

## A new COST Action on Cherry: state of the art, main goals and upcoming events

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The [COST Action FA1104](#) entitled 'Sustainable production of high-quality cherries for the European market' started on 16 April 2012 with the [Management Committee](#) (MC) settlement and entered officially into force on 1 July 2012. This 4-year long Action (until 16 April 2016) is meant to create and support a network among the main stakeholders of European research on sweet and sour cherry and aims to achieve important steps forward in the research on these crops. Indeed, although Europe is the main cherry producer in the world, coordination of European research activities and funding should be improved.

Adaptation of cherry cultivation to climate change, implementation of new cultivation practices to promote sustainable agriculture, development of new strategies to face dangerous pests and diseases, promotion of high tasting and healthy crops are among the most important challenges of this Action, but not the only ones. This Action is meant to facilitate data exchange between research groups, to develop consensus experimental protocols, to implement predictive models in the fields of epidemiology and tree phenology and to establish coordinated European marker-assisted selection strategies.

Presently, 28 countries (27 European countries plus Turkey) have signed the [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MoU). They are represented at the MC by their own delegates; each country can participate with two members and two substitutes. The first MC meeting took place at the COST Headquarters in Brussels (Belgium) on 16-17 April 2012. The MC members nominated the Action leaders: José Quero Garcia (INRA-UREF, Villenave d'Ornon, France) was appointed as Chair and chose Brion Duffy (Agroscope Changins-Wädenswil, Switzerland) as his Vice-Chair. The Leaders of the four WGs were also appointed:

- **WG1, Genetic resources and Breeding, Genetics and Genomics** (Leader Sergiu Budan, Romania)
- **WG2, Crop Production** (Leader George Manganaris, Cyprus)
- **WG3, Crop Protection** (Leader Joerg Samietz, Switzerland)
- **WG4, Socio-economics and dissemination** (Leader Mario Njavro, Croatia).

A number of events are planned in the first year of the Action (1 July 2012-30 June 2013). Some have already taken place:

- On 1 October 2012, jointly with the Sixth Rosaceous Genomics Conference (RGC6) in San Michele all'Adige, Trento, Italy, WG1 held a meeting entitled 'Application of genomic approaches to breeding cherries'. About 20 COST and non-COST Participants attended and briefly presented their activities on sweet and sour cherry. Four invited speakers presented their activities, goals, approaches and progresses of genomics applied on other Rosaceous species: apple, apricot and peach breeding.
- The First Meeting of all WGs, organized by the Department of the University of Palermo (DEMETRA) together with the COST Coordinator, was held from 21 to 23 November 2012 in Palermo, Italy. Sixty participants from 22 countries attended the meeting, contributing to

this event with either posters or oral presentations. Topics discussed included: genetics and genomics of sweet and sour cherry resources; breeding programmes and released cultivars; cultivar and rootstock evaluation trials; fruit quality attributes and problems (i.e. fruit cracking, post-harvest decay); models applied to flower and fruit phenology and bioecology of pests; economic analysis of cherry productions. On the second day of the meeting, each WG met separately and established their respective priorities, activities and future events in the framework of Action FA1104.

Outcomes of the meeting, pdf of oral presentations and posters, as well as the minutes of the MC workplan for the second year of the Action will soon be available at the Action Web site.

Other events already planned for the first year include:

- A Workshop on the fruit fly *Drosophila suzukii*, a newly introduced pest in Europe but already an emergency to cope with. The meeting, organized by Joerg Samietz (Agroscope, Switzerland) and planned for early 2013, is restricted to a limited number of scientists (10-12), prioritized according to their current involvement and expertise on this topic.
- The Second Meeting of all WGs will be held in Plasencia, Spain jointly with the ISHS VII International Cherry Symposium (23-37 June 2013; <http://www.cherry2013.com/>).

Training is a major focus of this Action, mainly targeted towards young researchers. Tools such as the Short-term Scientific Missions (STSM), varying in length from 15 days to 3 months, will facilitate transfer of knowledge and training in new techniques. In the first year of the Action FA1104, four SMTS calls are planned. Training Schools in various fields of experimentation and analysis will be organized at well-equipped and advanced laboratories participating in the Action.

Action FA1104 will tightly interact with ECPGR members, more specifically with the *Prunus* Working Group (several members of the WG have already joined the Action) for activities devoted to cherry germplasm conservation, phenotyping and genotyping, dissemination.

For more information or to join the Action, refer to:

Action Web site	<a href="http://www.cost.eu/domains_actions/fa/Actions/FA1104">http://www.cost.eu/domains_actions/fa/Actions/FA1104</a>
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