

FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

The International Workshop on Sustainable Forest Genetic Resources Programs in the Newly Independent States of the Former Soviet Union was held from September 23 to 27, 1996, in the national park Belovezhskaya Pushcha, Belarus. The workshop was organized by the International Institute of Plant Genetic Resources (IPGRI), in close collaboration with the Forest Institute of the Belorussian Academy of Sciences.

Forest genetic resources of the former Soviet Union are of global importance because there are about 28 % of all the world forests. More than 570 species of trees and over 1,050 species of shrubs grow in these forests. Many important species of the genera *Larix*, *Pinus*, *Picea*, *Quercus*, and others, grow only on the territory of the former Soviet Union.

Thirty-three scientists and specialists from majority of the former republics of the Soviet Union and West and Central European countries participated in the workshop.

Their presentations were aimed at present state of investigation and conservation of forest genetic resources in different regions of the former Soviet Union. The content of these reports elucidated such problems as:

- characterization of each region (country) with regard to forest cover, tree species composition and structure of forest stands;
- current status of *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation activities;
- status of research activities aimed at forest genetic resources;
- existing capacities and operational structures responsible for the conservation, management and use of forest genetic resources in each region;
- difficulties and constraints;
- needs, opportunities and perspectives in each region (country);
- needs and priorities for international cooperation.

On the first day, the participants were addressed by J. Turok and Th. Gass (IPGRI) who set down objectives and aims of the Workshop. The first part of the symposium was aimed at reports characterizing the state-of-art of the conservation of forest genetic resources in individual regions of the Russian Federation, *e.g.*, Siberia (Milyutin, Danchenko, Vorobjeva), the Urals (Yanbaev), north-eastern part of Russia (Kozubov), northwestern part of Russia (Ilyinov, Shcherbakov), central Russia (Prokazin and Kamalova), northern Caucasus (Kartlev and Olisaev). Further reports were aimed at the state of the forest genetic resources conservation in Moldova (Postolache), Ukraine (Patlaj, Shvadchak, Yatsyk, and Khromov), Belarus (Goncharenko, A. E. Padutov, Silin, and V. E. Padutov), Kazakhstan (Mosin and Korobko), Estonia (Tamm), Lithuania (Gabrilavičius), Uzbekistan (Aleksandrovsky), and Abkhazia, Georgia (Leiba). A. I. Iroshnikov presented a review of forest genetic resources in the former Soviet Union.

Presented information showed different situations in different regions (countries). Great work has been done in the western republics (Ukraine, Belarus, Estonia, Lithuania), as well as in the Urals. For example, the study of forest genetic resources in the Ukraine includes 517 provenances of 44 species conserved on an area of over 27,000 ha. "Plus" stands

of 9 species were selected in the total area of over 3,100 ha. Clonal seed orchards of 18 species were established in the area of about 1,400 ha.

Genetic resources of the most valuable indigenous tree species of the Eastern Siberia and especially of the Far East have been investigated to a lesser extent, because of the lack of specialists in these regions.

G. G. Goncharenko (Gomel, Belarus) presented the results of population genetics, evolution and taxonomy investigations in Eurasian conifers and E. N. Muratova (Krasnoyarsk, Russia) the karyological investigations of Siberian conifers. H.-J. Muhs (Germany), L. Paule (Slovakia), Cs. Mátyás (Hungary) presented international experiences in gene pool conservation practices, legislation, etc.

The participants of the workshop recognized that coordination of activities on forest genetic resources should be strengthened. It was agreed that the basic building block be well coordinated national programmes with defined objectives and structure. *It is recommended that each country will nominate a coordinating institute or set up a coordinating committee in charge of the national programme. Such committees should ideally include representatives of all relevant ministries and organizations.* In view of the Convention on Biodiversity and other international agreements (such as the Strasbourg Ministerial Resolution on Conservation of Forest Genetic Resources), it is recommended that the coordinating committees develop close contacts with all related fields dealing with biological diversity and conservation. National programmes should be developed in countries that have not yet done so.

The participants recommended to take action to raise awareness about the need to conserve forest genetic resources. This should be done at a national level with policy makers, forestry authorities and the general public. The international community should support these efforts wherever possible. International organizations (IPGRI, FAO, and others) should contribute to raise awareness about the importance of forest genetic resources conservation in the former USSR.

Training has been considered an essential element in support of national conservation programmes. Main target groups are young scientists and forest officers that can be expected to take responsibility for forest gene conservation in the medium term. Special courses and curricula about forest genetic resources should be included in study programmes for forestry faculties and forestry schools.

Support should be given to the national programmes and coordinating institutes or committees through the provision of basic communication facilities and infrastructure.

The workshop was closed by the excursion on the territory of the national park Belovezhskaya Pushcha aimed at some *in situ* conservation practices. Impressive part of this excursion was observation of the herd of European bisons, the greatest European population. Thanks to the financial support to the organization of this symposium made by the IPGRI it was possible to organize this excellent workshop, actually the first event in this field after the division of the former USSR.

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