



AZRRI – Agency for Rural Development of Istria

Candidate Host of the ERFP Secretariat

Hamburg, 2026



AZRRI – From Istria to Europe

A Multidisciplinary Approach to the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Animal Genetic Resources



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AZRRI - Agency for Rural Development of Istria

AZRRI – Who We Are

- Established in **2003** by the **Region of Istria**
- Publicly owned regional development agency based in Pazin, Croatia
- 32 employees** with multidisciplinary expertise in agronomy, veterinary science, food technology, economics and rural development
- Over **20 years of experience** in the development and implementation of rural, agricultural and livestock programmes
- Long-term commitment to the **conservation and sustainable use of Istrian local breeds**
- Direct cooperation with breeders, breeding organisations, scientific institutions, public authorities and the agri-food sector
- Our strength: multidisciplinary expertise translated into practical action.**



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OUR MISSION

Conservation is not only about preserving a breed.
It is about maintaining the system that allows the breed to thrive.

For AZRRI, conserving animal genetic resources means connecting:

GENETIC DIVERSITY

BREEDERS & FARMING SYSTEMS

LANDSCAPE & BIODIVERSITY

LOCAL PRODUCTS & ECONOMY

GASTRONOMY & TOURISM

RURAL COMMUNITIES & CULTURAL HERITAGE

Sustainable breeds depend on viable farms and thriving rural communities.

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FOUR ISTRIAN LOCAL BREEDS

One Conservation Strategy



ISTRIAN CATTLEISTRIAN SHEEPISTRIAN GOATISTRIAN DONKEY

CONSERVATION THROUGH UTILIZATION

Our approach combines:

IN SITU CONSERVATION

+

EX SITU CONSERVATION

+

BREEDING MANAGEMENT

+

ECONOMIC VALORISATION

+

ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

One objective: long-term sustainable populations.

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Why Conservation Matters Beyond Genetics

- Local breeds are an integral part of the ecological and socio-economic functioning of rural Istria.
- Their role involves:
 - Maintaining open grasslands and pastures
 - Supporting biodiversity and habitat conservation
 - Limiting vegetation succession and landscape abandonment
 - Reducing combustible biomass and contributing to wildfire risk management
 - Maintaining traditional rural landscapes
 - Supporting climate-resilient, locally adapted livestock systems
 - Preserving rural knowledge, cultural heritage and identity
- Animal genetic resources are biological resources, but also territorial resources.**



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AZRRI’s Integrated Conservation Model

1 | GENETICS & BREEDING

Gene Bank
Pedigree & genomic data
Breeding programmes
Mating plans

2 | BREEDERS & FIELD WORK

Direct breeder support
Herd development
Education
Zootechnical practices

3 | SCIENCE & INSTITUTIONS

Research
Universities
Public authorities
National & European cooperation

4 | ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

Products
Value chains
Gastronomy
Tourism

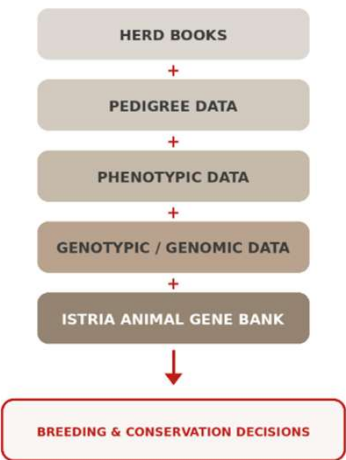
5 | COMMUNICATION & SOCIETY

Public awareness
Media
Education
EU projects
Visibility

From genetic conservation to sustainable rural development.

From Genetic Data to Breeding Decisions Istrian Centre for Genetic Resources – COGRI

AZRRI has developed an integrated system connecting:



The system supports:

- monitoring genetic diversity
- mating planning
- management of genetic relationships
- preservation of valuable lines
- selection of breeding animals
- long-term population management

The Istrian Centre for Genetic Resources is a unique platform that integrates all relevant genetic and breeding data on Croatia’s native breeds from Istria: Istrian cattle, Istrian donkey, Istrian sheep and Istrian goat.

For AZRRI, a Gene Bank is not an archive.
It is an operational conservation tool.

