

SAVE eNews 1/2014

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



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Conservation of Ciuta Sheep - smallest sheep in the Alps

The Ciuta sheep (pronounced tshiuta) still exists in a small northern Italian valley of Valtellina, where it lives freely in woods and pastures for most of the year. The habitat is harsh and consists of meagre and steep pastures at altitudes between 800 - 2700 m above sea level. In winter, the animals are kept for 2-3 months in barns and fed with hay and dry leaves.



Photo Patrizio Mazzucchelli

Striking about the Ciuta are the goat-like horns of the females, this occurs only in original breeds of sheep. Together with the Tavetsch sheep in the Grisons Oberland and the sheep of Montafon in Vorarlberg, the Ciuta could be a direct descendant of the extinct Peat

sheep (*Ovis aries palustris*). It is interesting that all three breeds are referred to as "Tshiut" in the respective local language. Female Ciuta weigh only 30-35 kg and have a withers height of only 40-45 cm, they are the smallest breed of sheep of the Alpine region. The wool is of low quality and low productivity. The very low in-put and the use in extremely extensive farming needs to be taken into consideration when looking at their economic potential.

For about 30 years, the farmers have tried to crossbreed with the large-framed Bergamasca sheep to make the breed more "productive". This did not succeed, but the pure Ciutas have almost disappeared. When the sheep were brought down from the Alp in autumn 2013 of the almost 500 sheep only just three dozen reasonably pure Ciutas could be identified. With the help of the local government veterinarian, it was possible for the project conducting network "Pro Patrimonio Montano" to buy 25 animals and thus to form four new breeding nuclei. Other breeders are participating in a private conservation programme. Thus, the breed will hopefully be saved at the last minute. With the help of the local administration and educational events other parties will be invited to join. The task ahead is substantial but important.

More information: www.patrimonio-montano.org or <https://www.facebook.com/patrimonio.montano>

Ark Farms in Bulgaria

The most recently included member of Arca-Net is the “Wild Farm” in Gorno Pole, Bulgaria.

The Wild Farm is an unconventional farm where animals are bred in the wild and visitors can stay in a guest house. It is situated in the Eastern Rhodopes, South Bulgaria. The guests can enjoy the traditional accommodation and a lovely mountain view. Anyone who enjoys activities such as milking cows, horse riding, extracting honey, nature walks and organic food will enjoy spending time there.



The farm is home to a herd of over 500 cows and bulls from local indigenous breeds - the Rhodope Short-Horned Cattle and the Bulgarian Grey Cattle. They are kept outside all year round, in harmony with the surroundings. There are also bees - both domesticated, the indigenous *apis mellifera rodopica*, and wild bees - also rabbits, Karakachan sheep and dogs. However, there are no hens and roosters as they cannot survive due to the hawks and many other, globally endangered raptors to be found in the area. The Eastern Rhodope Mountains is the best place in Bulgaria for watching and photographing raptors. Within a distance of only 15-20 km, along the valley of Arda, you can watch two thirds of all species of birds of prey that are found in Europe.

One of the oldest members of Arca-Net is also in Bulgaria - in Vlahi, near Kresna. It is run by the SAVE Network member BBPS Semperviva. Working together with the Balkani Wildlife Society, the national park authority and local farmers, Semperviva researches, rescues and conserves endangered Bulgarian livestock breeds: the Karakachan sheep, horse and dog and the Kalofer and Screw-horned goat. The herds of rare breeds are bred in their natural habitat in situ. Sheep, horses and dogs make seasonal transhumance between winter and summer pastures. Vlahi lies at the edge of the Pirin National Park. The combination of agricultural use and nature protection, between several projects that would not be feasible individually, are important goals: the use of herd-protecting dogs in areas with wolves and bears; horses as a means of transport in protected areas; extensive grazing in alpine pasture conservation. After a major setback last year when a lightning strike destroyed the barns housing the goats and the winter stock of hay, as well as the newly completed dairy – where the Arca-Deli Award winning cheese “Koze Sirene” is produced – the Ark Centre in Vlahi is now rebuilt and welcomes visitors who enjoy spending time off the beaten track.

