EUROPEAN FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES PROGRAMME

WHY DO FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES MATTER?

Forests provide a vast array of products, socioeconomic benefits and environmental services. Sustainable forest management aims at managing forests in such a way that the capacity of forests to provide these benefits for human well-being does not diminish over time. Thus conservation and appropriate use of forest genetic resources is an important element of sustainable forest management.

Genetic diversity ensures that forest trees can survive, adapt and evolve under changing environmental conditions. Genetic diversity is also needed to maintain the vitality of forests and to cope with pests and diseases. In addition, forest genetic diversity has a crucial role in maintaining forest biological diversity at species and ecosystem levels. However, forest genetic resources are facing several threats such as habitat destruction, fragmentation, poor silvicultural practices and inappropriate use of forest reproductive material. Special attention should be given to conservation and appropriate use of forest genetic resources while taking action to implement sustainable forest management in practice.

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Bioversity International

EUFORGEN is coordinated by Bioversity International

Objectives for Phase III

- Promote practical implementation of gene conservation and appropriate use of genetic resources as an integral part of sustainable forest management;
- Facilitate further development of methods to conserve genetic diversity of European forests;
- Collate and disseminate reliable information on forest genetic resources in Europe.

International context

In addition to its member countries, EUFORGEN collaborates closely with various organizations participating in the MCPFE process such as the European Forest Institute (EFI) and the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO). Furthermore, in collaboration with Bioversity's global project on forest biodiversity, EUFORGEN also interacts with several other organizations and regional programmes on forest genetic resources outside Europe.

The European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN) is a collaborative effort to promote conservation and sustainable use of forest genetic resources in Europe. The Programme was established in October 1994 to implement Strasbourg Resolution S2 (Conservation of forest genetic resources) endorsed by the first Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) in France in 1990.

During the first two phases (1995–1999 and 2000–2004), EUFORGEN focused on developing conservation strategies and technical guidelines for genetic conservation of European forest trees. Phase III (2005–2009) of the Programme will focus on promoting appropriate use of forest genetic resources as an integral part of sustainable forest management. This also contributes to the implementation of Vienna Resolution 4 (Conserving and enhancing forest biological diversity in Europe), adopted by the fourth MCPFE Conference in Austria in 2003. Currently more than 30 countries are supporting and participating in the EUFORGEN activities.

Structure and modus operandi

EUFORGEN is financed by its member countries and coordinated by Bioversity International in technical collaboration with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The overseeing body of the Programme, the EUFORGEN Steering Committee, is composed of National Coordinators nominated by all member countries.

The EUFORGEN Secretariat manages the implementation of the Programme activities based on the decisions made by the Steering Committee. The financial contributions of the member countries are used for the overall coordination of activities, Network meetings and operations, publications and dissemination of information. Network members provide inputs in-kind by participating in the Network meetings and carrying out jointly-agreed tasks between the meetings.

Networks

EUFORGEN operates through various Networks that bring together scientists, policy makers and managers to exchange information, discuss needs and develop strategies and methods for better management of forest genetic resources in Europe. During Phase III, EUFORGEN has one thematic Network and three species-oriented Networks:

- Forest Management Network

- Conifers Network
- Scattered Broadleaves Network
- Stand-forming Broadleaves Network

These Networks collaborate with each other through the Information Working Group which sets up specific task forces on cross-cutting issues, in particular on information management.

The outputs

EUFORGEN has produced several concrete outputs, such as:

- Technical guidelines for genetic conservation and use of forest trees;
- Publications and public awareness material;
- Long-term forest genetic resources conservation strategies;
- Revised distribution maps of forest trees in Europe;
- Descriptors and databases;
- Collections of genetic material.

EUFORGEN has facilitated the strengthening of national efforts on forest genetic resources in Europe and contributed to the development of new programmes and policies of the European Union. Furthermore, EUFORGEN has provided a useful platform for developing bilateral and multilateral cooperation and research projects on forest genetic resources in Europe.