
EDITORIAL

Since the last issue of AGRI a lot of activities have been implemented within the Animal Genetic Resources group, establishing a solid basis for the coming Special Action Programme. Meanwhile, ongoing activities have been pursued.

As was announced in the previous editorial, the World Watch List has been finalized and sent to the printer. It has not been an easy task to design this WWL in such a way that it could be used by different readers/users and that it could be updated regularly (not only as regards the population data or the introduction of new breeds, but also as regards the information available on each of the breeds). A more detailed description of the structure of the WWL will be given in the next issue.

Two working groups have been created, one on Genetic Distancing (chaired by S. Barker) and the second on Databanks (chaired by T. Henzen). These groups have considered the available methodologies and the needs in their respective fields and have proposed plans of action. The two reports will be widely distributed. A special emphasis is put on the need that the information gathered and/or created within these activities be accessible to everyone. Modern communication systems (notably electronic mail) will be developed while keeping active the more conventional communication packages (paper).

A team constituted of a geneticist and a livestock economist has spent six weeks in China to make an inventory of the Animal Genetic Resources and to make proposals for future plans of action. Similar missions will be initiated for other regions, as funds become available: in a near future for Africa, followed by Eastern Europe, and later on by Latin America.

On Genebank management, with the financial support of UNEP, two training courses are being organized for Africa (one in English and one in French), in association with ILCA in Addis Ababa and CRTA/CIRDES in Bobo Dioulasso. With these, all regions will have been informed, and links developed at regional levels. The future activities in this field will then rely mainly on each country's awareness and willingness to act. The regional nodes will serve as safety storage and coordination centres. It is now planned to gather all the information related to these genebank activities in a separate databank, connected with the Global Data Bank for Domestic Animal Diversity. While preparing the WWL, information on storage of semen and/or embryos was used to evaluate the degree of risk.

The first paper in the present issue gives the results of the survey initiated in 1992 by a questionnaire included in AGRI No. 8. Useful information on what is done in 40 countries is presented here. However nothing is known regarding the other 142. This survey should be continued. A call is made to anybody able to forward the relevant information from his own country to have a look at page vi of AGRI No. 8 and fill in the questionnaire.