

ELN-FAB NEWSLETTER

No. 4, February 2011

European Seminar on ELN-FAB identifies ways forward

11 & 12 November 2010, Ljubljana, Slovenia

On 11 and 12 November 2010 the annual European Seminar on the European Learning Network on Functional AgroBiodiversity (ELN-FAB) was held in Ljubljana, Slovenia. The aim of the meeting was to bring together representatives of various stakeholder groups and national and international organizations throughout Europe to collect and exchange experience about functional agrobiodiversity.

The 44 participants, from 14 European countries, actively contributed to the workshop discussions, which focused on the following themes: 'How to put the concept of FAB into practice: What works and what doesn't?'; 'Functioning of the network – the role of stakeholders and partners. How can you contribute?'; and 'The economic and social aspects of the role of FAB for a more sustainable agriculture'. The outcome of the productive discussions will provide input into the planned handbook on FAB, which will help the stakeholders to strengthen the role of FAB in their operations and identify what is needed.



Photo: Albert Koopal

The conclusions of the seminar were presented by Dr Felix Wäckers, chairman of the ELN-FAB steering group, at the opening session of the conference 'How can we green the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)? - A contribution to the dialogue based on the views from the New Member States and countries aspiring to EU membership'. This [conference](#) was held from 12-14 November 2010 in Bled, Slovenia, and organized by Avalon (www.avalon.nl).



Photo: Albert Koopal

The key conclusions from the seminar and action points for the future include:

- There is an increasing interest in ecosystem services, although the awareness about FAB as a tool to optimize ecosystem services is limited;
- FAB approaches can be tailored to specific requirements of various European regions;
- Awareness raising among various stakeholder groups (policymakers, land managers, agribusinesses, scientists) is a key issue;
- FAB is not yet clearly incorporated in European and national policies;
- More emphasis should be put on quantifying the socio-economic benefits of FAB (TEEB process);
- ELN-FAB network can act as a driver for new research;
- Economic aspects of FAB to be strengthened during upcoming discussions and seminars.

The annual European Seminar on ELN-FAB was organized by ECNC in cooperation with DIVERSITAS and the European Environment Agency (EEA), and hosted by the Agricultural Institute of Slovenia (KIS).

For more information see:

- [Final programme](#)
- [Presentations](#)
- [Final participant list](#)
- [Pictures from the seminar](#)

Handbook on FAB to be one of the key outputs of 2011

The ELN-FAB was established with the mission to accumulate, document and share knowledge on how biodiversity can be mobilized to the benefit of sustainable agricultural production. The ELN-FAB provides a platform for exchange of knowledge and practical experiences between farmers, policymakers and scientists to enable fast and effective implementation of best practices in the EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland.



Photo: Veronika Milkos

The aim is to prepare a handbook on FAB to help the stakeholders to strengthen the role of FAB in their operations, promote sustainable agriculture, help the land managers to integrate functional agrobiodiversity into their agricultural practices and identify what is needed. The

examples in the handbook are planned to be structured according to different regional characteristics, crop types and ecosystem services.

Other key outputs of the project until the end of 2011 will focus on:

- annual European seminar, bringing together representatives of the target groups from several countries, and collecting and exchanging experience;
- the ELN-FAB website, providing information on functional agrobiodiversity, examples of good practices and a register of projects from all over Europe, news and more;
- steering group meeting(s) in order to ensure the proper implementation of the project;
- communication and outreach activities, presentations at events;
- joint project (research) proposals with relevant stakeholders for submission to European funds.

The ELN-FAB project is currently financially supported by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment (previously Ministry of VROM), the Netherlands; Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), Switzerland; Flemish Land Agency (VLM), Belgium; Ministry of Agriculture, Estonia; and the European Environment Agency (EEA). The European Landowners Organization (ELO) provides in-kind support. Fundraising continues in order to expand the Network in the long term.

ELN-FAB project team meeting discusses future activities

2 February 2011, Tilburg, the Netherlands

The project team of the European Learning Network on Functional AgroBiodiversity (ELN-FAB) held its first meeting of 2011 to discuss the progress made during last year and the priorities for 2011. The meeting was held on 2 February 2011 and hosted by ECNC-European Centre for Nature Conservation at its headquarters in Tilburg. The project team was satisfied with the achievements of 2010, which included among others the publication of a brochure on the concept of FAB, the annual ELN-FAB European seminar and two well-attended regional meetings in Estonia and Belgium.

