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COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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**A REGIONAL FOCAL POINT FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF FARM ANIMAL
GENETIC RESOURCES:**

THE EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE

This document was prepared by the European Regional Focal Point for Animal Genetic Resources (ERFP), and provides information on the process of setting up the ERFP, mode of operation, funding mechanism and the various activities carried out in this regional framework.

The text is the responsibility of the ERFP and does not necessarily represent the views of the FAO or its member states.

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A REGIONAL FOCAL POINT FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF FARM ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES:

THE EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, in its Eight and Ninth Regular Sessions, stressed the importance of a regional focus, through networking and training, urged countries to designate, where appropriate, Regional Focal Points (RFP) and noted that some countries were actively supporting their establishment.
2. At the first annual meeting in Vienna (1997), European National Coordinators (NCs) agreed to establish a RFP for Europe. France, with the assistance of Poland, took over the tasks of an informal RFP. At a meeting in Warsaw (1998) basic decisions regarding the future European Regional Focal Point (ERFP) for Animal Genetic Resources (AnGR) were taken: to set up a unique RFP with a light structure supporting regional work on AnGR, respecting national sovereignty in the management of AnGR and with voluntary country participation.
3. Under the sponsorship of the European Association for Animal Production (EAAP) and FAO, a consultation was undertaken, with 80 % of European countries voting for one ERFP based on a light organizational structure, and funding provided by a dedicated trust fund financially managed by EAAP. After 5 years of discussions, the ERFP was created at a NC workshop in The Hague, in August 2000 and a Steering Committee was appointed. Four countries were ready to contribute 10,000 Euro each to finance ERFP actions, provided ten other countries joined this international collaborative effort. Between August 2000 and August 2001, eleven countries agreed to donate financial support to this common European action. The ERFP formally became operational during the annual workshop of NCs held in Cairo in August 2001, as a side event of the regular EAAP annual meeting. The number of countries included in the ERFP to date is 37.
4. The terms of reference for ERFP activities include: to assist and enhance the AnGR activities of National Focal Points (NFP) in Europe; to develop and maintain regular contact and exchange of relevant information on AnGR among NFPs and with the Global Focal Point in Rome within FAO's agreed global structure; to stimulate regional projects, workshops and national programmes; to co-ordinate the development of national and regional AnGR databases.
5. The ERFP is based on three main structural elements: an annual workshop of NCs, conducted in parallel to the EAAP annual meeting, a Steering Committee, and a Secretariat hosted by one country on a rotational basis. France has provided the Secretariat for the ERFP from its foundation to date. The ERFP budget is around 100,000 Euros per annum with 70 % for actions and programmes, 10 % for the annual workshop, and 20 % for development and work. The hosting country of the ERFP Secretariat is expected to cover the overhead costs of office, staff and communication.
6. The full document *A Regional Focal Point for the Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources: A European Experience* is included as Annex I.



ANNEX 1

A Regional Focal Point for the Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources: The European Experience

1. BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION.

Livestock production is based on a few species within which there are many breeds or populations, each having unique characteristics resulting from their evolution in particular environments and from differential human selection. The species (cattle, sheep, goat, pig, ass, horse, chicken, duck, turkey, goose) that have been drawn into human farming and pastoral systems are also threatened in many cases with depletion and extinction. In many countries, they have not yet received the same emotive and financial support as in the case of wild species. In Europe, where the situation is well documented, 2512 mammalian and 611 avian breeds (including extinct) are recorded in the Global Databank for Farm Animal Genetic Resources. Of the 2576 extant mammalian and avian breeds, almost half (48 %) are categorized as being at risk. This surprising situation is much more serious than that in other regions. It reflects the relative difficulty in obtaining census data for those breeds found in the developing regions. When the domestic Animal Genetic Resource (AnGR) inventory is examined in developed regions, it shows a significant number of breeds at risk of extinction. Additionally, Europe has the greatest number of conservation programmes in operation with 26 % of mammalian and 24 % of avian breeds at risk being maintained (World Watch List for domestic animal diversity, 3rd edition, October 2000).