Conservation Happens in the Field Working Directly with Breeders

AZRRI supports conservation through practical measures:

- acquisition and preservation of valuable breeding animals
- selection and rotation of breeding males
- mating plans based on pedigree and genetic information
- herd development and population consolidation
- field measurements and zootechnical testing
- breeder education and advisory support
- preventive veterinary and welfare practices
- support to breeding organisations

Data become meaningful only when they support decisions in real herds.



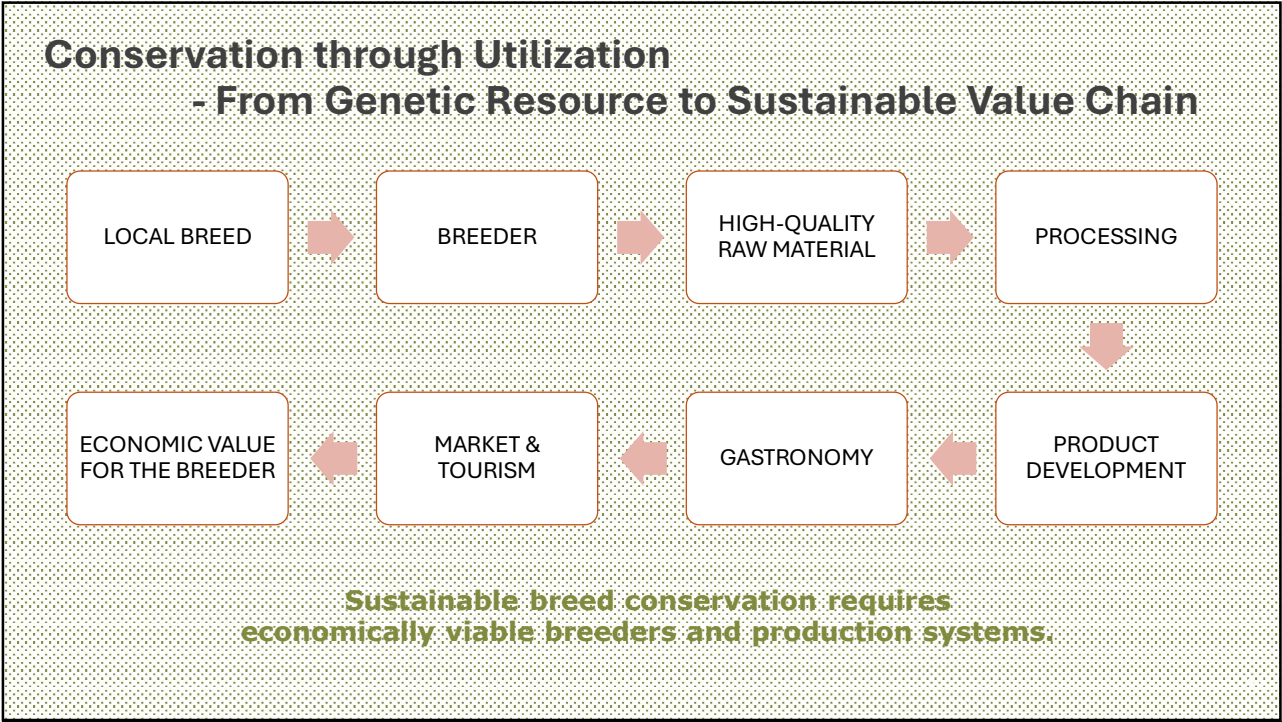
Science + Institutions + Breeders: Building Conservation Together

AZRRI works within a broad network connecting:

