
EDITORIAL

The Convention on Biological Diversity clearly accepts each country's sovereignty over its genetic resources, and this alone means that the structure for a global programme of management must focus at the country level. The need for such a focus is further underscored by the fact that countries possess different subsets of the global total of breeds forming each domestic animal species. Additionally, although production environments vary greatly even for the pigs and poultry, countries are becoming increasingly interdependent in seeking to access unique animal genetic resources from elsewhere. Hence, effective utilisation of animal genetic resources by nations must provide the foundation for a successful global programme of management for each species. The FAO Global Programme for the Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources (AnGR) provides the structure for achieving country-based emphasis combined with the necessary regional and global co-ordination of policy and effort. This primary level in the global infrastructure will provide for the early implementation of the necessary within-country management networks and enable countries to design, implement and maintain comprehensive national strategies for the management of their animal genetic resources. At present, priority is set on initiating the key infrastructure required. The main features of this infrastructure can be summarised as follows:

National Focal Point for each country, comprising a co-ordinating institution and a country technical co-ordinator nominated by, and strongly linked to, the government and to the regional focal point. The government must be responsible for the within-country component and can contribute internationally through the intergovernmental mechanism for AnGR which is also being developed as a component of the Global Strategy for the Programme. This co-ordinator will be the point of contact for the country's involvement in the FAO AnGR Programme and will assist in establishing and maintaining the essential incountry network.

Regional Focus in each major genetic storehouse region of the world, to help develop effective national co-ordinators, design and implement effective regional networks as integral components of the global structure, help achieve early and wide introduction of national strategies, and trigger a range of most effective projects covering the conservation complex for domestic animals. Regional focal points are implemented for Asia and the Pacific; being planned for Europe; the Americas; Africa; and, the Near East and Mediterranean.

Global Focus for the Programme is being established at FAO headquarters to lead facilitate, communicate and co-ordinate the global effort; as FAO's 170 + member governments resolved. This includes developing the necessary modalities for countries and assisting them in establishing their management strategies for AnGR; developing, implementing and maintaining the Domestic Animal Diversity Information System (DADIS); communicating the issues globally; maintaining the Early Warning System for AnGR; involving the range of governmental, non-governmental and intergovernmental parties essential for the Programme's success; servicing the intergovernmental mechanism; and seeking the essential extra-budgetary funding for the Programme.

Some aspects of the Programme are already being implemented. Although complete implementation of the Programme will take some years and will depend on strong collaborative support for its activities, significant progress has been made. To date, 50 countries have established focal points: 38 in Europe and 12 in Asia. The regional focal point for Asia and the Pacific has

now been initiated in Bangkok. Planning for the Regional Focus for Europe has commenced and a preliminary workshop of the National Co-ordinators of most countries was held in the autumn of 1995. A third workshop is being held for the National Co-ordinators in the Asia Region, where an evaluation mission recently strongly recommended the country-based and regional structure and reported that it was operating very successfully. In the Americas a group has been formed to establish the country and sub-regional focal points and 11 countries in three sub-regions were identified to be invited, through official channels, to nominate national coordinators. A training course on DAD-IS was organised in Brasilia in May 1996. FAO professional staff travelled to Africa to assess the needs for AnGR management programme and to enlist the help of national, regional and international organisations related to this field. It is intended to organise, on a pilot sub-regional basis with 12 Southern-African countries, a workshop and field a project identification mission.

Another important achievement in the implementation of the AnGR Management Programme was the launching of DAD-IS on the INTERNET which can now be accessed at the site <http://www.fao.org/dad-is/>

The Editors