The accelerating demands of a growing human population and the pressures of economic development are now affecting the security and even the survival of many breeds and strains which have been a stable part of their particular ecosystems for hundreds of years. The push to replace undervalued local populations with a very few highly promoted breeds from developed countries is intensifying. This tendency is accentuated by the ease with which genetic material can now move internationally by the use of frozen semen or embryos and other biotechnologies.

In Eastern Europe, the situation is especially critical as there are few active conservation programmes in place. Under the former centralist ideology, large farms under state ownership were developed in order to standardize production. Indigenous breeds, often highly adapted to local conditions, were upgraded with a small number of highly specialized exotic breeds, thus considerably narrowing the genetic base of domestic livestock used for food and agriculture.

Every domestic species, breed and individual animal provides unique genetic material - that is, genetic diversity - and rational and integrated management of this material is the only way to guarantee sustainable production and increased productivity. Genetic diversity allows farmers to select breeding stock or develop new breeds in response to changes in the environment, threats of disease, new knowledge of human nutrition requirements, changing markets and socio-economic conditions. Most or all of these changes are unknown or largely unpredictable.

The need for countries to develop and strengthen their capacity to benefit fully from their biological resources highlights the need for a global strategy to conserve biological resources. The need for such a strategy came with the endorsement of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. The CBD considers domestic animal diversity as a component of overall biological diversity. The sovereignty of each country over its own genetic resources is also recognized by the CBD, which however stresses the equitable sharing of benefits derived from their use as well as the necessary exchange of information between countries. National conservation policies have therefore to be put into a proper international perspective.

In Europe, the awareness of possible erosion of the Animal Genetic Resources (AnGR) originated in the 1960s, and from the beginning, the emphasis was put on preservation of endangered breeds. Concerted activities on AnGR in Europe started in 1980, when the European Association for Animal Production (EAAP) established a working group on AnGR. At the global level, 1980 is also the starting point, since the first expert consultation on AnGR was held in Rome with FAO.

European countries have a long tradition in the management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources. The results of monitoring animal genetic resources by the EAAP Working Group on Animal Genetic Resources, started in 1980, was published in 1993 by D.L. SIMON and D. BUCHENAUER – Genetic diversity of European livestock breeds. This report has four main objectives, which relate to the growing awareness of people and present concepts for the conservation of animal genetic diversity:

- Firstly, it presents a register of breeds of the major farm animal species in Europe. This can facilitate a wider use of minor breeds, which may have a specific potential for a particular environment.
- Secondly, it defines the status of endangerment of breeds and draws attention to it.
- Thirdly, it forms groups of similar breeds where this information can be used to decide on the conservation of an individual breed in the context of others.
- Fourthly, it presents in a condensed form most of the information needed in order to decide whether a particular breed, which is endangered, should be conserved and whether this could be done in conjunction with other breeds.

In 1993, the European data were also transferred from Hanover to Rome, in view of preparation by FAO of a **World Watch List for Domestic Animal Diversity**. The WWL-DAD is being developed as a global early warning system aiming to help prevent the erosion of genetic diversity in those important species that are used to provide the wide range of food and agriculture for humankind now and in the future. The first edition was published in November 1993.

In parallel, FAO developed, in 1990, a Global Strategy for the management of farm animal genetic resources. In 1992, the CBD and Agenda 21 formally identified domestic animal diversity as a genuine and important component of global biodiversity. Based on an expert consultation, an expanded priority programme of work associated with shaping and developing a Global Strategy for the management of farm animal genetic resources was recommended by FAO.

Article 6 of the CBD calls upon Nations to develop national strategies, plans or programmes or to adapt existing ones for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity into sectoral, and cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies. For most countries this will require an in-depth inventory and assessment of the livestock sector to be able to develop this Strategy on which to base decisions. This will include identification, enumeration, characterization of species and breeds together with a close evaluation of the prevailing production environments to evaluate production and productivity of the different breeds adequately. It will also include the development and implementation of specific plans for improving those breeds currently widely used by farmers and for conserving those unique breeds, which are at present of little farmer interest. The primary guidelines for the development of these action plans for AnGR have been drafted by FAO (1996). The Global Strategy attained to its full development when the FAO'S Commission on Plant Genetic resources broadened its mandate (Resolution 3/95) to cover all components of agrobiodiversity of relevance to food and agriculture. It was then renamed the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA). The Intergovernmental Technical Working group on Animal Genetic Resources was created in 1997 (ITWG-AnGR). This group reinforced the Global Strategy during its first meeting in September 1998.