Arca-Net, with over 600 listed Ark Centres, can be found here: <http://www.arca-net.info>

Photo: Elli Broxham, taken in the context of the programme “Linking nature protection and sustainable rural development” funded by the Swiss Contribution thematic fund “Civil Society Participation in Bulgaria”

8th European Seminar on Agrobiodiversity 2014 “Agrobiodiversity and Nature Conservation” and SAVE Network Meeting in Croatia



The SAVE Annual Meeting and the 8th European Seminar on Agrobiodiversity will take place from the 18-20 September in the Lonjsko Polje Nature Park in Croatia. Here one of the first and most dramatic rescue operations SAVE has ever conducted took place 20 years ago: the saving of the Turopolje pig. The frontline of the Croatian civil war divided the habitat and the free roaming pigs were being shot by soldiers. SAVE with Arche Austria and EuroNatur, and with logistical support

of the Zagreb Zoo and Schönbrunn Tierpark in Vienna, removed animals during a ceasefire in winter of 1993/94 to safer places whilst marking others so that a herdbook could be started. Today the Turopolje pigs play an important role as conservers of nature in their place of origin, the Lonjsko Polje Nature Park, about 90 km south-east of Zagreb.

The SAVE meeting will be held in cooperation with the Lonjsko Polje Nature Park and ADIPA, the Croatian Society for Natural History Diversity Research & Conservation. The participants will stay in the romantic villages in the park. The seminar and sessions will take place at the visitor centre of the Nature Park. Besides interesting information and discussions we will have the possibility to see a successful concept of livestock and nature conservation. Breeds like the Turopolje pig, the Posavina Horse, the Slavonian-Syrmian grey cattle and others keep open the landscape for a rich, wild flora and fauna. Also some crop cultivation takes place in harmony with the natural surroundings.

Provisional programme

Thursday, 18 September

- 13.00 – 14.00 Arrival and Registration
- 14.00 – 18.00 Seminar: Agrobiodiversity and Nature Conservation
- 18.00 – 20.00 Observation Boat trip
- 20.00 Dinner (and Arca-Deli Committee)

Friday, 19 September

- 8.30 – 11.30 Council of Cooperation Partners and Project Commission (CCP/PC)
Workshop Groups on 2-3 questions concerning the network
- 12.00 – 19.00 Lunch and guided excursion in the nature park
- 19.30 – 22.00 Dinner and presentation of the Arca-Deli Award entries

Saturday, 20 September

- 9.30 – 12.30 Closed Session of the BoD
European Heritage Day in the nature park
- 14.00 Farewell

Information and registration: www.save-foundation.net/pdf/SAVE_2014.pdf (soon available).

The Heritaste® Quality Label



In 2013 the focus of the Heritaste project was on two important subjects. Firstly, how much non-Heritaste ingredients are allowed to be included in Heritaste products and, secondly, how to ensure a trustworthy certification process that is also affordable. To this end, an email questionnaire was sent out, initially with the two short questions:

- How much % should be required to be “Heritaste”?
- Should the percentage be written at the product? (e.g. juice from 100% rare Apple, Sausage made of 80% Busha meat, jam made of 50% rare fruits).

The answer to the second question is easy – the almost unanimous answer is yes, the percentage should be written on the label along with the name of the breed/variety.

The first question is not so easy:

- 42% of the answers say that 100% of the MAIN ingredient should be from a traditional breed/variety.
- The other answers range from 25-95%
- Depending on the kind of product mentioned, there are also additional ingredients that need to be accounted for.
- Ingredients such as salt, spices etc should not get counted but other ingredients e.g. sugar should be organic. As the Heritaste criteria also say that the products must respect fair trade, this must also be taken into account.
- A valid point was made about TESTING the percentage – if it is not 100%, how can that be tested?

From the above, it is concluded that the main ingredient should be 100% Heritaste. Main ingredient would mean “milk” in the case of cheese, “meat” in the case of sausage, “fruit” in the case of jam – and so on. The additional ingredients should be certified organic and, where relevant, fair trade. For ingredients such as salt, the EU guidelines for organic production should be consulted.

