Why this strategy?

Genetic resources are part of the world's vast biodiversity and the raw materials on which humankind relies for food, nutrition and livelihood security, and to support the bioeconomy.

The vast range of traits expressed in genetic resources, and their adaptive capacity, are essential for enhancing the resilience of agricultural production systems and forests, as well as for supporting advancements towards innovative, efficient agro-food systems and other bio-based value chains. However, current global trends in erosion of genetic resources are not only increasing the vulnerability of agriculture and forestry to the impacts of climate change, but also reducing options for the future.

The three networks that represent plant, forest and animal genetic resources communities:

- European Cooperative Programme for Plant Genetic Resources (ECPGR) – www.ecpgr.cgiar.org
- European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN) – www.euforgen.org
- European Regional Focal Point for Animal Genetic Resources (ERFP) – www.animalgeneticresources.net

download the Strategy

GENETIC RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR EUROPE

www.genresbridge.eu/GRS4E

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 817580

For more information, please visit the project website:
www.genresbridge.eu

or contact:
genresbridge@efi.int

EFI The GenRes Bridge project is coordinated by the European Forest Institute

GenRes Bridge

Genetic resources for a food-secure and forested Europe

ECP/GR EUFORGEN ERFP

GENETIC RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR EUROPE

The strategy

In an effort to stem the loss of genetic resources by affording greater visilibity to their value and the need for concerted efforts to conserve and sustainably utilize them, three European organizations came together with other stakeholders to draw up a Genetic Resources Strategy for Europe, accompanied by new or updated domain-specific strategies – the European Cooperative Programme for Plant Genetic Resources (ECPGR), the European Regional Focal Point for Animal Genetic Resources (ERFP), and the European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN).

The Genetic Resources Strategy for Europe provides a policy framework and Action Plan for European countries to adopt and implement to secure genetic resources and promote their sustainable use to strengthen agriculture and forestry in Europe and further afield.

The Strategy identifies several recommendations under three broad headings:

- **Strengthening conservation and sustainable use**
- **Enabling transformative change**
- **Reinforcing international cooperation**

Conservation

Conservation *in situ* (on-farm or in the wild), is essential for plant and animal populations to continue evolving to changing environmental conditions. Complementary conservation *ex situ* in genebanks provides access to genetic resources for sustainable use and acts as a back-up in case of population losses *in situ*.

The Strategy identifies areas in which the coordination of conservation actions can be improved, and underlines the need to urgently escalate complementary conservation efforts. It also stresses the need to intensify the characterization of genetic resources and ensure that breeders and other users have access to this improved information to make use of genetic resources in the bioeconomy.

Improved information collection and management will also enable better monitoring of genetic resources conservation and use. One aim of the Strategy is to ensure that the information systems managed by each of the domains converge on standardized methods while at the same time raising the capacity of all European countries to supply high quality data.

Transformative change

Transformative change in genetic resources conservation and use is needed to cope with the climate emergency and European commitments to sustainable agriculture and forestry. The Strategy seeks to raise awareness of the importance of genetic resources for the future of Europe's people and economies. It also underscores the need to ensure that European policies in response to global initiatives on conservation specifically include genetic resources and for better coherency between existing policies that impact genetic resources conservation and use.

Genetic resources will be essential to move towards greener economies, and the Strategy identifies the need to ensure that countries have the capacity to collaborate and communicate about genetic resources. At the same time, it points out the need to look beyond the borders of the European Union and Europe – for example, to the Caucasus, the Fertile Crescent and North Africa – helping them to conserve genetic resources that may be relevant to Europe's future.

International cooperation

International cooperation beyond neighbouring countries has been an essential factor in the growth of agriculture and forestry in Europe to date. The Strategy highlights the increased cooperation that is needed to stem genetic erosion and to facilitate efficient conservation and use of genetic resources – particularly due to the interdependency of countries and regions these resources. It calls on Europe to play an active part in strengthening genetic resources expertise in neighbouring regions, and notes that greater international cooperation will be needed for Europe to meet the Sustainable Development Goals and transition to sustainable agriculture and forestry.

The need to improve conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources is urgent. The European networks – ECPGR, ERFP and EUFORGEN – have been and remain central to these efforts in Europe and neighbouring regions. Financial support for these networks and for national programmes is essential. With secure support in place, the Genetic Resources Strategy for Europe and accompanying domain-specific strategies will forge much-needed links between wider biodiversity issues and those that face agriculture and forestry.