The Global Strategy for the Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources provides a technical and operational framework for assisting countries, comprising:

- an intergovernmental mechanism for direct government involvement and policy development,
- a country-based global infrastructure to help countries cost-effectively plan, implement and maintain national strategies for the management of animal genetic resources,
- a technical programme aimed at supporting effective action at the country level in the sustainable intensification, conservation, characterization and access to Animal Genetic Resources, and,
- a reporting and evaluation system to guide the Strategy's implementation, facilitate collaboration, coordination and policy development and maximize cost-effectiveness of activity.

The key component of the Global Strategy is the Country-Based Planning and Implementation Infrastructure, which includes five key structural elements: the Global Focal Point, Regional Focal Points, and National Focal Points, the donor and stakeholder involvement mechanism, and the Domestic Animal Diversity Information System (DAD-IS). The Country-Based Planning and Implementation Infrastructure is necessary to communicate and coordinate effectively, set priorities, develop and implement strategies, plans and projects, and for reporting.

The Global Focal Point at FAO Headquarters leads the planning, development and implementation of the overall Strategy, develops and maintains the information and communication system, oversees preparation of guidelines, coordinates activity amongst the regions, prepares reports and meeting documents, facilitates policy discussions, identifies

training, education, and technology transfer needs, develops programme and project proposals, and mobilizes donor resources.

Regional Focal Points facilitate regional communications, provide technical assistance and leadership, coordinate training, research and planning activities amongst countries, initiate development of regional policies, assist in identifying project priorities and proposals, and interact with government agencies, donors, research institutions and non-government organizations.

National Focal Points lead, facilitate and coordinate country activities, identify capacity-building needs, develop project proposals, assist with the development and implementation of country policy, and interface with the range of country stakeholders, including the country focus for biological diversity, and with the Regional Focal Point and the Global Focal Point.

The Donor and Stakeholder Involvement Mechanism mobilize the range of stakeholders, providing broad-based support for the Global Strategy. The Global Focal Point seeks to ensure stakeholder involvement in all major aspects of the Global Strategy, using a variety of communication means. The stakeholder mechanism provides added opportunity for non-governmental contribution to the development of the Strategy. At national level, each country will need to determine what mechanisms it requires to involve its stakeholders, public and private sector, in the management of its animal genetic resources.

The FAO's Global Strategy for the Management of Animal Genetic Resources calls for the establishment of an intergovernmental mechanism to oversee and coordinate the Programme, a global infrastructure to help and coordinate regional and national activities, a technical work programme and an advisory board of experts. Its success depends on the full participation of governments, NGOs, scientists and trainers. The three key sectors in the global structure start at the national level and expand outward to incorporate a global dimension. It is intended to avoid top-down imposition. Central to the programme is the need to train operators at all levels in the techniques necessary for its successful implementation. An essential step in this is the establishment of a Regional Focal Point at the intermediate level of this proposed structure. Establishment of this infrastructure is basic to the success of the programme and is indispensable to its implementation and development.

2. CREATION OF THE EUROPEAN REGIONAL FOCAL POINT.

According to the Global Strategy, Regional Focal Points are intended to operate at an intermediate level between the Global Focal Point and individual National Co-ordinators in the country-based structure. In the structure the small Global Focal Point in Rome cannot hope to respond to the broad range of demands emanating from developing, transitional or developed countries with the assistance needed for successful achievement of conserving domestic animal genetic resources. Regional Focal Points are, therefore, broadly intended to assist the countries of a region to design and establish their own cost-effective management and conservation programmes for maintaining diverse animal genetic resources and to coordinate common regional and sub-regional activation including policy development, training, research and field activities.

During their first annual meeting in Vienna (1997), the National Coordinators (NCs) referred back to a discussion started in 1996 expressing the need to establish a Regional Focal Point (RFP) for Europe. However, the exact expectation of the National Coordinators towards

a Regional Focal Point still needed to be clarified. The NCs proposed that France with the assistance of Poland should perform jointly the tasks of an "informal" Regional Focal Point.