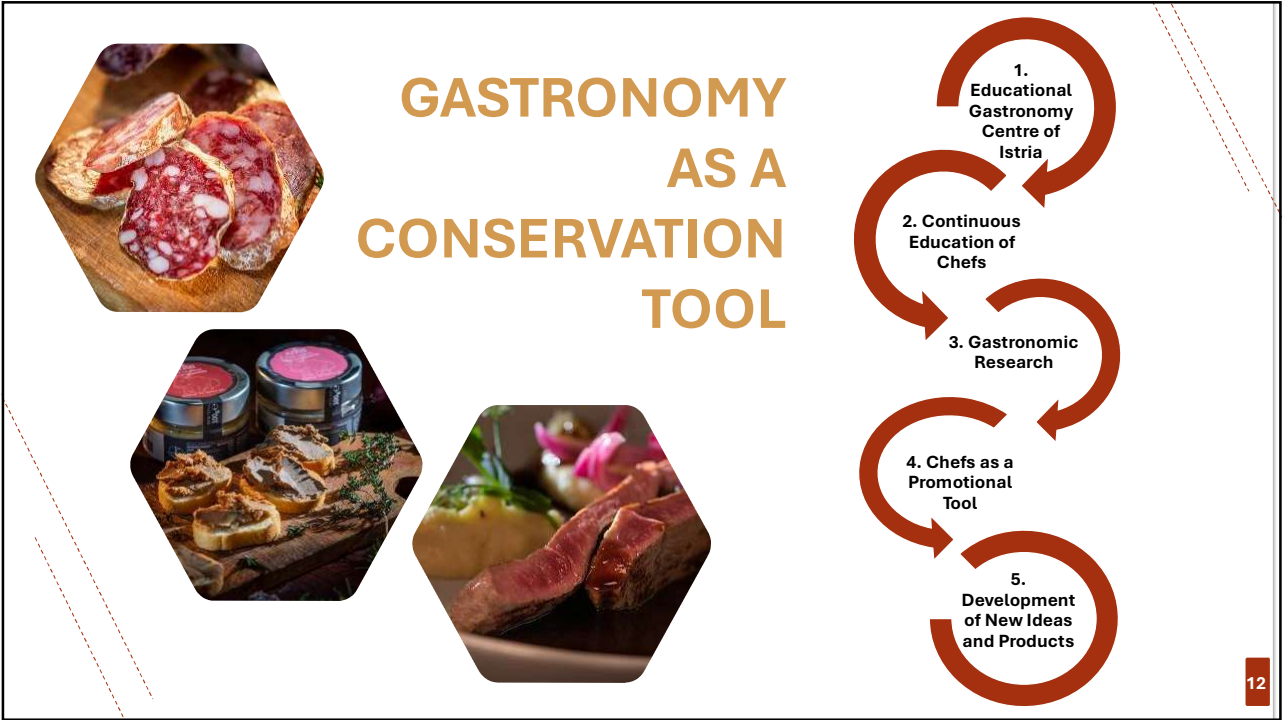
Collaboration includes the **Ministry of Agriculture, HAPIH (Croatian Agency for Agriculture and Food), the Faculty of Agriculture and the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Zagreb, international institutions, as well as ERFP and EAAP.**

Our role is often to connect actors that approach conservation from different perspectives.





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over 280 workshops



over 3,000 participants



58 chef mentors

EDUCATIONAL GASTRONOMY CENTRE OF ISTRIA

Activities include:

- gastronomic research
- development of new products and recipes
- professional chef education
- valorisation of local agri-food products
- no-waste approaches
- communication with media and the wider public

We create value for local products in order to create value for the breeds behind them.

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Innovation in Conservation - New Tools for New Challenges

Conservation needs science – but it also needs creativity.

Our Initiatives:

01

“Our Istrian Goat” Fund
A symbolic adoption model providing direct financial support to breeders and supporting population growth.

02

CAPI – Istrian Local Breeds Routes
Connecting breeders, local breeds, rural landscapes, gastronomy and tourism through authentic visitor experiences.



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EUROPEAN COOPERATION IS PART OF OUR DNA

20+

years of international project experience

€30+ million

total partnership value

30

EU & national projects

€4+ million

managed by AZRRI

Experience within:

INTERREG | HORIZON | ERASMUS | Rural Development Programmes

Proven capacity for international coordination, administration and implementation.

Can AZRRI manage an international Secretariat?

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AZRRI'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE ERFP SECRETARIAT - FROM ISTRIA TO ERFP

What our experience has taught us

Successful conservation requires:

KNOW-HOW

to create value chain

FIELD EXPERIENCE

to understand breeders

COORDINATION

to connect institutions and countries

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

to keep breeds in production systems

COMMUNICATION

to make society understand why AnGR matter

This is the experience AZRRI wants to bring to ERFP.

