

**COUNTRY REPORT
FOR 2009-2010****Ireland****Reported by****Mark Maguire, National Co-Ordinator****STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 1: CHARACTERIZATION, INVENTORY AND
MONITORING OF TRENDS AND ASSOCIATED RISKS****Actions undertaken during the past year**

Population data monitored. Data to be entered onto the national EFABIS website. Funding provided through the National Advisory Committee for molecular characterisation work using SNP technology on native breeds namely, Galway Sheep and Kerry Cattle. Funding also provided for a global database for the Irish Draught Horse breed to allow Irish Draught breeders worldwide to check their breeding decisions in relation to inbreeding and relatedness. Work continuing on the project characterising Dexter cattle in Ireland and abroad.

Actions planned for the next year

Continue to record and update information on EFABIS system. Monitor population levels for Irelands rare breeds. Collaborate with breed societies and research institutions to ensure that inbreeding is minimised and that Irelands native rare breeds make genetic progress. Ensure that funding is obtained for the work of the National Advisory Committee and for the conservation of genetic resources from the national budget.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 2: SUSTAINABLE USE AND DEVELOPMENT**Actions undertaken during the past year**

Keepers of rare native breeds received payments, previously under the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS) and now under the new Agri-Environmental Options Scheme (AEOS), to assist with *insitu* conservation and use of Rare Native breeds. Additional payment is made to the keepers of Kerry Cattle Breed to help with the conservation and sustainable use of that breed. Funding provided to bee breeding groups for the sustainable use and development of native honey bee strains in Ireland.

Actions planned for the next year

Continue to support and advise breed organisations with regard to sustainable use and development of rare and native breeds and also for the development of new and innovative value added products from rare and native breeds.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 3: CONSERVATION

Actions undertaken during the past year

A working group was formed to provide guidance in relation to the creation of an *ex-situ* national animal genetic resources genebank. A report was prepared and presented by the genebank working group to the National Advisory Committee for Genetic Resources and funding was obtained to purchase the initial hardware required for the genebank and to send one person on the training course organised by Wageningen University at Lelystad.

Actions planned for the next year

It is planned to install the hardware at the chosen locations for the national genebank and also at the location of the duplicate collection. A detailed plan and structure will also be created by the genebank working group in relation to issues such as animal health, access, ownership, decision making and funding. A proposal to begin collecting of genetic material from Ireland's rare breeds for the national genebank will be presented to the National Advisory Committee. The holders of existing collections will be approached seeking expressions of interest in providing material to the national genebank. Facilitate the installation of cryo-web software.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 4: POLICIES, INSTITUTIONS AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Actions undertaken during the past year

In terms of national policy, as mentioned above, a new agri-environmental scheme was launched in Ireland in 2010. This continues the financial support of previous agri-environmental programmes for Ireland's rare and native breeds. The scheme is called the Agri Environmental Options Scheme and replaces the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme. Payments of €200 per livestock unit are available to keepers of rare and native breeds participating in the scheme.

A lesson plan was developed and distributed to all Irish Second Level Schools, to educate students on the importance of genetic resources for food and agriculture and outlining methods of conservation and preservation.

Actions planned for the next year

Continue to ensure that rare and native breeds are included in policy decisions across government departments and schemes, particularly in the context of reduced government spending.

Organise a one day seminar where the stakeholders involved in the conservation and use of national genetic resources can discuss and debate the latest scientific findings and policy issues.

Contribute to the review of the National Biodiversity Plan in Ireland.