During the Warsaw meeting (1998), the NCs accepted that the setting up of a viable exchange and communication network between the countries of Europe would have to be done slowly, in step with the evolution of each country's own animal genetic resources management needs. Only in this way would the more dynamic countries be prepared to facilitate and pay for this evolution. Once established, the first work of the RFP would be to facilitate exchange of information between countries and to provide the management tools required to satisfy this need. An information letter was created with a broad circulation among European countries.

The NCs considered that a single RFP for Europe would be enough to meet the various countries' needs, but that this should not inhibit subsequent development of sub regional grouping should the need arise. The RFP should have a light organisational structure taking into account the relatively limited funding in most countries.

Two basic decisions for the future ERFPP were taken during this important meeting:

1. To set up a light structure to support major new regional developments,
2. To respect national sovereignty in the management of farm animals genetic resources and the voluntary participation of countries in this regionally co-ordinated structure.

Under these conditions, the NCs considered that it would be possible to create an ERFPP as a platform to exchange experiences and information in the management of farm animal genetic resources. To continue the discussions, France proposed the creation of a Trust Fund for financing ERFPP activities. The participation of all European countries was implicit; but country participation in financing the ERFPP would not be a precondition of participation in all program activities. The French Government donated 76,000 \$ to establish the ERFPP provided other European countries supported this action.

At the end of this Warsaw workshop, there was no formal NC agreement on the establishment of an ERFPP. However, it soon became clear that in the context of the various European Union (EU) regulations affecting AnGR, a strong European network was needed to act as a reference point for the EU to call on for expert advice when proposing relevant legislation. A Regional Focal Point for co-ordinating the management and conservation of European AnGR and creating a network of human and institutional expertise across Europe was urgently needed.

There are many arguments in favour of strong collaboration between European countries in the field of AnGR. Though many livestock products are in surplus in the EU, genetic resources should be managed and/or conserved to meet unpredictable future needs or changing productivity targets often linked to product quality improvements. Patterns of production may become more diversified, and breeds better adapted to more extensive systems of production may well be in demand. The production of animals reared in more traditional housing, on low input feeds and under less intensive cycles of reproduction, but still reaching the same weight (for example) as those produced at a younger age in standard systems could encourage breed diversification. Public demands for improved animal welfare mean that value can sometimes be added to livestock products if they have been produced in accordance with the principles of good animal welfare practice under less intensive conditions. Breeds with disease tolerance or resistance, easy parturition, high mothering ability or particular dietary adaptations, may become favoured if public opinion requests a reduced dependency on drug and veterinary intervention. In summary then, the final outcome

of this important Warsaw workshop was the will expressed by NCs to continue discussion on the ERFPP with the full support of FAO and the European Association of Animal Production (EAAP).

During the International Technical Working Group on Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in Rome (8 –10 September 1998) the need for FAO to continue shaping the Global Strategy and providing core programme budgetary support was stressed. In addition, the need for all stakeholders to seek to mobilize extra-budgetary support for conservation and sustainable utilisation of AnGR was agreed. The Working Group recommended establishment of the National Focal Points by countries, which had not yet done so, and Regional Focal Points where appropriate. It recommended that the FAO should co-ordinate development of the country-driven report on the "State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources" which would provide an assessment of countries' AnGR and ongoing programmes as well as a global assessment. The need to establish a common approach to prepare the Report was an important factor in stimulating the European NCs to establish an RFP.

To implement the Global Strategy at the national level, the individuals involved must have a true will to collaborate and to exchange all kinds of information. This is an essential prerequisite. It can start with informal, friendly relations between interested parties and the NCs. But to be effective, NCs must engage their own governments at an early stage. Each country is responsible for its own genetic resources and level of participation in the Global Strategy. The concept of national sovereignty is an essential principle of the CBD. In order to be able to collaborate, all NCs and the regional co-ordinator (RC) need official and permanent status recognised at national as well as international level. This formal interdependence allows each NC to have national recognition and to receive assistance from the ERFPP.