Over the last years a lot of thought has been put into how the certification process can work in a simple and cost-efficient way. Using an official certification body will prove to be very expensive – for example, SAVE will have to train the auditors to understand conservation of rare breeds. This is not a simple subject and would need more than one day of training. To this end it was proposed that SAVE Foundation and Network should form a certification body owned by supporters of the Heritaste idea. This idea would work as follows:

People who want to use the Heritaste label should:

- Pay an annual member fee to cover costs
- Fully document their farm and products as a “baseline”
- Send an annual report to show they are keeping to the rules of Heritaste

- Work together within a national/regional group to make sure that standards are kept to (farm visits etc) and to make suggestions for improvements. In consultation with both certification bodies and producers, the concept of a group of producers working in a mutually supportive and self-regulatory way has been suggested. Although it is intended to still allow individual certification where it is desired, the idea of a grouping of producers has many benefits, for example it is beneficial for:
 - Economies of scale
 - Reducing transaction costs
 - Reducing uncertainty
 - Avoiding pointless competition
 - Combining products and services to present a more diverse whole
 - Joint ownership of certificate
 - Exchange of experience and ideas

This “grouping” of producers can take many forms, depending on national laws and regulations. It is possible to expect that these groupings could be Farmers’ cooperatives, Breed organisations, NGOs, Interest/working group or Business partnerships.

SAVE/Heritaste will then:

- Make unannounced “spot checks” at farms to make sure that no one is cheating.
- Give permission to use the label
- Provide a website, including webshop or links to own webshop
- Coordinate (Networking, Newsletter, Training events etc)
- Make a full audit of farms where problems occur – paid, in full, by the “problem” producer.

In this way it should be possible to provide a trust-worthy certification process that does not cost too much. This concept has been agreed to by the members of the Heritaste Guiding Committee. In 2014, those farmers and producers who have already expressed an interest in taking part in a pilot study of this approach will be asked to provide the baseline data for their farm. Along with this, they will be asked to develop and test a workable framework for the “spot checks” on farms.

Marketing of Agrobiodiversity – a double-edged sword?

On the following pages we publish an edited version of an interesting article about quinoa, an important staple of the Andean diet, and the marketing of it in economically developed countries. Eating quinoa has become a fashionable alternative to eating meat-based products. However, this has not been without controversy. SAVE Foundation promotes the “conservation through use” principle – agricultural varieties need to be put to use in order for them to become economically interesting for farmers and to move away from a reliance on the political football of “subsidies”. However, care must be taken that the use is beneficial to the producers and that policy and communication support the sustainable use rather than promote unsustainable practice and/or consumer confusion.

Popular press reveals controversy and misconceptions regarding quinoa and food security

By Charlotte Ambrozek and Martin Zorrilla, Department of International Agriculture and Rural Development, Cornell University and in collaboration with Bioversity International, Rome. The full article and references are available on request from Bioversity International: a.drucker@cgiar.org

Agricultural biodiversity is a strategic asset, particularly for rural people. Agricultural biodiversity has a role in increasing agricultural sustainability, maintaining resilience at the landscape level, facilitating the ability of communities to adapt to a changing climate, improving their diets and nutritional outcomes, and increasing their food security.



Harvested quinoa varieties, August 2009, community of Santiago de Okola, Camacho Province, Bolivia. Photo: Adam Drucker

Diverse traditional crop species can have higher nutritional values than some major crops, as well as having multiple uses for the household. Considering that in 2010-2012 there were 870 million people who went hungry, 840 million who were obese and 2 billion who suffered from at least one micronutrient deficiency, as many tools as possible to tackle this triple malnutrition challenge of hunger, obesity and nutrient deficiencies are needed.

Agrobiodiversity conservation represents a strategic opportunity to address the malnutrition challenge. Bioversity International's Payments for Agrobiodiversity Conservation Services scheme on quinoa in the Andes (<http://tinyurl.com/qxjlg9y>) is an example of one such mechanism to conserve agricultural biodiversity and improve food security outcomes.

The scheme focused on quinoa as a case study example as increasing demand for a few varieties of the Andean staple is leading to the displacement of many other varieties and the loss of crop diversity. Its high nutritional status as a "superfood" even led NASA to decree it ideal for missions in space. Quinoa is now so popular that the United Nations named 2013 the International Year of Quinoa. Yet some impacts of quinoa's popularity have become controversial in the popular press. A recent maelstrom of press articles on the "Quinoa Controversy" was ignited by a provocative piece in The Guardian entitled "Can Vegans Stomach the Unpalatable Truth About Quinoa".

