

SAVE eNews 4/2011

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

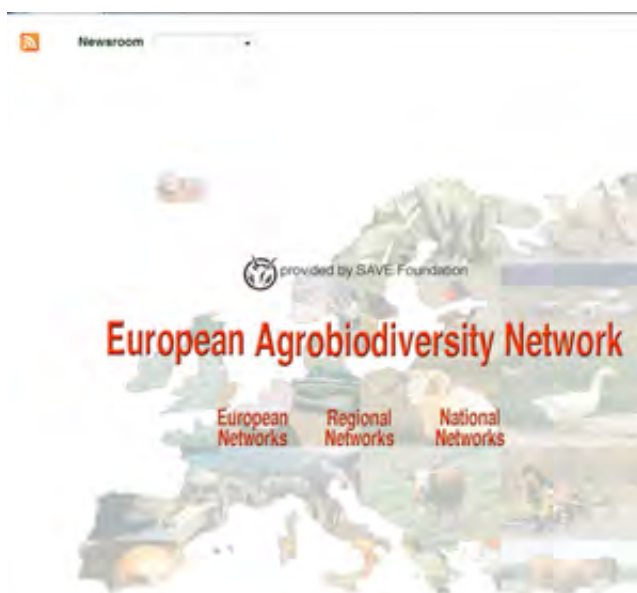


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Gimme Five: 5 Years of the European Platform Agrobiodiversity.Net: The Who's Who of European NGOs

The website „European Agrobiodiversity Network“ (www.agrobiodiversity.net) is five



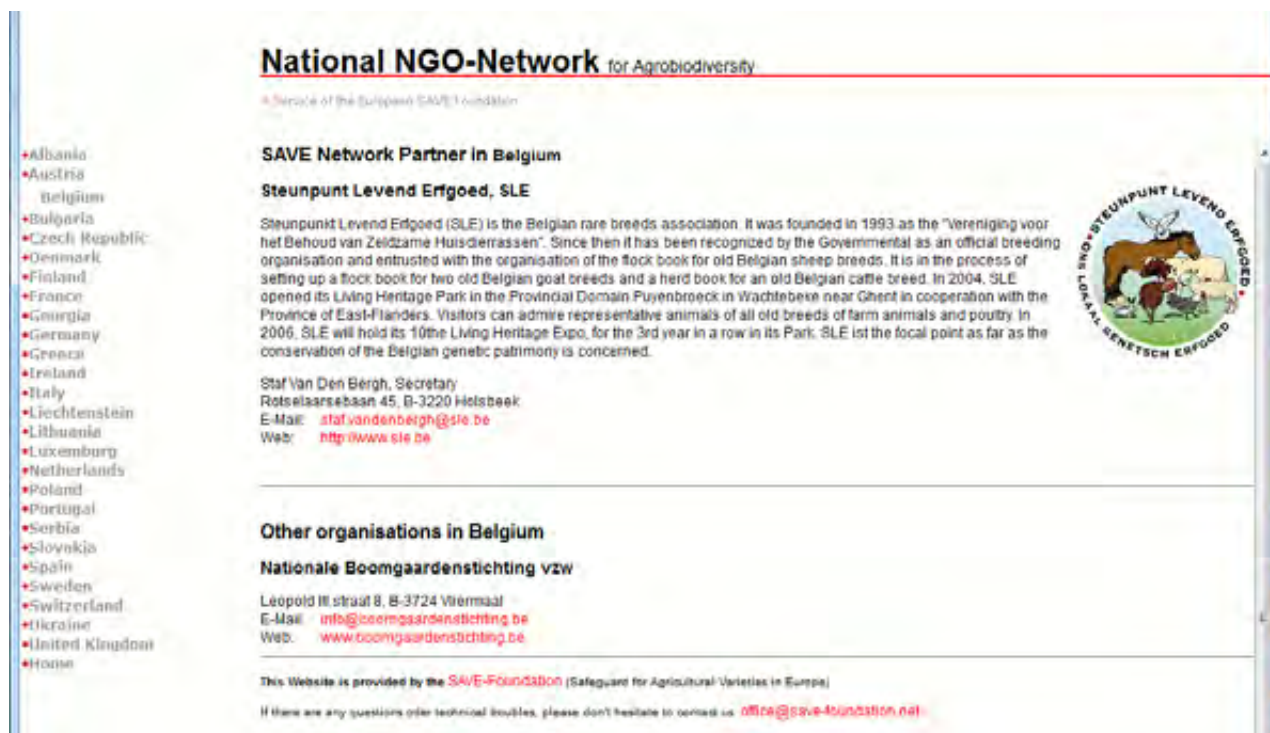
years old (eNews 2/2006). At the beginning, it was questionable if another website was really needed, however, the „European Agrobiodiversity Network“ has become an important European platform for agrobiodiversity, especially for non-governmental organisations. Here all the important institutes and organisations working in the field of agrobiodiversity in Europe are brought together as a service from the SAVE Foundation on one website. You also have the possibility to position the details of your national NGO on this website on the national page – with contact address and the weblink. Take the opportunity to send us your up-dated details!

