PoortAckre" on 21 and 22 August, the meetings of the SAVE- bodies were held. At the SAVE Annual Meeting this year more than 25 persons from 11 countries participated. Before the actual meeting SAVE took part in a guided tour and presentation to the European Parliament in Brussels on 20 August. The participants of the SAVE network could get a concrete impression of the otherwise mostly very abstract term "European Union".



An international seminar on agrobiodiversity "Innovative Aspects for In-Situ Conservation" was the starting point of the SAVE meetings. In this seminar the state of the conservation work of various projects and countries were presented:

The diversity of breeds in Romania were discussed, especially in the Banat region, and supplemented with historical images. The "Milina" project in Serbia is an example of well thought out conservation work and products marketed in the Balkan region. The state of the European Concerted Action ELBARN was explained, perspectives and possible future projects were presented. The need to address also the semi-wild populations of farm animals in Europe were given in another presentation. As a transition to the meetings of committees of the SAVE bodies the state of various projects were reported, existing and future activities were presented. The presentations are available under: <http://www.save-foundation.net/Conferences/Ghent.htm>

In bright sunshine, at noon of the 21 August, an official address of welcome was held by delegates of the Province of East Flanders and the mayor of Ghent. The SAVE partners were very pleased to hear that at least in Flanders, the indigenous breeds, are officially valued. The SAVE Network is grateful for the warm welcome and the lunchtime aperitif.



The Project Commission and the Council of Cooperation Partners carried out a joint meeting this year. Thus, duplication could be avoided and there was more opportunity for exchange and communication. This combination is to be maintained in future meetings.

At the Annual Meeting 2009 the renewal of the appointed bodies for the next three-year term had to be done: New for the Board of Directors Pauline Wolters (Europ. Federation of City Farms, EFCF, Netherlands) and Dr. Andras Gaspard (Vet. Univ. Budapest, Hungary and DAGENE) were appointed. Gabi Bluemlein, Bonn, Germany, Imré Bodo, Szentendre, Hungary; Jean-Emmanuel Eglin, Dasle, France and Prof.Dr. Andreas Georgoudis, Thessaloniki, Greece had resigned from the Board of Directors. The two as yet unfilled places are reserved for representatives from South-East Europe and from South-West Europe. Discharged from the project commission were Joerg Bremond, Bonn, Germany; Dr. Boris Krska, Lednice, Czech Republic; Dr. Wieslaw Podyma, Blonie, Poland and Dr. Borut Stumberger, Circulane, Slovenia. We thank the resigning colleagues for their commitment.

The social program in Ghent was very diverse and of great culinary interest: During a city tour, not just the history of the city were humorously illuminated, but also delicacies from the region could be tasted. The culmination of this was the "Gentse Waterzooi", an aromatic soup with chicken.

Belgian indigenous livestock breeds could be seen on Saturday, 22nd August: A breeder of the old Flemish horses showed the sleek elegance of these giants among the heavy horses. The animals were in part repatriated from the Amish in Canada. Frans Vandenhende showed the Flemish and Kempens goats, indigenous breeds of Flanders. Finally, in the village Balegem the last farm distiller still active in the Benelux, who produces the regional typical Genever could be visited.



Already for the 13th time the exhibition "Levend Erfgoed Expo" in the Domein Puyenbroeck in Wachtebeke took place on 23 August 2009. This exhibition, in which the Belgian native breeds of farm animals, poultry and small animals are issued and sold, finds great attention in the Belgian population. Every year thousands of

visitors attend. Also this time the crowd was correspondingly large. With a glass of champagne, the chairman of the SLE, Jan Martens, bid farewell to the participants of the SAVE Annual Meeting in Wachtebeke. A big thank you to Steunpunt Levend Erfgoed for the excellent hospitality and support during this annual meeting.

The SAVE Annual Meeting 2010 is expected to take place in Berlin-Brandenburg, together with the partner VERN e.V. (Society for the Conservation and Reclamation of Crops in Brandenburg).