During the 5th workshop for European NCs in Zurich (1999), an agreement was not reached between the different European countries to allow the formal creation of the European Regional Focal Point (ERFP). No formal or informal structure could continue the work at European level. France did not receive any formal mandate to act as Secretariat of the ERFPP. In this unfortunate situation, the conclusions of the previous Warsaw workshop were fully respected. However, the NCs did agree that the annual NCs workshop should be continued and asked France to continue to act as a temporary ERFPP for one more year.

However, the failure of this Zurich Workshop to set up the ERFPP stimulated urgent exchanges and dialogue between countries interested in collaborating on AnGR. That is why a small group of countries under the sponsorship of EAAP and FAO asked the French national coordinator to organize a vote of all European NCs in order to gain an overall picture of the willingness of countries to support the concept of the ERFPP.

The vote was organised at the end of 1999. Around 80 % of European countries asked for one ERFPP based on a light organisational structure, with funding provided by a dedicated trust fund financially managed and fully edited by EAAP (Rome).

After 5 years of discussion, the NCs finally decided to create the ERFPP during their workshop held in The Hague, in August 2000. A Steering Group was appointed to set up the ERFPP as soon as possible. Four countries were ready to contribute 10,000 Euro each to finance ERFPP actions provided ten other countries joined this international collaborative effort. Between August 2000 and August 2001, eleven countries agreed to donate financial support to this common European action. The ERFPP formally became operational during the annual NCs Workshop held in Cairo in August 2001.

3. THE EUROPEAN REGIONAL FOCAL POINT.

The Cairo NCs workshop adopted the following terms of reference, proposed by the Steering Committee and based on recommendations of the EAAP working group on AnGR (1999, in RFP Newsletter n°2):

- To assist and enhance the AnGR activities of National Focal Points (NFPs) at the European level.
- To develop and maintain regular contact and exchange of relevant information on AnGR horizontally between European NFPs and vertically with the Global Focal Point in Rome within FAO's agreed global structure.
- To stimulate the funding and organisation of regional projects, workshops and national programmes on AnGR within the European Region.
- To stimulate and co-ordinate the maintenance and further development of national and regional AnGR databases and encourage European information networking on AnGR.

This basic and light structure of the ERFPP is based on three main elements: an annual NCs workshop, a Steering Committee and a permanent secretariat hosted by a willing country. With such a structure, it is intended that the dynamic nature of the ERFPP will be preserved. It has to be noted that the host country finances the office facilities of the ERFPP secretariat and minimal personnel costs in order to achieve the annual objectives. The tasks for each activity are as follows:

a) *Annual Workshop of National Focal Points.*

- To bring together all NCs of FAO's European Region (currently 37 countries) annually and normally co-chaired by the host country.
- To exchange information on relevant national and sub-regional activities.
- To decide on the ERFPP budget, the general rules of the annual meeting, the ERFPP Steering Committee and Secretariat and the future activities of the ERFPP.
- To elect the Secretariat NFP and the Steering Committee.
- To be advised by technical (e.g. EAAP) political (e.g. EU Commission) and organisational (e.g. FAO Global Focal Point) experts as appropriate.

b) *Steering Committee.*

- To consist of members elected from among the NCs (initially 5 members including representatives of each of the European sub-regions – EU, CEE, SE Europe).
- To plan or execute activities of the ERFPP as decided upon by the Annual Meeting of NCs, and raise and oversee the Annual Budget.
- To make proposals to the Annual Workshop regarding work programmes and ERFPP organisational issues.

- To represent the ERFPP in contact with other institutions under the mandate of the Annual Meeting.

c) **Secretariat.**

- To be elected from among the NCs to serve for a limited period (France to serve initially for 4 years).
- To be headed by an executive officer of the elected NFP (usually the NC)
- To organise the Annual Workshop of the NCs.
- To give secretarial support to the Steering Committee of the ERFPP.
- To execute decisions or support projects decided on by the Annual Meeting or Steering Committee and to manage the Annual Budget.
- To distribute relevant information on AnGR to and from NFPs and pass on information from within the FAO global network using newsletters / email / internet homepage, etc..

The ERFPP is funded through financial contributions made by donor countries placed in a Trust Fund administered by the Steering Committee through the Secretariat but held by and fully audited by the European Association of Animal Production (EAAP). These funds cover basic additional costs of the Secretariat (time, communications, travel) when engaged on ERFPP business, the Steering Committee and any costs for specific activities approved by the Annual Meeting. Donors for specific programmes or projects co-ordinated by the ERFPP may also make voluntary additional financial contributions.