Always up to date with Agrobiodiversity.Net

Agrobiodiversity.Net has some new features to celebrate its 5th birthday. One is the „Newsroom“, set up to receive RSS feeds: Using a drop down menu, the latest news from SAVE Foundation can be called up, under "International" you can find selected international RSS feeds on agricultural biodiversity – a range of news from "open calls" to the latest news on genetic resources for food and agriculture from the FAO Newsroom can be read quickly and easily. Events with their corresponding links are listed under "Events". Those active in the field of agro-biodiversity, should consider having Agrobiodiversity.Net as their browser start page!

However, the European Agrobiodiversity network offers much more: The website is divided into the „European Networks“, „Regional Networks“ and „National Networks“. Under „European Networks“, European NGO networks, including the different SAVE networks are listed. The list is completed with "GO Networks" where State-level European networks are listed.

The "Regional Networks" present the regions where the SAVE Network is active in cross-border: for more information about the regions there is an interactive map. It is also possible to open the menu point Area Networks, where regional activities, networks and results are published. This includes, for example, for the Balkan Region the goals and description of the network, what events (meetings) have taken place, an Atlas of the Rare Breeds of the Balkans (Breed Atlas), a member page, news and links. The "Topic Networks" refer to the two currently active networks for short-horn cattle and water buffalo.



National NGO-Net for Agrobiodiversity
A Service of the European SAVE Foundation

SAVE Network Partner in Belgium
Steunpunt Levend Erfgoed, SLE

Steunpunt Levend Erfgoed (SLE) is the Belgian rare breeds association. It was founded in 1993 as the "Vereniging voor het Behoud van Zeldzame Huisdierrassen". Since then it has been recognized by the Governmental as an official breeding organisation and entrusted with the organisation of the flock book for old Belgian sheep breeds. It is in the process of setting up a flock book for two old Belgian goat breeds and a herd book for an old Belgian cattle breed. In 2004, SLE opened its Living Heritage Park in the Provincial Domain Puyenbroeck in Wachtelebeke near Ghent in cooperation with the Province of East-Flanders. Visitors can admire representative animals of all old breeds of farm animals and poultry. In 2006, SLE will hold its 10th Living Heritage Expo, for the 3rd year in a row in its Park. SLE is the focal point as far as the conservation of the Belgian genetic patrimony is concerned.

Staf Van Den Bergh, Secretary
Rotselaarsbaan 45, B-3220 Holbeek
E-Mail: staf.vandenbergh@sle.be
Web: <http://www.sle.be>

Other organisations in Belgium
Nationale Boomgaardenstichting vzw

Leopold III straat 8, B-3724 Viermaal
E-Mail: info@boomgaardenstichting.be
Web: www.boomgaardenstichting.be

This Website is provided by the **SAVE-Foundation** (Safeguard for Agricultural Varieties in Europe)
If there are any questions or technical troubles, please don't hesitate to contact us: office@save-foundation.net

National NGO Networks

This area is reserved for the national non-governmental organizations in Europe. For each country, the SAVE network partners and other NGOs are listed. Here all organisations active in the field of agrobiodiversity have the opportunity to present themselves with a short text, their address and the link to their website.