Review of Access and Benefit Sharing [ABS] of Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

This review has been undertaken in the light of the up-coming FAO Special Information Seminar "Policies and Arrangements for Access and Benefit-Sharing for Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture" FAO, Rome, 17 October 2009 http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/nr/documents/CGRFA/Programme_e.pdf. Laws and regulations already exist in the sector Plant Genetic Resources [PGR], these are still missing for Animal Genetic Resources [AnGR].

The main stakeholders in this context are:

- National Governments – commitments to international regimes
- Agri-business – large profit-stakes in animal breeding
- Research Institutes – wishing to undertake scientific research on many levels
- Civil Society and Livestock Keepers – future food and income security

The stakeholder level least involved in this discussion is the last. They are also the least protected by law and, it could be argued, with the most at stake. It is essential that this stakeholder level engages in the subject of ABS before a regime is put in place.

Primary Concerns:

Intellectual Property Rights

In creating new plant varieties breeders invest both time and money. Therefore, they are interested in protecting the outcomes through various means. An example is the Plant Breeders' Right [PBR], which provides exclusive rights over a developed variety. Up to 1991, this PBR was fairly extended, along with a Farmers' Rights system which allowed for saving seed and replanting. Under the Plant Treaty, these rights have become limited.

Access and Benefit Sharing

Access should be understood as the wide access to animal genetic resources [AnGR] for all stakeholders – from farmers through to researchers. Benefit sharing means a sharing of all the benefit provided by AnGR – from economic through to ecological – by all stakeholders. The concept of ABS comes from the Convention on Biological Diversity [CBD] third objective, which ensures fair and equitable sharing of the benefits of biological diversity through measures such as Prior Informed Consent and Mutually Agreed Terms. ABS was a primary concern in the process leading up to the Plant Treaty. This was due to the fact that the signing of the CBD in 1992 led to a change in sovereignty rights. This meant that PGR was no longer solely regulated by the *sui-generis* Breeders' Rights system, and led to "a fistful of hot issues" (s. Seedling, 1996) mainly involving Farmers' Rights. These Rights are now incorporated into the Treaty but governments hold the responsibility for implementing them (s. FAQ Plant Treaty website).

Patenting

Generally, patent laws were previously not extended to living organisms. However, plant patents have been granted in the USA since the 1930s. Under new trade laws and in the light of genetic modification [GM], it has become possible to patent biological material as GM is a technical process and, thus, falls within the patentable category. A patent can only be granted on something innovative. In the light of traditional knowledge of animal and plant breeding, many questions have been raised about "proving innovation" and it is feared that attempts may be made to patent knowledge that has been part of breeding for the 10'000 years that agriculture has existed.

Gaps in the Legal Framework:

The Primary Concerns above are covered by three international regimes:

- Agriculture – through the UN-FAO systems: Plant Treaty, GPAs
- Environment – through the CBD, Bonn Guidelines
- Trade – through WTO/SPS/WIPO/TRIPS

Significantly, there is no protection of AnGR under a Human Development-based regime such as the UNESCO Convention on Intangible Heritage, signed in 2008.

Differences between PGR and AnGR

It could be seen as an obvious solution to just transfer the existing system for plants to Animal. This table shows the main differences between PGR and AnGR and offers a key to the reasons why the discussions that took place about ABS for the Plant Treaty cannot be directly transferred to an Animal Treaty.

	plants	animals
inbreeding	used extensively	not desirable
value of individual	low	high to very high
testing costs	inexpensive	expensive
GM	possible/efficient	difficult/not accepted
exchange	south → north	N→N and N→S
ownership	public genebanks	private
patentability (TRIPS)	varieties	breeds not patentable
centres of origin	well defined	multiple domestication
trading	farmers'/breeders' rights	bilateral agreements

(Based on Hiemstra, S.J. et al 2006 p23 from NCCR workshop presentation by Mäki-Tanila. MTT Agrifood Research. Finland)

Animal Genetic Resources

AnGR exist in a mainly unregulated state. The Interlaken Declaration and the Global Plan of Action [GPA] for AnGR were signed by the member states of the UN-FAO in September 2007. There is not yet a treaty for AnGR. The ongoing process includes negotiations on a funding strategy for the GPA, a possible Treaty and, of most interest to this review, a regime on “access and benefit sharing”.