The articles essentially argue that increased production of quinoa in Bolivia and Peru, the ancestral homeland of this Andean grain, has had negative social and environmental impacts on small farmers. This conclusion is based on alleged Bolivian government reports that showed that domestic quinoa consumption has decreased in recent years. Most authors attributed this drop to the price of quinoa, which has tripled in the past six years. Similarly, increased production and mechanization has been linked to ecosystem degradation and social conflict, particularly related to land access.

The “quinoa quandary” story was soon being carried by a dozen or so major news sites, and countless independent bloggers. We examined 42 such stories written between 2011-2013 in order to understand how the Western world interpreted this complex issue involving malnutrition, commodity markets, land degradation, and globalization.

Not only has the decreased-domestic-quinoa-consumption claim by the New York Times in 2011, been contradicted by later data suggesting that domestic consumption over the past four years has in fact tripled, but further misconceptions exist. The most common is that the high price of quinoa was responsible for malnutrition and poverty in the Andes. High prices of quinoa increased incomes for farmers, and actually inspired a generation of rural poor who had moved to the city to return to farming. Less sensationalist press stories revealed that while malnutrition was occurring among some families, it was more likely due to cultural reasons. Quinoa in the Andes has traditionally been a poor person’s food; as farmer incomes increased so did their tendency to replace quinoa with more western processed foods.

Another element missing from almost every press report was the opinion of Bolivian and Peruvian journalists and academics. Interestingly, our survey of Andean press sources found a very different take on the controversy. One thing became particularly clear: Bolivians and Peruvians are not begging Americans to stop eating quinoa. Many do not see high quinoa prices as a serious threat, given the economic benefits to farmers and the country as a whole. Rather Andean critics were often incredulous, with some expressing suspicion at the attention that the issue has received in the United States. One Bolivian news source suggested some US sources were calling for increased North American quinoa production merely in order to stimulate United States domestic quinoa production for their own market. Of the Bolivian news sources that have called attention to high rates of malnutrition among farmers, many point out that domestic quinoa consumption was historically low, prior to its rise in popularity in the West (in part as a result of practices during the colonial period).

However, the most striking difference between Andean and Western perspectives on the controversy lies in the proposed solutions. American journalists and bloggers almost universally emphasize consumer choice and how it should change, distilling the complex problem to a binary choice: eat quinoa or don’t eat quinoa. Andean sources instead recommend solutions to be achieved through policy changes and collective action. Articles often call for the government to prioritize domestic consumption, attempt to popularize quinoa consumption and subsidize its consumption in school lunch programs. To many Bolivians and Peruvians, increased quinoa demand is unquestionably a positive outcome, while negative side-effects are the result of poor agricultural policy and a lack of market regulation.

Whether in Bolivia or the United States, the increased price and production of quinoa has generated a strong reaction. The bubbling controversy reveals much in terms of how we view our food system and the global economy. It tells us that we, as Westerners, understand remarkably little about how our choices as consumers actually affect producers in other countries. It plays into a Global North vs. Global South view on those choices, and how people see avenues for change. Yet ultimately it tells us that people care, they care about the food they eat, and they care about the people who don’t get enough food to eat. The real question is how to turn that concern into increased food security for developing country farmers based on sustainable agricultural practices.

Newsflash

Seed regulation rejected by the EU Parliament



The European Parliament's Environment Committee has voted for the Commission to withdraw its proposal for a Regulation on agricultural seeds and other plant reproductive material. On 12th March 2014, after many protests, actions and policy debates, the European Parliament has adopted a legislative resolution, which clearly rejects the Commission's proposal with an overwhelming majority and calls the Commission to submit a new one. This is a crucial success for small and organic growers. The feared additional obstacles to the distribution of old and endangered varieties, such as needing official approval, are now swept from the European table, which now can continue to be spread with a wealth of diversity. Conservers and growers can breathe freely again. However, the issue is expected to raise its head again at the end of 2014 when new trade agreements are negotiated. For more information: www.seed-sovereignty.org/

International Solidarity Caravan for Seeds April 27 - May 1, 2014

The International Solidarity Caravan for Seeds is an event to inform and mobilize the public especially in the Mediterranean about the importance of the diversity of seeds and a free and unlimited exchange of them. On April 26, 2014 Peliti, a Greek organisation for the conservation of cultural plant varieties and SAVE partner will organize the 14th nationwide exchange celebration of local varieties. After that event, The International Solidarity Caravan for Seeds will start its journey off on April 27, 2014 from Peliti located in Messochori Paraneistiou in Greece, driving through Italy and finally arriving in Southern France (Le Mas d'Azil) for the International Seeds' Days' Festival organized by Kokopelli on 1st - 4th May 2014. The caravan will celebrate the rich diversity of seed and food in the Mediterranean countries, and will carry a message of Freedom for traditional seeds to the various areas it will travel through. The caravan will be held by cars or bus. Each participant should bear the cost of his/her travelling and hosting, including during the Festival in France; bus travellers would share the costs.

