

Legislative drivers and current UK genetic resource initiatives

The meeting was briefed on an overview of legislation, including international agreements, treaties and conventions and current UK and European ex situ genetic resource activities.

The role and objectives of the Working Group

The role of the working group:

- To advise Scottish Government and the Rural Land Use Working Group on in situ and ex situ issues relating to the conservation and use of landraces and traditional varieties in Scotland

The following objectives of the Working Group were proposed:

- Facilitate the distribution mapping of landraces and traditional varieties grown in Scotland and the collection of representative seed samples.
- Create and maintain an inventory of in situ and ex situ genetic resources for food and agriculture in Scotland
- Facilitate the characterisation and evaluation of landraces and traditional varieties grown in Scotland.
- Provide input on crop biodiversity to SBF implementation plans.
- Development of strategies for the long term conservation and use of landraces and traditional varieties based on in situ and ex situ information (distribution, characterisation and evaluation data).
- Promote the use and conservation of landraces and traditional varieties
- Promote awareness of the Scottish Landrace Protection Scheme.
- Communicate with other interested parties involved with landraces and traditional varieties

Landraces

It was recognised that there were 5 landraces being grown in Scotland (bere barley, small oat, Hebridean rye, Shetland cabbage and 'Scots' timothy). It was agreed that there was a need

1. to find out, whether other landraces exist, or whether there are more growers of existing landraces in Scotland.
2. to collect seed of existing Scottish landraces for ex situ storage through the Scottish Landrace Protection Scheme.

Traditional Varieties

There were a number of traditional varieties of wheat, oat and other crops which were still being grown, but more information was needed on their distribution and use.

It was agreed that information would be circulated through the SAC area offices and the Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate (RPID) of Scottish Government, to raise awareness of landraces and traditional varieties. As both organisations had local knowledge, they would be asked to provide information on where landraces were grown and to encourage growers to donate seed. Information would be prepared for circulation to SAC, RPID and other parties with an interest on landraces.

SAC Crop and Soil Research Group in Edinburgh in collaboration with SASA had started a research project to study the genetic diversity of three Scottish landraces: small/Shetland oat, Hebridean rye and Shetland cabbage; further information on these landraces and where they were grown would be timely.

Both in situ and ex situ characterisation and evaluation information would help to understand the variation and structure of the various populations which would assist the development of future conservation, regeneration and crop improvement strategies.

Ex situ collections

It was agreed to create a Scottish Inventory of Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture for both in situ and ex situ material.

Policy

The Working Group requested Scottish Government to include Scottish Landraces and Traditional Varieties in their biodiversity policy.

Membership of the Working Group

It was agreed to seek further members to broaden the expertise within the Working Group.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Working Group would be held on 10th June 2008.