

Institutional and legal framework for Ex-situ conservation

ALBANIA

The Albanian government has defined, in the Albanian National Strategy for Conservation and Use of FAnGR, the creation of the National Cryoconservation Bank for local breeds at risk, as a priority. In the Albanian conditions where, experience, capacity, knowledge and the awareness level of the decision makers and other stakeholders is insufficient, the National Action Plan provides for the realization of this priority a process, which is to be developed in several stages. The main stages of this process are defined; (i) preparation of the legal and regulatory framework; (ii) investment for the capacity building in laboratory infrastructure and scientific-technical staff; (iii) methodology development for the establishment and functioning of the genetic Cryobank, in accordance with the Albanian conditions and the guideline prepared by FAO; (iv) awareness development: (v) encouragement and development of regional and international cooperation as a possibility to generate the necessary funds and the exchange of experience in the framework of projects and joint programs.

During and after the '80 of the last century, Albania has worked intensively on the extension of the artificial insemination technique in cattle. One of the most important output of this work was the establishment of a National Laboratory for the conservation, in liquid nitrogen of genetic materials and bulls semen. This Laboratory is the only public facility in which are stored samples of bull semen, that belong to the most frequent bull races in Albania such as, Laramane e Zeze, Holshtejn Frizon, Xhersej. Currently this Laboratory is defined as the core on which bases will be established the National Genetic Bank for Ex-situ conservation of local breeds at risk of extinction.

The National Action Plan for the *Ex-situ* conservation defines, as the first action to undertake, the establishment of the genetic Cryobank for the conservation of somatic cells. Currently, breeds/local farm animal populations are selected for the sample collection –leather from ear– that will conserved in liquid nitrogen. Given the lack of necessary infrastructure and capacities for ovocytes and embryo cryo conservation and, on the other hand, the limited possibilities for In-situ preservation of breeds/local populations at risk of extinction, the establishment of the Genetic Bank for somatic cells conservation aims to create a genetic reserve, that will enable, in the long term, the recovery of losses in the native genetic stock.

The Cryobank will store somatic cells samples of all breeds/ecotypes/populations of Albanian, small ruminants, local pigs, buffaloes, rabbits, birds and local cattle. It is planned to create a fund for each breed/ecotype/local population of no less than 90 samples (70 female and 20 male).

In addition to the Cryobank, the National Action Plan foresees the establishment of the Genetic Bank *Ex-situ in vivo* conservation of breeds/ecotypes/populations at risk of extinction. Considered as a public asset, this Bank will preserve, sheep and goats of local populations at risk of extinction, in herd of about 100 animals (90 females and 10 males). Actually, there are two herds, with about 60 animals each, with Shkodrane” and “Lara e Polisit” breeds of local goats, that are at risk of extinction. This year it is expected to be created even a small heard with 5 cows and 1 bull of the local breed “Ilyric Dwarf cattle” named “Prespa Cow”.

It is planned, that by the end of 2013, the Cryobank shall have stored somatic cells of all breeds/ecotype/ population of Albanian local animals and poultries, despite their level of being at risk of extinction. It is foreseen, that by the end of 2015, in the *Ex-situ in vivo* Bank, will breeding, at level of the collection herds, all breeds/ecotype/local populations, declared as being at risk of extinction.

The Law No 9426 of 28.01.2008 “On Livestock Breeding” serves as the legal base for the above actions. In regard to animal genetic resources, the purposes of this law are its protection, improvement and conservation through conservation programs (*in-situ*, *ex-situ in vivo*, *ex-situ* conservation). The Act regulates the following matters: (i) livestock conditions and practices for a good breeding, methods and technologies for animal breeding and feeding; (ii) criteria for preparation and approval of breed programmes; (iii) establishment and administration of gene banks etc... According to Article 63 of this Law, the trade of embryos can take place only with an institution or organization specialized in embryos collection, preparation, storage, transplantation and trade following the provisions of the “On the Veterinary Service Act”.

The Albanian legislation does not cover issues related to the right of ownership and use of the materials that are stored in the Cryobank. Till today it is treated and considered as a public asset. The current Albanian legislation classifies, the establishment and the administration of the Cryobank and/or *Ex-situ in vivo* Conservation Bank, as a duty and the right of the public institutions, only. Albania lacks the necessary legal framework to regulate the relations between stakeholders and other actors, it also lacks the specific legal framework on which bases are to be developed the transboundary issues.

In Albania, the work on drafting rules, regulation and methodologies by which will be established and management the genetic Cryobank and the genetic Bank for *Ex-situ in vivo* conservation is in its infancy. It misses specific sanitary arrangement/regulations for the different activities of the Cryo conservation Bank. For the *Ex-situ in vivo* National Bank, that currently has established its first structures, were implemented the provisions provided by the Law “On the Veterinary Service Act”. Currently the Minister of Agriculture has the right to decide which type of materials and breeds/ecotype/local animals populations are to be preserved in the Cryobank or

in the *Ex-situ in vivo* conservation Bank. The Minister is based on the recommendations of the National Consultative Council for FAnGR, chaired by the National Coordinator.

The legal and regulatory framework that should contain the entirety of the storage conditions and documentations, like as storage facilities and rules, data management and documentations, gene bank security, special sanitary arrangement and legal issues related to genetic material and data, ownership and IP, collecting new materials and access to gene Bank is in working progress as part of the National Action Plan, update following the Global Plan of Action, Interlaken Conference, September 2009.