The Caravan is organized by: Peliti, www.peliti.gr ; Seed Freedom Global Movement, <http://seedfreedom.in> ; Navdanya Movement, www.navdanya.org and Kokopelli, <https://kokopelli-semences.fr> . You can register here: caravan@peliti.gr

Diversifying food and diets

The publication **Diversifying Food and Diets** revisits the role agricultural biodiversity can play in improving dietary diversity and health outcomes in a world where 868 million people are undernourished. Food system-based approaches that use local agricultural biodiversity to address diet-related health problems (such as cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular disease) by enhancing food availability and diet quality often fall outside the traditional scope of nutrition, and have been under-researched. As a consequence, there remains insufficient evidence to support well-defined, scalable agricultural biodiversity interventions that can be linked to improvements in nutrition outcomes. The book provides a set of lessons learned and a basis to help practitioners carry out similar efforts in other regional contexts. See: http://www.b4fn.org/the_book.html

Important dates (extract)

20-22 March: EkoSeedForum - European conference on organic plant breeding, organic seeds and crop biodiversity; in Poznan, Poland. Contact: jansen@ekoconnect.org, Web: <http://www.ekoconnect.org>

5-6 April: 4th International Re-enactment Fair; at Roman Villa Borg, Saarland, Germany; info@reenactmentmesse.de; Web: <http://www.reenactmentmesse.de/> (International Fair for Living History, Reenactment and Archaeotechnique)

7-25 April: Training programme on "Contemporary Approaches to Genetic Resources Conservation and Use", in Wageningen, The Netherlands. Web: www.wageningenur.nl/en/show/CDIcourse_contemporary_approaches_2014.htm

13-14 April: Natural & Organic Products; London, UK. <http://www.naturalproducts.co.uk>

26 April: 14th Pan-Hellenic Seed Exchange Festival, Messochori, Greece. www.peiliti.gr

22 May: International day for Biological Diversity; Web: <https://www.cbd.int/idb/2014/>

1-2 June: Organic Marketing Forum 2014, Warsaw, Poland. www.naturalproducts.co.uk

5-6 June: Sustainable Foods Summit 2014; Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Contact: info@sustainablefoodssummit.com, Web: <http://www.sustainablefoodssummit.com>

13-15 June: International food tasting of regional products at the Spring Festival in the Majjistral territory, Malta; Contact: info@leadermajjistral.eu

25-29 August: EAAP-Meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark, Web: <http://www.eaap2014.org>, Contact: eaap@discongress.com,

3-5 September: ECOMUSEUMS 2014, 2nd Int. Conference on Ecomuseums, Community Museums & Living Communities; Montalegre, Portugal. ecomuseums2014@greenlines-institute.org; Web: <http://www.ecomuseums2014.greenlines-institute.org>

16-19 Sept.: Forum Carpaticum 2014: "Local Responses to Global Challenges", in Lviv, Ukraine. Contact: ikruhlov@gmail.com, Web: <http://www.forumcarpaticum.org>

17-19 September: ForumAlpinum 2014: "Valorization, use and management of Alpine resources", at Darfo Boario Terme (Val Camonica), Italy. <http://www.forumalpinum.org>



18-20 Sept.: "Agrobiodiversity & Nature Protection", 8th Europ. Seminar on Agrobiodiversity and Annual Meeting of the European SAVE Network, at Lonjsko Polje Nature Park, Croatia. office@save-foundation.net, Web: www.save-foundation.net

25-29 Sept.: Europ. Federation of City Farms Conference 2014, Swansea, South Wales, UK; Contact: abigail@farmgarden.org.uk, Web: www.cityfarms.org/events/view/32

3-5 October: International Fair of Organic and Regional Food NATURA FOOD, Poland. Web: <http://www.naturafood.pl>

=> **Further Dates see:** <http://www.save-foundation.net/english/actual.htm#Events>