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Methodology for creating a National Inventory of PGRFA

Introduction

The best way of creating a National Inventory of PGRFA will differ from country to country. However, in the approach proposed by the EPRGIS project, a number of steps can be distinguished: a National Inventory Focal Point will be (has been) nominated, the relevant collections will be identified, the data from these collections will be compiled, processed, and somehow made available. These steps will be discussed in some more detail.

1. Nomination of National Inventory Focal Point

The national coordinator for PGRFA (in most cases the national coordinator of ECP/GR) nominates a qualified person who will act as the National Inventory Focal Point, responsible for the compilation and management of the National Inventory of PGRFA.

The tasks of the Focal Point include creation of a database and conversion and loading of data, and database management including maintenance of the contents and provision of the data to the public; as such, the National Inventory will be made available *inter alia* to EURISCO, the European PGRFA Search Catalogue that will be established in Rome at the ECP/GR secretariat.

2. Identification of relevant PGRFA holding institutes / collections

The National Inventories should cover important national *ex situ* collections. Relevant collections would be long-term (i.e. genebank collections) and important working collections. The institutions holding relevant PGRFA collections will have to be identified. In many countries most of these have already been listed in the national reports of the country in preparation of the 4th International Technical Conference of the FAO on PGRFA in Leipzig, 1996. Nevertheless, surveys can be necessary to update the information about the collections and to locate additional collections of importance. In these surveys, especially the following information about the structure and documentation of the collection(s) should be collected:

- kind of documentation (books, cards, databases etc.)
- technical infrastructure of the documentation system
- amount and structure of data
- mode and period of updates of data

However, the identification and hence inclusion of relevant PGRFA collections into the National Inventory is at the discretion of the Focal Point.

3. Compilation of data

Once the existing data sources are known the data need to be compiled. If a National Inventory already exists, this can be used as a starting point. The data from the PGRFA holding institutes have to be obtained and transferred in the relevant structure. This might involve the choice of database management software and the creation of a database.

The basis for the data structure of the National Inventories can be the fields of the IPGRI/FAO Multi Crops Passport Descriptor List (MCPDL, if available in the revised form). This basic structure can be expanded with additional data, but that is completely at the discretion of the Focal Point.

The data that will be loaded in EURISCO will follow the MCPDL, and will thus contain only a minimum of important passport information; but there will be links for each accession to additional information (if available) in the holding institute, Central Crop Databases, etc.

4. Validation / harmonization / updating of data

During the compilation process, data need to be validated (typing errors etc.) and harmonized according to the requirements of the MCPDL. This will involve changes in field names, possibly combining or splitting fields, coding, decoding or recoding certain fields, and changing the format of certain fields, changing the case, separation signs, etc.

Botanical and geographical standards might need to be harmonized too. All changes should be made in consultation and agreement with the owner of the data (usually the PGRFA holding institute); who should at least be kept informed.

Update-mechanisms have to be established; therefore, agreements between the National Inventory Focal Point and the owner of the data (PGRFA holding institute / collection) need to be made. These agreements have to cover the format for data exchange, the way to handle amendments of data (see above), timeframe of updating etc.

5. Provision of data

After compilation of the data, the resulting National Inventory could be provided to the public. For this there are several options, depending on the financial and technical resources available:

- Online provision in an on-line searchable database. This provides optimal access and searchability, but requires some technical facilities.
- Offline provision, either electronically or on paper. An electronic copy of the database can be provided as a downloadable file or on diskettes or CDs; the printed paper version has limited searchability and high cost for updating.

Apart from providing the data directly to the public, the contents of the National Inventory will also be made available to EURISCO, in a standardized format (see EPGRIS paper on 'Uploading Mechanism').

Stepwise approach for implementation

For provision of a National Inventory it is not necessary to collect first all possible data of PGRFA in a country. Rather a stepwise approach is recommended in which the necessary technical elements are created, and the first data are provided by one or more major collections. Other collections can then easily be added, as they become available, or as capacity of the Focal Point allows.

To give an example, in the case of Germany, the starting point for the National Inventory "PGRDEU" (<http://www.genres.de/pgrdeu>) which is compiled and maintained by ZADI/IGR, has been the inclusion of the six genebank collections of the two major institutes IPK and BAZ. In a stepwise manner, later the most important collections of mainly *Laender* institutes and even some private holders have been added.

Probably, most of the European genebanks will have already computerized data too; in many cases the structure of these data will be very similar to that of the MCPDL. Therefore, the compilation of these data, that can cover already a big part of the whole *ex situ* collections of a country, might be easy. This also forms an important basis for the National Inventory.