The ERFPP is organized around the Annual Workshop of the NCs. This workshop takes note of the activities accomplished during the past year and decides on new directions to take during the following year. The workshop elects a Steering Committee. This consists of NCs representing broad geographical sectors of Europe:

- South/SE Europe currently represented by Greece.
- Central / East Europe currently represented by Poland
- West Europe currently represented by The Netherlands
- North / Baltic currently represented by Lithuania.
- Plus the ERFPP President and the Secretariat.

Each member is elected for 5 years with a rotational system whereby each year one region stands for re-election. In 2004, the NC representing East and Central Europe will resign, in 2005 the NC representing West Europe will resign, etc.. The Secretariat was elected for 4 years. It will be changed in 2004, if a new host country accepts that role. The President will resign in 2007. The Secretariat of the ERFPP ensures the implementation of the directions given by the Steering Committee according to the decisions and guidelines provided by the Annual Workshop. Since 2000, France has acted as the ERFPP Secretariat.

The ERFPP budget is around 100,000 euros per annum and set at the Annual Workshop for the period from 1 September to 31 August with approximately 70 % for actions and programmes, around 10 % to organize the annual workshop, 10 % for its own development and 10 % as working funds. The hosting country of the ERFPP Secretariat is expected to cover the overhead costs of office accommodations, administrative and clerical staff and communications equipment.

For the ERFPP to be created, at least 10 donor European Countries had to pledge to the Trust Fund up to Euro 10,000 per annum each for the first 4 years to meet the budgeted costs. The Secretariat sends a letter annually for Governments to donate up to this amount. If more than 10 countries are willing to pledge funding then the costs per country could be reduced accordingly. It is therefore important that as many countries as possible pledge financial support to the ERFPP.

4. ERFPP ACTIONS.

Since 2000, the ERFPP has been operational. The ERFPP is, above all, a communication platform managed by the Secretariat. Under the control of the Steering Committee, it publishes information on the NCs' and ensures the exchange of information and experience between the different countries and the governmental and no-governmental organisations. It works with the sub-regional organisations in order to reinforce a common approach to tackling AnGR problems in neighbouring countries having the same needs. In this framework, it receives information support from the University of Hanover, in particular for the maintenance of the European database. There are also routine exchanges with the FAO information system (DAD-IS). It establishes close working relationships with international NGOs (RBI, SAVE, DAGENE, FAIP, etc...). For all scientific aspects, it receives advice from the EAAP WG-AGR. The ERFPP does not create new structures, but relies as far as possible on existing functional structures in the different countries.

In 2002, the ERFPP website was launched. This tool is important to improve communication between European countries. This web site should be fully operational very soon.

In August 2004, the lightly structured ERFPP will again organize the tenth Annual Workshop where the 37 European NCs can exchange their needs and experiences. . It will again be combined with the annual EAAP conference in Bled, Slovenia. The main decision will be the approval of a workplan and budget for 2005. Various speakers will be invited to take part in presentations and discussions, some reporting on projects funded by previous ERFPP Calls for Action (see below) and others on the FAO "Report on the State of the World's AnGR". An annual report is edited after this meeting, including annual country reports from the various European NCs.

In 2002, for the first time the ERFPP launched a Call for Action following the decision of the 8th Workshop of NCs. The proposed projects to be financially supported by the European Regional Focal Point had to initiate or reinforce ongoing collaborative activities in the field of AnGR between European countries. The following areas were eligible when submitting project proposals:

a) ***Breed development and conservation - In-situ.***

The formation of one or more groups of countries with a common interest in maintaining the same breed or breeds of similar origin. Projects should facilitate the exchange of experience and lead to the development of proposals for concerted action regarding *in-situ* conservation.

Expected outputs:

Development of proposals for collaboration in breeding programmes that will ensure long-term, economically viable and sustainable conservation of AnGR through the concerted efforts of the relevant countries.

b) *Breed development and conservation - Ex situ.*

The formation of a group of countries interested in developing ex-situ conservation programmes. The project should focus on the technical, legal and practical aspects of maintaining cryo-conservation banks.

