

Eastern Africa Plant Genetic Resources Network

Keeping traditional varieties for current and future use

As part of measures to address the challenge of climate change on world's food production and agriculture, scientists recommend to search for genes in wild and traditional varieties of common food crops that could help plants to adapt to variable weather conditions, resist pest and disease, tolerate drought and produce sustainable yield. For this to happen, crop diversity must be properly conserved and easily accessed.

ASARECA, in collaboration with national partners, has since captured over 15,720 (an increase of 13% from the baseline) accessions of crop plant and wild relatives of cultivated species for conservation and utilization in eight Eastern African countries over the last couple of years.

A total over 140,000 accessions of crop plants have been collected and conserved in the various national genebanks in the sub-region. Some of the accessions were adequately characterized (about 27,000 accessions) and evaluated (1,416 accessions) for various agronomic traits, nutritional qualities, yield potential and drought tolerance.



● Building capacity for conservation

Three PhD candidates are undertaking their post-graduate studies in various national universities. A total of 12 plant genetic resources scientists have done their MSc degrees in and outside the region. Twelve staff members of the national programmes have attended specialized training and information and documentation training courses in the Nordic Genebank in Sweden.

Hands-on training for nine technicians related to principles and practices of conservation and management in genebanks were held during the project period. Furthermore, two short-term training courses on in situ conservation were organized for staff drawn from all EAPGREN partner programmes and NGOs to help build capacity.

● Infrastructure

The project acquired hardware and software for developing the regional plant genetic resources information and documentation hub at Entebbe, Uganda. Similar facilities were installed at the national genebanks of Burundi, Eritrea, Sudan and Uganda. A temporary information portal was constructed and is being maintained by NordGen until a fully operational system is organized in Entebbe.

Over the years the national PGR initiatives have been supported and strengthened by providing them with the relevant genebanking facilities and equipment including deep freezers, drying rooms, conservation facilities, computers, vehicles,

Two run-down genebanks were renovated while two new genebanks have become operational and reinforced through the project and national resources by the project



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