In 2010 the organizational model has been further developed: stakeholder groups were contacted on European and national levels and other possible intermediaries who could actively participate in the project. There is a continuous growth, currently the database consists of 450 contacts. Connection and cooperation with other relevant networks has been further explored. In addition, the Secretariat was active in submitting project proposals in response to calls for tender.

EC Environment Commissioner Potočník welcomes stronger cooperation between DG Environment and ECNC

7 February 2011, Brussels, Belgium

On 7 February 2011 ECNC representatives met with EC Commissioner for the Environment, Mr Janez Potočník. This was followed by a meeting with the Head of the Natura 2000 Unit, Mr Stefan Leiner, and the Deputy Head of the Biodiversity Unit, Mrs Claudia Olazábal.

The Commissioner was very appreciative of ECNC and its activities, and welcomed further strengthening of the working relationships between DG Environment and ECNC, which hosts the Secretariat of ELN-FAB.

Information and views were exchanged about:

- The EC developments towards an EU Biodiversity Strategy and a Strategy on Green Infrastructure.

- The Commissioner's Flagship Initiative for a Resource-Efficient Europe, aiming at mainstreaming environment and biodiversity in Europe's economy as part of the efforts to green the economy. The Commissioner will develop a road map and wants to increase the focus on biodiversity and ecosystem services. He invited ECNC to provide expertise input, including about business and biodiversity.
- The European Learning Network on Functional AgroBiodiversity (ELN-FAB), and the relevance for greening the Common Agricultural Policy.

Commission Communication on the CAP towards 2020

The European Commission published a Communication on the 'Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) towards 2020: Meeting the food, natural resources and territorial challenges of the future' on 18 November 2010.

On the basis of the outcome of the institutional debate and of the consultation in the framework of the Commission Impact Assessment more concrete and elaborated options and measures

will be examined, and their feasibility and effectiveness will be analysed in the framework of the impact assessment. Legislative proposals by the Commission for the CAP post-2013 are expected in July 2011.

For more information see:

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/communication/index_en.htm.

The future of rural development policy

The debate about the future of rural development is part of the broader debate about the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), its link with the Europe 2020 strategy and with the budgetary framework of the next Financial Perspectives. The recently published 'Agricultural Policy Perspectives Brief No. 4' looks into the most recent of the CAP policies – rural development. This arm of the CAP aims at dealing with issues related to climate change, resource efficiency and territorial balance among many other things. How this is done today, and what may be improved in the future are covered in this Brief. Ensuring sustainable land management and addressing biodiversity loss constitute a key contribution of rural development to the Europe 2020 strategy for sustainable growth and jobs.

For more information see: [APP Brief No 4 - The future of rural development policy](#) and the CAP after 2013: <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013>.



Photo: Veronika Mikos

ELBARN project is completed

ELBARN is the European Livestock Breeds Ark and Rescue Net (ELBARN), a pan-European concept for in-situ conservation of animal genetic resources. ELBARN began in 2007 and was completed in 2010. The three-year concerted action has resulted – among other things – in a well-networked and motivated group of people; this resource is an asset to the future work on conservation of indigenous animal breeds in Europe.



Photo: Albert Koopal

The website www.elbarn.net presents all the published materials (ELBARN Book, Guidelines and four Area Action Plans), plus a fully searchable database of over 400 centres in 43 European countries, which makes this a unique collection of farms, open air museums, nature reserves, etc., all conserving the traditional breeds of their region. The project was co-funded by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, under Council Regulation (EC) No. 870/2004. The European network for livestock breeds will be continued into the future by the [SAVE Foundation](http://www.savefoundation.org).

For more information see the [ELBARN book here](#) or visit the website www.elbarn.net.



Updates on the ELN-FAB website

The ELN-FAB website (www.eln-fab.eu) provides the main communication platform for the Network and contains a European project database on the subject of functional agrobiodiversity. The website is available in English, German, French and Spanish, and uses targeted messages to focus on the Network's stakeholder groups.



New projects have been uploaded to the database

Over the last decade, knowledge on how to preserve and use ecosystem services in agricultural practices has increased. Pilot projects have yielded their first results. But is this information available to the right people and stakeholder groups, also to enable multiplication of good examples? Learn more about practical experiences on the website.

New projects have recently been uploaded to the agrobiodiversity project database. One example focuses on the creation of the World Saffron and Crocus Collection (WSCC), a unique collection which contains a representation of the genetic variability present in saffron crop and wild relatives at global scale. The project is led by the Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha in Spain.