And now it is up to **YOU**: Take advantage of the opportunity to make your (national) organisation known. Send your request for entry to the SAVE Network Office! We will generate any up-dates and new entries as soon as possible. Provide us with a two-line short description of your organisation, as well as contact details and your home page. We will list you in Agrobiodiversity.Net under the respective country.



Contact us today at office@save-foundation.net. We will process your suggestions and entry wishes as soon as possible on www.agrobiodiversity.net

Gimme Five – working together for agricultural diversity!

A breed is a breed if anyone says it is

A statement of Dr. Philip Sponenberg, The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy (ALBC), DVM, PhD, Professor of Pathology and Genetics in Blacksburg, Virginia.

A deep understanding of breeds can powerfully inform and shape effective conservation programs at all levels. Knowledge is especially important when resources might not provide for “saving it all,” because in that situation wise choices need to be made in order to save as much as possible, and to save it effectively for use by the next generations of farmers and consumers.

The most basic definition of a breed that some have adopted for a variety of reasons is that a breed is “**anything anyone says it is.**” This includes a wide variety of populations, and the result does not help much to assess the relative value of populations for biodiversity.



The other extreme is only recently made possible by molecular genetics testing. This approach defines breeds by the specific, identifiable genes they contain, focusing on the most common variants as being typical. The definition is “**breed = identifiable package of specific genes**”. This approach assumes that the techniques are capturing most or all of the relevant genetic information.

A useful general definition lies between these extremes: a breed is a group of animals whose individual members resemble each other closely enough to be readily recognized, and that reproduce this same breed type when mated together. This definition assures genetic uniformity within the breed, leading to predictability. It also indicates agreement among breeders about the characteristics defining the breed. This defines a breed as a phenotypically identifiable and somewhat consolidated genetic resource, which helps to determine conservation priorities. This definition is basically “**breed = genetic resource,**” although some will fault it for being driven by appearance and production and not by molecular techniques. However, appearance and production are both driven by genetics, so that uniformity in them indicates underlying genetic uniformity.

This definition drove most breed development over the last few centuries. Producers and breeders had a goal, wanted predictability, and mated animals with both goal and predictability in mind. Breeders were isolating genetic pools without understanding the finer points of genetics, and without the ability to measure individual genes. Molecular genetics can now peek into genomes, and the tendency is to replace the older practices of master breeders who used appearance and production. The two approaches can vary in result, although both have a place in breed conservation. Appearance and production are based on the underlying genetics, so that focusing on them rather than on identified genes does not lead to a non-genetically-based strategy.

The “breeds as genetic resources” definition can drive conservation decisions in a few ways. One is that it allows decision-makers to focus on the degree to which populations

satisfy the definition, leading to a ranking of populations as to the degree of genetic consolidation or uniformity (and therefore predictability) in the candidate population. A second is an evaluation of the relative uniqueness, or lack of relatedness, compared to other populations.

“Breed = genetic resource” is a convenient and reasonably objective definition, and allows conservation to encompass anything that leads to saving genetic resources. Cryopreservation, exhibition/demonstration herds, and production herds all have important roles.



A global view of breeds and their role in agriculture needs to encompass factors beyond the strict genetic resource definition. Each breed lives in its own environment, with constraints imposed by the natural environment. Agricultural resources are also affected by selection decisions made by breeders, and by husbandry practices of human owners. The selection pressures of this uniquely agricultural environment determine the ongoing genetic structure of the breed. Without these constraints, breeds will change from their original form. For this reason breeds are most effectively conserved in their original habitat, under their original management, as this allows the breed to slowly adapt to changes in the environment. This is important for long-term survival as environments change.

In this sense, then, the definition becomes **“functional breed = genetic resource + natural environment + human management and selection.”** This takes effective conservation to a very different endpoint, because breed populations must be kept as ongoing genetically viable groups in an appropriate environment, and under appropriate management and selection. This requires living populations of animals in a productive setting. This does not rule out cryopreservation, but does imply that living populations are the ultimate goal and that these need to be carefully maintained and monitored.

