

Russia / Russland

1. Who is saving the diversity of cultivated plants and/or fighting for peasant rights of saving seeds in your country? Who is involved in GMO-free seed production? Are there new groups or networks that are setting up?

In the Russian Federation the only organization having the duty to collect, store, evaluate and distribute PGR of crops is Vavilov Institute of Plant Industry (VIR). VIR start to do these activities from 1894. Several companies, including western and research institutes like Centre of Bioengineering are involved in the testing GM crops in special experimental fields. There is no CM crops seed production in the country. It is appear several small voluntary groups of the people who are involved in the organic agriculture. This movement is only start, but in small plots of the countryside near big cities (we call these plots "dacha") people cultivated for themselves some potato, vegetables and fruits using natural fertilizers.

2. Please give some examples for using cultivated biodiversity. How do you see the importance of peasant, local or traditional varieties for agriculture and vegetable gardening?

In dacha it is very common to use old local varieties which are very adapt to the ecological conditions of the region. The products from these plots some times appeared in the local markets. Also people exchange the local varieties for testing the quality and nutrition values. Potato, carrot, cucumber, tomato, apples, pears ets., some kind of flowers, ornamental and medicinal plants are very useful for these people.

3. Which are the main (legal) obstacles that constrain you? How can you avoid them?

The main obstacle which constrain people to do there voluntary work in the dacha is very slow process of land privatization and these people strongly depend from the decision of local administration – bureaucrat.

4. Which are the public gene banks in your country? What is the cooperation with them like? Do the gene banks have public access? How do they assure GMO-free quality?

As already mentioned the only Gene Bank in Russia is VIR. The collection of the Institute is about 320,000 accessions. The collection belong to the government and served as source of new plant material for scientific and breeding purposes for the Russia, CIS, Europe and for the whole World. Each year from the Institute we distribute approximately 5-6 thousands accessions all kind of users.

5.What are the perspectives of public gene banks for the future in your country?

The main problem for our activities is financial support for collecting missions, preservation and evaluation of the PGR. But this problem is common for all Gene Banks, which belong to the governments and depends from the budgetary money.

6.Is there any other important information that you want to share?

For Europe it is very important that Gene Banks will have a strong links and cooperation, share responsibilities for saving and preserving agrobiodiversity. ECPGR under the leadership of Bioversity International proposed to organize European Integrated Gene Bank System (AEGIS). From our point of view this initiative, which will be finalized to the end 2008 is a very important step for preserving our common thresher – PGR.

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