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THE AZRRI TEAM BEHIND THE SECRETARIAT

A multidisciplinary team supported by the wider institutional capacities of AZRRI

- Edmondo Šuran
- Gordan Šubara
- Spomenka Maurović
- Katja Santro

Supported by AZRRI’s expertise in administration, finance, communication, EU projects, rural development and animal genetic resources.



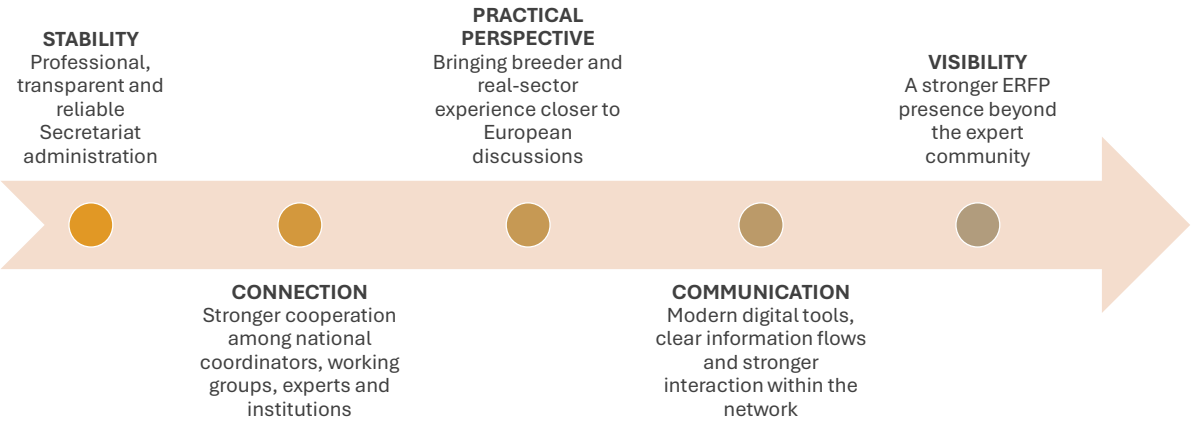
Scientific & Strategic Support

Prof. Ante Ivanković

Croatian National Coordinator for Animal Genetic Resources

Providing scientific and strategic support and a strong link between the AZRRI Secretariat team, the Croatian AnGR framework and the ERFP network.

WHAT WILL AZRRI BRING TO ERFP?



Our role will not be to change what ERFP is, but to help its network work, communicate and connect even better.

A MORE VISIBLE ERFP

Strong science deserves strong communication.

AZRRI aims to strengthen ERFP communication at two complementary levels:

01 WITHIN THE EXPERT COMMUNITY

- National Coordinators
- Working Groups
- Scientists & experts
- Breeding organisations
- Institutions & policymakers

02 BEYOND THE EXPERT COMMUNITY

- Breeders & farmers
- Students & young professionals
- Media
- Rural communities
- General public

HOW?

Website

Social Media

Press & Media

Digital Content

Events

Storytelling

Professional Communication

Our ambition: make the work of ERFP and the importance of Europe’s animal genetic resources more visible, understandable and recognised.

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What will AZRRI get from ERFP?

EUROPEAN NETWORK

A stronger European network of experts, institutions and partners

VISIBILITY

Increased visibility and recognition at European level

KNOWLEDGE & EXPERTISE

Access to knowledge, expertise and good practices from across Europe

COOPERATION

New opportunities for cooperation, partnerships and joint projects

REGIONAL – EUROPEAN LINK

Stronger links between regional experience and European developments in animal genetic resources

ERFP will strengthen AZRRI’s European dimension, while AZRRI will bring that knowledge and cooperation back into practice at a regional level.

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FROM ISTRIA TO EUROPE

Connecting science, breeders and society
to safeguard Europe’s animal genetic resources.



AZRRI
Future Host of the ERFP Secretariat

Thank you!

Edmondo Šuran
Head of the Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship Development
www.azrri.hr