It is not always possible to “have it all.” In some cases saving the genetic resource by cryopreservation may be all that can be done. This strategy removes both “natural environment” and “human management and selection” from the equation. Other situations remove only one or the other of these factors, and can still change the final outcome. For some feral livestock, the component of “natural environment” may be impossible to maintain due to removal or eradication programs, and acknowledging the resulting change in final genetic outcome can be useful in informing conservation programs. For other breeds, the “human management and selection” piece may have to change radically from past practices due to changes in societal demands for animal welfare. In each case the changes can be acknowledged, and can be counteracted by wise decisions in population management and selection that allow the original resource to persist without significant change in overall genetic structure.

The short version of all of this is:

A breed in the narrow sense is a genetic resource that is externally and genetically uniform enough to be recognizable from other animals of the same species, and that reproduces the parental type when mated to other members of the breed. A functional breed is a combination of the genetic resource, but also including the natural environment as well as the human management and selection pressures exerted on this resource.

See further discussion approaches: www.globaldiv.eu/NL/GlobalDiv_Newsletter%20no%204.pdf

SAVE Annual Network Meeting 2011 in Dimitrovgrad, Serbia

The SAVE Annual Meeting 2011 took place 22nd – 25th September in Dimitrovgrad, Serbia. This meeting, co-organised by the SAVE network partner Natura Balkanika, was a great opportunity to see the beautiful landscape and interesting culture of the area as well as networking with members and other people committed to the conservation of agrobiodiversity. Even though the meeting required considerable travel for many people, SAVE and Natura Balkanika were happy to welcome 35 participants from 10 countries.



The annual meeting, which included meetings of the SAVE bodies as well as a DAGENE meeting was enhanced by the 5th European Seminar on AgroBiodiversity with the topic: "Preservation or Adaptation? - Conservation in the face of a changing environment" (presentations see: <http://www.save-foundation.net/Conferences/Dimitrovgrad.htm>). The Seminar provided a wide view on various subjects, some practically-based and others gave an in-pu on the current scientific knowledge on adaptation. The seminar attracted media attention and a report about it was broadcast on television. Participants confirmed that the agrobiodiversity seminar has become an important part of the annual meeting and that it should be continued. Ten members of the Board of Directors met together in a closed session, with only four of the members not present due to other commitments.

The combined meeting of the Council of Cooperation Partners (i.e. Network members) and the Project Commission was followed by an open session on Heritaste[®] (see eNews 3/11). This discussion was a part of the public consultation to finalise the conditions for use of the label and to create a framework within which it should function. It is clear that, although there is a great interest in the label, there are many problems that will need to be ironed out before it can be used. The public consultation remains open until the end of 2011. All the information plus the notes on the discussion in Dimitrovgrad can be found here <http://variety-savers.net/page/heritaste-consultation>.



The SAVE-Network was able to welcome a new member in Serbia. The Serbian Association of Breeders of Old Breeds was accepted into the Network and, through some of the excursions, it was possible to meet members of the Association and to look at some of their animals. This brings the number of Network members to 22 from 15 countries.



The Regional Fair of Balkan AgroBiodiversity (Rare Breeds Exhibition) took place on the 23rd September and was visited by the participants of the annual meeting. The fair provided a good opportunity to experience the local culture through music, dance, food and hand-crafts. There were also breeds on display and the annual meeting participants were able to ask questions to the breeders. The fair is a good example of how rare breeds and traditional culture can be made attractive.

An adventurous trek in the Stara Planina Nature Park provided a good opportunity for getting to know other participants and to share information and ideas. Often, the annual meeting is dominated by meetings and, whilst it is essential that these meetings take place, it was clear that everyone enjoyed the chance of seeing new surroundings and having time to get to know each other better.



One further excursion took place to the meadows of the Milina farm near Dimitrograd to see the grazing animals. The whole of the annual meeting was enriched by the chance to try the traditional food of the region and participants were entertained by a traditional music group in a small, private performance. At the Regional Fair of Balkan AgroBiodiversity the music group was present again, this time in traditional costume. In



all, the whole meeting was an enjoyable opportunity to see the work being done for the conservation of agrobiodiversity in this part of Serbia.