Expected outputs:

Preparation of guidelines on the establishment and management of cryo-conservation banks for AnGR. Such guidelines may cover specific aspects of development and management of ex-situ banks including procedures for collection of various genetic materials, access regulations, conditions for use and replenishment protocols, ownership and organizational structure etc.

c) *Monitoring animal genetic resources – Practices and approaches.*

The formation of a group of countries interested in analysing and advancing their AnGR monitoring programmes.

Expected outputs:

Analysis of ongoing AnGR monitoring programmes including recommendations on identifying best monitoring practices, the dimension/organization of software systems, and templates to provide quality input for national databases.

d) *Monitoring animal genetic resources - Overview of available data and information.*

The formation of a group of countries interested in conducting an analysis of Europe-wide data and information available on AnGR diversity.

Expected outputs:

Study on available European databases concerning various aspects of AnGR and analysis of possible use of these data in evaluating animal genetic diversity at European level.

e) *Projects to enable direct assistance to particular country/group of countries in supporting activities of the National Focal Point.*

The specific assistance of a consultant was able to be appointed by the ERF to support activities at country level.

Expected outputs:

Enhanced activities of the NFP and support of the NC in developing national action plans. Increased involvement and contribution of the supported country in regional level activities.

The 'Call for Action' was launched in mid November 2002 on a date agreed by the Annual Workshop, with a very tight deadline for submissions on the 25th of November. 9 submissions were received and 2 projects were funded, one 'Development of guidelines for cryopreservation of AnGR in Europe' and the other 'Study on optimising the implementation of databases on AnGR in Europe'. Both projects received 20,000 Euros each. In addition, the SC Selection Panel approved the funding of national consultancy visits to the value of 3,000 Euros to advise the NC for Albania in the establishment and training of a National Network for AnGR.

The Selection Panel recommended that some projects should be combined and re-submitted in the next Call for Action. They felt that some project proposals were too specific to the conservation of particular endangered breeds and that the ERFPP should not absolve national Governments of their responsibility to conserve their own indigenous breeds.

The 2003 Call for Action included the same themes. However, the annual workshop agreed that priority should be given to projects under themes that were not supported in the 2002 Call for Action. It was proposed that the ERFPP might support multinational breed conservation projects and consultancy visits. It was agreed that if populations were declining rapidly that the ERFPP should consider funding multinational projects to assist in their conservation.

The Selection Panel (ERFP SC + Technical Adviser + FAO Senior AnGR Officer) received a total of 7 projects of which the following two have been approved for immediate funding subject to the conditions given:

- ***European Cryoconservation of Heritage Sheep Breeds – Scoping Study.***
Total cost: 20,000 Euros.
- ***Veterinary provisions for the maintenance of genetic resources in case of infectious diseases.*** Total cost: 7,500 Euros.

In addition, the Selection Panel strongly recommended that 2 further projects should be combined into one to save administrative costs and encourage co-ordination across Central and Eastern Europe. Both projects involve the *in-situ* conservation of similar native sheep breeds.

- ***Development of common approach and proposals aiming at the In-situ conservation of similar local sheep breeds in the Balkan regions.*** Total cost: 20,000 Euros.

5. CONCLUSION.

At the regional level, it is possible to set up a light coordination structure for the management of the domestic animal genetic resources. The ERFPP experience demonstrates that this is actually achievable. It stems from the will of the European countries and the enthusiasm of their NCs to share their experiences, advice and their own reflections on AnGR management. It has led to a greater effectiveness in collaborative actions and pooling of resources.

The ERFPP is still young. It will certainly meet and hopefully overcome hurdles but it has already showed its vitality and its capacity to mobilize joint action. It has already taken an active part in EU negotiations on regulations affecting AnGR and in acting as a catalyst in the FAO State of the World process. It has organised a successful international workshop on cryopreservation in Europe, created opportunities for research and training, edited several scientific documents, financed 5 international projects and established strong, working and friendly links between the European National Coordinators.

6. DOCUMENTS.

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Report on the 5th workshop for the European National Coordinators for the management of farm Animal Genetic Resources. Zurich, August 21, 1999.

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