The Bonn Guidelines (of the CBD) are voluntary guidelines meant as a practical resource for nation states wishing to set up an ABS regime. They refer to all types of genetic resources (also wildlife) and, whilst providing a useful framework, do not address the specific issues relating to AnGR.

Thus, it is important to concentrate here on the main concerns for agrobiodiversity.

- Stakeholders in the livestock sector have very little awareness of ABS
- Many stakeholders deny the need and urgency for engaging in the subject
- Stakeholder fears of new regulations making everything even more complex
- Vast disparity between stakeholder group “industry” and stakeholder group “livestock keeper”

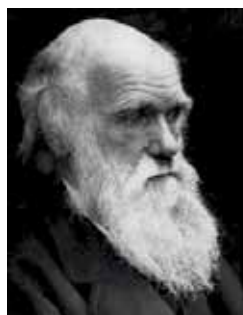
(Hiemstra, 2008, presentation at NCCR Workshop "Rights to Animal Genetic Resources", November 2008, World Trade Institute, Berne)

Ownership of AnGR is subtly different in nature to that of PGR. The GR of an animal are contained within it and included in the market value of each individual animal. Plant varieties, through cloning or hybridisation are often exact replicas of the parent stock, making ownership of GR easier – this is also partially true for poultry livestock. Each animal is a totally unique combination of GR, which makes ownership complex. Within pastoral farming systems, AnGR are owned collectively, in small scale farming the farmers themselves own the AnGR – only in industrial scale breeding is the breeding stock owned by companies and not by the farmers themselves.

Useful resources for further information:

- Convention on Biological Diversity <http://www.cbd.int/>
- Ivankovic, M., Analysis of applicability of ABS principles on AnGR, MSc thesis, Centre for Genetic Resources, Wageningen University, 2008
- “Leipzig: make or break?”, Seedling, March 1996 edition
<http://www.grain.org/seedling/?id=149>
- State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, FAO 2007
- The Plant Treaty Website (esp. FAQs) <http://www.planttreaty.org>
- UNESCO Convention on Intangible Heritage, <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich>
- Wolff, F., *Legal Factors Driving Agrobiodiversity Loss*, Environmental Law Network International, 1/2004

Charles Darwin (1809-1882)



This year, the 150th anniversary of the publication of “On the Origin of Species”, it has been hard to escape the name of Charles Darwin. Charles Darwin will always be remembered as the person who gave us the theory of evolution and, with it, inspired us to look at the world in new ways. For five years, Darwin sailed the seas with the ship HMS Beagle (1831-1836), travelling from England to Brazil, Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego, Chile, Peru and then on to the Galapagos Islands, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa before returning to his home. When Darwin came home from his voyage on the Beagle, he tested his theories about selection by breeding pigeons and growing all kind of vegetables in his garden. He also corresponded with many breeders of domestic animals and farmers who were growing crops of cabbages.

In “On the Origin of Species”, Darwin gives an example of the result of selection of cabbages. Different types of wild plants have been developed by human selection. In the cabbage it is the leaves, in brusselsprouts the side buds and in cauliflowers the flower head forms the edible part and is overdeveloped in size. At first, people discovered plants in nature which are edible; but they did not grow them. When they started growing them, they used selective breeding to improve them.

To Darwin, growing different varieties of plants and breeding different breeds of domestic animals were a possibility to show that his theory of evolution did occur in nature. Variation under domestication was not really different from variation in nature. It is all a matter of surviving and adapting to the environment. The key word is survival. Selection is used to survive. In nature, plants and animals which adapted to the environment, did well. Man has learned that plants and animals are a source of food, clothes, medicine, power etc and, so, select them and breed animals or grow plants with special characteristics. But the recently man has done this at the cost of the natural balance. Agriculture became a monoculture and a system with a high out-put. Breeding degenerated animals. The variety of species disappeared and with that the survival of many species and breeds. It is important to rediscover the diversity of nature. Selection is only possible if there are things to choose from. Sustainable agriculture allows natural processes a chance and biodiversity is maintained – this increases the possibilities for survival.

With thanks to Dr. Ank Zegwaard, SZH

Update: The Green Paper on agricultural product quality policy



In the SAVE eNews 4/2008 a statement from the SAVE Network about the EU Green Paper on agricultural product quality was published. This statement was subsequently sent to the European Commission for consideration.