Thanks to the good organisation by the SAVE partner Natura Balkanika, the whole meeting ran smoothly. SAVE wishes to extend thanks to Natura Balkanika and, in particular to Sergej Ivanov, for the collaboration in organising this meeting.

Arca-Deli® Awards 2011

SAVE Foundation is pleased to announce the winners of the Arca-Deli® Awards 2011! The judges agreed that the award is not a competition as such; rather it is an award for innovative and qualitative conservation activities. The awards for 2011 go to the following products and services:

- Vlahi Rare Breeds Centre, Semperviva, Bulgaria with the Karakachan sheep's milk cheese "Tolumsko Sirene".
- Dimos Ark Farm Avra, Greece with traditional sausages from Katerini steppe cattle and Greek landrace pigs.
- Primagro Farm, Hungary with two jams: sour cheery from the variety "Kantorjanosi" and sweet cherry with the variety "Katalin", both 100% fruit content, no sugar, no preservative, no colorant.
- La Fattoria Degli Animali, Ladispoli RM, Italy, for educational workshops and therapies with rare breeds (see: <http://www.arca-net.info/pages/frame.asp?sprache=en>)
- Zeldzaam Lekker, the Netherlands, for developing a label and website for promoting the products of rare breeds (<http://www.zeldzaamlekker.nl/>).



We congratulate all the winners for their excellent products and services and look forward to being able to present more awards in 2012. In case of any questions, please contact SAVE staff on office@save-foundation.net.



More information on the institutions see www.arca-net.info resp. <http://variety-savers.info>

Fruit-Net: Database of forgotten fruits & berries

To help stimulate the international exchange of information between farmers and experts, and of course, to conserve the almost forgotten knowledge about old varieties and genetic diversity for future generations, the Fruit-Net project was called to life a few years ago. Fruit-Net, the Internet database of conservers of rare fruits and berries in Europe now appears in new guise and with a new database system on www.fruit-net.info. In this publically available (English) database a variety of search experts and institutions that harbour rare species and varieties (and in some cases offer for sale) can be found through an extensive search function. It is also possible to search by species (varieties). Currently about 450 institutions and experts in Europe are listed.



The institutions and experts manage and update the respective contents of the database themselves, using an individual log-in (with password).

In spite of an annual call to update, it may be that individual entries are outdated or have misleading content. In such cases, SAVE Foundation asks the users of the database to let us know on: office@save-foundation.net. Messages about other institutions and professionals who are not listed, or could contribute their knowledge of synonyms for fruits in different languages are also welcome.



In the context of updating the Fruit-Net, the “synonym register” was revised. It now has more than 18,000 synonyms for apple and cherry and is now also listing Prunus varieties. The species and varieties and their synonyms can be found using a detailed search function. The synonym register can also be reached directly via: www.synonymregister.info/.

Newsflash

PAR Researcher Database



The “PAR - Platform for Agrobiodiversity” launched a worldwide “Researcher Database”. This Database is an online registry compiling information about experts and institutions working in the different fields of agrobiodiversity worldwide. The user can search according to certain criteria such as name, specialty, affiliated institutions, geographic location and type of the institution. Each expert or institution can register quickly and easily. The database is available on <http://agrobiodiversityplatform.org/database/>.

Congratulations to Goran Gugic

SAVE Foundation congratulates Croatian conservationist Goran Gugic who received the EuroNatur Award 2011 at a special ceremony on the 12th October on the island of Mainau in Lake Constance.

Goran Gugic has a long association with SAVE Foundation especially in connection with the Turropolje pigs. Since 1998, he is the director of the Nature Park Lonjsko Polje. Here, an unbroken tradition of pasturing has been preserved since medieval times. The pasture land serves as retention area for the floods of the river Sava, the largest tributary of the Danube. These alluvial wetlands host an exceptional richness in species. For more details about the Nature Park see: <http://www.pp-lonjsko-polje.hr/>



Photo: Peter Schmenger

SAVE Activity Report 2010-2011

The SAVE Activity Report 2010-2011 is available on the SAVE website (http://www.save-foundation.net/docu/reports/SAVE_activities_2011.pdf). This document will provide you with an overview of SAVE and the projects currently running.