Let your voice be heard

If your organization has relevant projects which you would like to promote via this Network and the database, the ELN-FAB Secretariat would be happy to receive them. In the register of agrobiodiversity projects we can put a short description (max. 2 pages) of your project, including information on overview, aims, partners, outputs, attached files (e.g. project leaflets) and contact person.

Additionally, if you have any relevant scientific publications, news items connected to the practical implementation of functional agrobiodiversity or the science-policy interface, you are kindly invited to submit them to the ELN-FAB Secretariat. The information can be disseminated and published in our quarterly newsletters and on the Network's website.

Publications

Agrobiodiversity: A mainstay of the 3rd generation of agri-environment measures?

A recently published report explores how existing agri-environmental measures in Flanders can be optimized and investigates which potential new measures could be applied. This study aims to contribute to the European goal to better combine agricultural production, agrobiodiversity conservation and the provision of ecosystem services. The study clearly shows that the interactions between agriculture and agrobiodiversity are very complex and functional agrobiodiversity (FAB) contributes to agriculture via: (1) the improvement of soil quality, (2) crop

pollination, (3) biological pest control, (4) influence on micro-climate, and (5) the availability of genetic diversity.

For more information see:
[AGROBIODIVERSITEIT \(INBO-ILVO\)](#)



Upcoming events

4th Forum for the Future of Agriculture (15 March 2011, Brussels, Belgium)

Under the title, 'Refocusing security on food and nature – CAP renewal for better farming', participants will be invited to discuss, review and agree on the necessary responses to deliver safe, viable and productive agriculture and safeguard rural areas. Chaired once again by Franz FISCHLER, former EU Commissioner and Chairman of the RISE Foundation, the FFA returns with its best ever line-up of speakers.

The keynote addresses will be delivered by the European Commissioners Dacian CIOLOS (Agriculture and Rural Development) and Janez POTOČNIK (Environment).

For more information check out the [finalized programme](#) and register via the following link: [FFA2011](#).

5th European Organic Congress (31 May-1 June 2011, Hortobágy, Hungary)

The IFOAM EU Group in cooperation with the Hungarian EU Presidency is organizing the 5th European Organic Congress in Hortobágy, Hungary, 31 May–1 June. The conference will discuss the opportunities organic agriculture offers for farmers, operators and rural areas in reaching the objectives outlined in the Commission Communication on the new CAP.

For more information on this high-level event see the [announcement](#) or visit: www.ifoam-eu.org.



Photo: Ecotours Hungary Ltd.

FoSW symposium 'Ecosystem Services in soil and water research' (7-10 June 2011, Uppsala, Sweden)

The graduate school Focus on Soils and Water warmly invites PhD students and researchers to participate in the symposium 'Ecosystem Services in soil and water research' from 7-10 June 2011 at the Ultuna campus of the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala, Sweden.

Ecosystem services in soil and aquatic sciences will be addressed in six different sessions with focus on supporting and regulating systems as well as threats to and protection of services

provided by soil and aquatic systems. The scope ranges from basic to applied research with strong links to different sectors of society. These issues are highly relevant for both the scientific community and society as a whole, and we would very much enjoy your contribution to these discussions. Abstract submission and registration is now open!

For more information see: <http://www-conference.slu.se/fosw2011/>.

Soil Science in a Changing World (18-22 September 2011, Wageningen, the Netherlands)

Climate change. Food security. Water resources. Biodiversity. These evocative titles are not issues that, in the eye of the Public and Politicians, are easily linked to soil scientists. Rather, they are challenges seen to be dealt with by other scientists in multidisciplinary think tanks linking into Parliamentary commissions and the front page of newspapers. Soil scientists have kept a remarkably low profile in such discussions and think tanks, despite the central importance of soils to all of these issues.

In this conference we will discuss the importance of soils and soil science for combating the problems we are facing around the globe. On behalf of the Soil Science Centre of Wageningen University we would like to invite you to the First Wageningen Conference on Applied Soil Science. These topics will be addressed in a dynamic way, by top keynote speeches, challenging debates, inspiring workshops and master classes as well as oral and poster presentations by participants.



For further information see the [second circular](#) or visit: www.wageningensoilmeeting.wur.nl.

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This newsletter aims to inform the partners, intermediaries and interested stakeholders of the ELN-FAB initiative. For more information visit: www.eln-fab.eu, or contact the ELN-FAB Secretariat:

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