

Summary of the meeting of the ECPGR Documentation and Information Working Group

Tallinn, Estonia, 18-19 September 2024

A meeting of the Working Group was organized on 18-19 September 2024 in Tallinn, Estonia, in collaboration with The Centre of Estonian Rural Research and Knowledge (METK). This was attended by 14 participants from 9 countries, including representatives of the ECPGR and FAO Treaty Secretariats as well as representatives of the ECPGR On-farm Conservation and Crop Wild Relatives (CWR) Working Groups.

Highlights of the agenda include topics related to the regional documentation of *in situ* CWR and on-farm landraces. In this regard, stock was taken of the developments made by the German-funded project on *in situ* CWR population data in EURISCO. This project was based on a number of principles that were eventually validated and to be recommended for practice by all European countries. In particular, only data related to material that could potentially be made available to users should be entered in EURISCO. The necessity that this material be actively conserved is considered less relevant from the point of view of the users. It is assumed that each country will define its specific criteria for inclusion of *in situ* CWR data into EURISCO. It is expected that by common sense, datasets would not include all the possible existing observations, but a subset that the country will prioritize as sharable material. Examples of data sets and criteria developed by the first pilot countries can serve as guidance for additional countries. The Documentation and Information Working Group (WG)/ECPGR Secretariat were encouraged to make available a compilation of the lessons learned in the preparation of *in situ* CWR national inventories and to invite contributions from all countries to the *in situ* CWR dataset in EURISCO.

The difference between CWR and wild harvested food (WHF) was noted, indicating that it mainly rests in the different use, keeping in mind possible overlaps of the two domains. As far as documentation of wild material in EURISCO is concerned, it doesn't seem relevant to prepare specific descriptors to distinguish the different use of CWR and WHF.

The establishment of a European inventory of on-farm material was discussed. The low sustainability and very complex compilation of an inventory of germplasm managed on farm was reiterated. Also, the value for the user was questioned, considering that access to such material could possibly be guaranteed only through deposit of samples into an *ex situ* genebank. On the other hand, knowledge of the existing diversity on-farm, with the approximate geographic distribution, size area of cultivation, and the most valuable traits of landraces and other heterogeneous material, would be useful to monitor, promote and manage on-farm diversity, including through incentives.

It was suggested that it is the responsibility of the On-farm WG to create a European inventory of landraces, made of nationally prepared datasets, where the information units would be the landrace and genus names. The amount of information to be associated with these names could be defined by a list of proposed descriptors for national inventories, similarly to the list proposed for the CWR national inventories. Each country would select and work on its own list of descriptors, based on local priorities. The European list of 'names' could be linked to EURISCO, with each name being associated through a hot link to the related accessions conserved in European genebanks. This virtual link could serve to monitor the level of *ex situ* conservation of on-farm material, as well as for gap analysis of what still needs to be secured into a genebank.

The Documentation and Information WG made itself available to offer advice for the compilation of appropriate descriptors for on-farm material, as well as to propose the technical mechanisms to implement the link between the European on-farm inventory and EURISCO.

Other items under discussion focused on possible developments of EURISCO, in terms of its functionalities and its role.

The opportunity to develop an ordering system whereby users might directly create an 'ordering basket' in EURISCO while browsing collections from multiple genebanks was discussed.

A mechanism was proposed, to be applicable to the AEGIS accessions, which should by default be available under SMTA. EURISCO would simply interconnect the requestor with the recipient genebanks by providing a specific API to the genebank information systems and thus redirecting specific orders, which would be received by the genebank in the same way as any other order submitted from outside of EURISCO.

WG members stressed the need to reinforce the training and capacity building activities. Proposals were appreciated to organize online webinars and discussion meetings on specific documentation themes, as well as continuing to hold regular in person trainings of the National Inventory Focal Points.

The experience of Crop Portals was evaluated. These are based on passport data extracted from EURISCO and developed to provide additional information targeted to the interest of specific groups of plant genetic resource (PGR) users. The examples of the Lettuce and Potato Crop Portals, currently no longer updated, showed that this good idea is difficult to sustain and requires commitment from volunteer experts or institutes and support from the WGs in order to be successful.

Other relevant topics were discussed, also preparing the ground for possible decisions by the EURISCO Advisory Committee (AC). Among these, is the acknowledged importance of increasing the assignment of DOIs to the genebank accessions, as illustrated and stressed by the FAO Treaty Secretariat representative. This is essential to extract all possible information related to each accession, including its history, derivation, duplication, past use, genotypic and other associated data.

The specific issue of inclusion in EURISCO of single-seed descent (SSD) lines data was thoroughly discussed. These lines are increasingly prepared for genotyping, and phenotyping is also frequently carried out on these same lines to facilitate genome-wide association studies (GWAS). A technical solution to store in EURISCO searchable information related to these accessions was proposed. This item was subsequently discussed, elaborated and promoted by the EURISCO AC.

A discussion was also started on the possible evolution of EURISCO towards becoming mainly a community of data specialists collecting and providing data that are transferred to Genesys, the global catalogue. A shift of focus would enable EURISCO to focus on strengthening its network of data providers but also to engage in the provision of other types of data, such as *in situ* CWR. Phenotyping data gathering could also be reinforced, and linkages with on-farm documentation initiatives could be established. The WG agreed on the advantages of establishing stronger linkages with Genesys and the possibility of using its features, software and tools. At the same time, it was noted that EURISCO is a very successful brand and its existence is motivating European governments and PGR national programmes to collaborate on a common initiative, ensuring a sense of belonging and regional pride. It will therefore be essential for EURISCO not to be diluted into Genesys or disappear as a physical database with its dedicated web interface.

Relevant discussions for the development of EURISCO continued the following day with the EURISCO AC meeting and these are reported in the [meeting's minutes](#).