Heritaste®

As announced in the last eNews the public consultation about Heritaste® is now running on the Variety-Savers website. It will remain open until the end of 2011. There are still some important points that need to be discussed before the consultation is completed. All interested people are urged to visit the website and to give their feedback either in the Variety-Savers forum (membership required) or directly by e-mail to office@save-foundation.net. See: <http://variety-savers.net/page/heritaste-consultation>



Social media

SAVE Foundation is now present on some social media platforms. You can “follow” SAVE on Twitter: [@VarietySavers](https://twitter.com/VarietySavers) (sadly, @SAVEfoundation was already taken by the Student Advocates for Valuing the Environment Foundation). You can also “like” and “share” the SAVE page on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/SAVE-Foundation/293654690663822>

Variety-Savers is the dedicated social network for networking and listing all keepers of indigenous livestock breeds & cultivators of indigenous cultivated plants found in Europe. If you have not yet joined up, then now is your chance! Go to <http://variety-savers.net/>

Important dates (extract)

5-8 December: Regional Workshop for Central and Eastern Europe on Updating National Biodiversity Strategies & Action Plans; Minsk, Belarus. Web: <http://www.cbd.int/>

8 December: ESPON-GEOSPES Conference "Europe's special areas?", Brussels, Belgium. Diana.borowski@perth.uhi.ac.uk, Web: <http://www.geospecs.eu/Registration.html>

8-10 Dec: Young researchers' conference: "Conservation Sciences in the Mediterranean Region", La Tour du Valat, France. www.medconservationsciences-conference.org/

2012:

17-19 January: Regional Workshop for Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans: Local & National Action in the Mediterranean Basin. Montpellier, France. Web: <http://www.cbd.int/>

18-19 January: BioVak Workshop on local seed varieties. Zwolle, Netherlands. Web: <http://www.organicseeds.nl>

20-29 January: International Green Week, Berlin, Germany. www.gruenewoche.de/en

13-14 February: Intern. Conference "Let Good Products Flow!" Global Organic Market Access 2012 and Beyond. Nuremberg, Germany. www.goma-organic.org/conference/

20-22 February: 15th International Conference on Organic Fruit Growing; University Hohenheim, Germany. Contact: jkienzle@ecofruit.net, Web: <http://www.ecofruit.net/>

25 Feb. - 4 March: Salon de l'Agriculture, Paris, France. www.salon-agriculture.com/

5-9 March: ECPGR Malus/Pyrus Meeting, jointly with ad hoc meeting on Fruit synonyms & descriptors; at Weggis, Switzerland. markus.kellerhals@acw.admin.ch

30 March - 1 April: City Farms Annual General Meeting, Pietersheim City Farm in Lanaken, Belgium, Web: <http://www.cityfarms.org/>

13 April: NATUR Congress "Landscape in the tension between protection and utilization", Basel, Switzerland. Web: <http://www.natur.ch/>

13-16 April: NATUR Fair: "Sustainability Platform"; Basel, Switzerland. www.natur.ch/

15-17 April: Conference on Sustainable Land Use and Rural Development in Mountain Areas, Stuttgart, Germany. Web: <https://uplands2012.uni-hohenheim.de/>

17-18 April: 6th Europ. Organic Congress; Copenhagen, Denmark. info@ifoam-eu.org

7-9 May: 7th Organic Marketing Forum: Processing and Marketing Products & Raw Material; Warsaw, Poland. www.organic-marketing-forum.org, Contact: info@ekoconnect.org

21 - 23 May: 2nd Nordic Conference for Rural Research "Rural at the Edge" in Joensuu, Finland. Web: www.mua.fi

28 May – 2 June: BALWOIS 2012 International Conference: "Environment and Human Activities", Ohrid, Macedonia (FYROM). Web: <http://www.balwois.com/2012/>

=> Further dates see: <http://www.save-foundation.net/english/actual.htm>