The "Conclusions from the Consultation on Agricultural Product Quality" have now been published and are available for download here: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/quality/policy/index_en.htm

It is possible to see that some of the issues raised in the SAVE statement have been addressed. However, the main issue – a special marketing structure for rare and traditional breeds and varieties is not to be found in the conclusions. The report states that detailed arguments and "fresh" ideas will be published separately, it is to be hoped that the issue will be addressed in future publications.

A summary of responses was prepared and presented in the Czech Presidency conference on quality policy held in Prague on 12-13 March 2009. For further Information: <http://www.qpc.cz/index.php?lchan=1&lred=1>

Newsflash

7th Meeting of the German ECPGR Core Group

On May 12, 2009 the 7th Meeting of the Core Group of the Expert Group on the European cooperation program of plant genetic resources (ECPGR) and of the Advisory and Coordinating Committee "BEKO" took place at the Julius Kühn Institute, Federal Research Centre for Cultivated Plants, in Quedlinburg. Highlighted were the following points:

- Report of the Steering Committee of ECPGR: the Task Forces of the In Situ and On-farm Conservation Network (working group Wild Species Conservation in Genetic Reserves and On-Farm Conservation and Management) shall be continued in Phase VIII.
- State of AEGIS (A European Genebank Integrated System) and 7th Research Framework Program: In the 2010 phase of the 7th Research Framework Program within the issue "Plant Genetic Resources Centres", a project proposal could be submitted to the establishment of AEGIS.
- The state of EPGRIS 3 (see SAVE and news 3 / 2007): In the frame of EPGRIS 3 a proposal shall be developed how future improvements can be achieved. A first workshop took place on 7 May 2009 in Bonn. For more information see <http://www.epgris3.eu/>.
- At the European Conference on Ensuring Seed Availability in the 21st Century on 18 March 2009 in Brussels, results of the various stakeholders affected by the legislative rules and discussions of the recommendations of evaluations and evidences for modifications were discussed. For more information and the report of the evaluation see http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/propagation/evaluation/index_en.htm.

With thanks to Ullrich Schulze

Seed Law in Europe: a changing scenario

The European Seed Law is to be reformed – it is hoped that diversity will be taken into account in the new legislation. However, it is unlikely that issues such as farm-saved seeds will be satisfactorily addressed. Source: Bioversity Newsletter for Europe, issue 38. Further information: http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/propagation/evaluation/index_en.htm

Important dates (extract)

25 Sept.: 7th Regional Fair "Balkan Agrobiodiversität & Rural Heritage" Dimitrovgrad, Serbia; Exhibition of indigenous Balkan breeds. Contact: 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



1-3 October: Conference "Old varieties and breeds - protection and biodiversity in agriculture" at Bachotek, Poland (between Torun and Olsztyn). Contact: info@ddoir.org.pl, Web: <http://www.ddoir.org.pl>

2-3 October: First Fruit Festival of Odorhei Region in the Romanian Carpathians with various Workshops and international speakers, at Odorheiu Secuiesc, Romania. Contact: istvanmar@civitas.ro; Web: <http://www.civitas.ro>

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, Web: <http://www.geocities.com/DonkeyConference/>

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

12-16 October: Conference "Plant Conservation for the Next Decade", Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, UK. Web: <http://www.kew.org>

28-29 October: TERRA MADRE Austria: International Biodiversity Congress and "Diversity Fair" in Vienna, Austria. Contact: info@arche-noah.at, Web: <http://www.slowfoodwien.at>

9-13 November: 2009 TDWG Annual Conference "e-knowledge about biodiversity and agriculture". Montpellier, France. Contact: tdwg2009@agropolis.fr, Web: <http://www.tdwg.org/conference2009>

12-14 November: "The Integration of Sustainable Agriculture, Rural Development and Ecosystems in the Context of Climate Change, the Energy Crisis and Food Insecurity" in Agadir, Morocco. Web: <http://2009-international-conference.synthasite.com>

13-15 November: International Meeting for Pomology at Arenenberg TG, Switzerland. Contact: fructus@bluewin.ch