

## ERFP Country report 2010 – 2011

**COUNTRY:** Ireland

**reported by:** Mark Maguire

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### **Strategic Priority Area 1:**

#### **Characterization, Inventory and Monitoring of Trends and Associated Risks**

Work has continued on the collection and collation of population data supplied by the native and rare breed societies for Ireland's 3 native equine breeds, 3 native cattle breeds and 1 rare sheep breed. The data is then loaded by the National Co-ordinator onto the national node of the EFABIS database. Population numbers are currently increasing for all of the rare and native breeds. This will continue to be monitored, particularly in this era of economic uncertainty.

A current project is looking at the phenotypic diversity of the Irish Draught breed worldwide, to see if the characteristics of the breed have changed over time and to decide on how to conserve the traditional characteristics of the breed. In addition an online database has been made available to assist Irish Draught breeders worldwide in making their breeding decisions and the possible implications with regard to inbreeding which may arise.

A separate study is looking at the changes in the genomic diversity of the Kerry Cattle breed over the past 30 years. This will provide a valuable insight into the current status of the breed with regard to inbreeding and the change, if any, since the early 1980's.

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### **Strategic Priority Area 2:**

#### **Sustainable Use and Development**

A project involving a local county council on public lands close to Dublin City, has been undertaken and is funded by the National Advisory Committee for Genetic Resources. The project is looking at the suitability of rare and native breeds for grazing areas in a river estuary, which is used by many species of wild birds for breeding. The Kerry, Dexter and Irish Moiled cattle breeds are being used in this project, as it has been found that the native breeds are more suitable for grazing rough forage, which is in abundance in this area. A walkway and information signs for the public have been put in place. As the lands are public, they have a footfall of almost 100,000 visitors per annum, therefore this is an excellent opportunity to develop the profile of the Ireland's rare and native breeds and to inform the general public about Ireland's animal genetic resources.

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### **Strategic Priority Area 3:**

#### **Conservation**

(please give details for the most relevant institutions for national genebanks / cryopreservation in the table in Annex 1)

Work has continued on the development of a national animal genetic resources genebank for Ireland. Funding received in 2010 from the National Advisory Committee for Genetic Resources was used to purchase the necessary hardware for storing animal genetic material. In 2011 the focus is on developing the necessary frameworks and legal documentation for the operation of the national genebank. Expressions of interest have been received from private AI companies with regard to hosting and maintaining the national genebank.

In addition, the Cryoweb software was been installed in Ireland in November 2010, for use by the national genebank. The software will be instrumental in recording and databasing the material which will be stored in the national genebank.

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**Strategic Priority Area 4:**  
**Policies, Institutions and Capacity-building**

The National Advisory Committee met in March 2011 and awarded a total budget of €150, 000 to projects concerned with animal and plant genetic resources. The National Advisory Committee also provides guidance in relation to national genetic resource policy issues and research.

In addition a new National Biodiversity Plan is being drawn up for Ireland and the conservation and protection of Ireland's native and rare farm animal genetic resources are an important element of the plan.

Rare and native farm animal breeds continue to be supported under the Agri-Environmental Options Scheme operated by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, where €200 per livestock unit, is paid to keepers of Ireland's rare and native breeds. An additional scheme is offered to keepers of Kerry Cattle, where a payment is made to the breeder for each live calf which is registered with the Kerry Cattle Society.

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**Annex 1: List of relevant national institutions for national Genebanks / Cryopreservation Experts**

institution, address, e-mail, homepage, phone / fax	contact person / expert incl. e-mail	animal species	type of genetic material	remarks
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Pavilion A, Grattan Business Park, Portlaoise, Co.Laois.	Mark Maguire mark.maguire@agriculture.gov.ie	n/a	n/a	The genebank is in the establishment phase and no material has been collected or stored, as yet. The initial aim is to store material from Irelands rare and native cattle, sheep and horse breeds.

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