

Name of Issue:

What are the three greatest obstacles in building your national programme and how do you intend to overcome them?

Convenor: Vladimir Pekic

Participants:

Katrin Kotkas (Estonia)

Drazen Jelovac (Serbia and Montenegro)

Loek Van Soest (Holland)

Lars Landbo (Denmark)

Luis Ayerbe (Spain)

Sonja Maznevaska (Macedonia)

Gordana Popsimonova (Macedonia)

Highlights from discussion:

Van Soest: The biggest constrain 20 years ago was to bring together all those collections into a central gene bank. Some were very reluctant and some were forthcoming. Now it is no longer a constraint. We started first with 10-15 crops, the easy ones and then we approached directors of stations and we put more pressure. It was a major constraint in the beginning. Without information you can do nothing. We first made an inventory, but we also had problems to get information for the inventory. The government was all for it, but I had to deal with individual persons. People find excuses not do it (no time, not able...) some times it took 2-3 years to get the information. In our country the collections were nearby so it was somewhat easier.

Landbo: Genetic resources are cross-cutting issues. And we are only in the implementation process- One of the problems is in involving different ministries and institutions.

Ayerbe: Do you have a co-ordinating committee?

Landbo: Yes, but it is not oriented towards practical implementation it is more political. But you should have committees that "get their fingers dirty". No bureaucracy.

Popsimonova: Maybe we should have 2 committees?

Landbo: We should avoid too much red tape. There are many players in this field. We are trying to expand this area and it's very difficult.

Van Soest: Maybe Germany with ZADI and France has succeeded in having a national platform, we still have to do it.

Kotkas: In Estonia we started several years ago. Maybe the biggest problems are personal problems between the ministers. Programs have to be very concrete with action plans. It is easier to implement.

Ayala: Problems are very similar between countries. We also have problems between ministries, but we also have regional and provincial governments. I think that this is a big problem. We have a good programme but it is not working because many of the provisions have not been put into practice.

Popsimonova: Since 1994 we had 9 ministers of agriculture changed including their teams

Maznevskaja: You probably have to find the persons who deal with these issues constantly in the administration.

Jelovac: If people understood PGR like health, education and the military, it would not be important who is in power. If work is based on one-year initiatives, the work on PGR will change constantly. You have to have a framework.

Popsimonova: We do not have a national programme – one of the 5 countries that was mentioned by Mr Turok yesterday.

Maznevskaja: But now we have. We are working on it.

Kotkas: In Estonia, in the 1990's a biodiversity action plan was followed in practice, although it was not approved formally. Our ministries had to follow plans how to implement the CBD.

Van Soest: If you ratified the CBD, you should have a national programme.

Popsimonova: Until the World Bank programme started nothing was happening. We needed financial incentives to start working on it. Everything can not be based on voluntary basis.

Ayala: Our plan for PGR is being drafted.

Van Soest: We have a law. We get about 90% of funding from our ministry, the 10% we have from the EU or assistance programmes (Bhutan, etc.). There is money, but the question is how much money?

Ayala: Is the focal point the same as the national co-ordinator?

Van Soest: The focal point is under the gene bank. We have the website with information. We do not have a national platform that involves everybody. We could develop it but we would need funds from the ministry if we are to develop it. It is important to involve the people from the ministry.

Landbo: It is important to have a clear structure, formalized – so it is not so important if ministers change. In my country, the No.1 option is not to make new administrative structures, people want to use existing structures. The problem can be that people working on the national programme will typically have other priorities to work on too. And work on the national programme will suffer. There has to be a number of persons that have running the national programme as their sole task.

Van Soest: We also have a national feeling that there is too much bureaucracy.

Jelovac: If there is political support for taking care of PGR and there is some money available, what would then be the main obstacles to running a successful national programme?

Maznevskaja: Human resources, for example.

Landbo: The next issue that pops up is how to use the money that is available! Everybody has different ideas (genebanks, NGO's, etc)

Van Soest: You need a plan of action. You need an inventory and then prioritize in your plan of action.

Jelovac: So at some point I have to think as a politician and this is in some way a sad fact.

Popsimonova: How much do you all use PGR in reality?

Landbo: I've talked to the breeders in Denmark and the important thing they always say is that PGR is like a kind of insurance for the future. Like life insurance, it does not have to be used in every case.

Van Soest: Using PGR is also a matter of information. We doubled our distribution in CGN to around 6000 accessions for 200 customers over the past 5 years (from around 3000 accessions for 100 customers). We have a program of stimulation of use. We have around 70 private breeding companies in Holland and we work together with them. We give them material and in return they give us data. Everything we have (data) is available on the Internet. It is a matter of information and not putting borders on your country. And it is a question of time.

Ayala: I agree. PGR are already being used by breeding companies.

Landbo: You should also place PGR material to museums and botanical gardens. It generates a lot of publicity. It is important for gene banks to become more visible in order to get more political support!

Van Soest: So, now we have to identify the three major constraints for national programmes. From our discussion I think that we can all agree on:

1. Funding
2. Institutional Framework in the country
3. Human Resources with commitment

are the greatest constraints.