

AgroBiodiversity and LEADER in Europe

At the occasion of the Transnational LEADER Event and Seminar in Kozard, Hungary on 19 September 2009

Ladies and Gentlemen

Yesterday you visited the Hungarian Rural Day in Budapest. You saw a plenty of diversity. This is not possible in every country anymore! Today Leader celebrates the European AgroBiodiversity Day, the EAD. This day, which occurs annually during harvest time, shall raise awareness throughout Europe on the importance of livestock diversity and plant varieties.

During last decades a greater part of livestock breeds and plants has disappeared, some breeds and varieties are already lost for ever, they are extinct! But this diversity is very important for future needs as well as for using marginal areas.

I'm a representative of the European SAVE Foundation, an umbrella organisation for the Safeguard of Agricultural Varieties (www.save-foundation.net), based in Konstanz/ Germany. SAVE Foundation and Leader/ELARD have some common tasks – that's why I'm happy to be here –we are both promoting Rural Development by offering an alternative in agriculture by taking profit out of Traditional AgroEcoSystems (TAES). These TAES protect wildlife, soil diversity, water quality, rivers as well as on-farm agricultural diversity – and they are attractive for rural tourism, agritourism.

A symbiotic relationship between humans, domesticated species and wildlife species has been built up over thousands of years; for the health and well-being of all these components, a continuing relationship is required.

The future will have two contrasting agricultural systems:

- the mainstream agriculture on high performance to provide the vast quantities of food to feed a growing population and
- the Traditional AgroEcoSystems which will produce quality food in marginal areas

The two farming systems can exist, side-by-side, even on the same farm. They will have a symbiotic relationship as a flow of money and genetic material moves from one to another. The eco-system services of the wild biodiversity in a TAES enrich farming systems with e.g. pollinators, natural pest control and improved soil structures. These services are perfectly adapted for low-input agriculture and improve the biodiversity of the farm for the benefit of the whole farm eco-system.

SAVE Foundation is engaged in preserving AgroBiodiversity by supporting autochthonous livestock breeds and plants in Europe. These breeds and plants have adapted during centuries to their local environment and produce, in most cases, tasty quality food. Keeping alive the threatened agrobiodiversity is a prerequisite for viable traditional agroecosystems.

To make the autochthonous breeds and plants economically interesting, the products have to be marketed separately. There are already some movements like SlowFood

and others which promote some flagship breeds and plants. But the whole of agrobiodiversity has to be promoted. That's why SAVE Foundation is establishing a trademark for the marketing of products and services from autochthonous breeds and plants which are processed in a traditional way.

And SAVE Foundation provides (with the support of the European Union in the frame of EC 870/2004) an infrastructure for the worst case by establishing a system of Rescue Stations in all countries. This project named ELBARN (European Livestock breeds Ark and Rescue Net; see www.elbarn.net) shall ensure that endangered livestock not has to be slaughtered when – as an example – an old owner dies or something else happens that could endanger the animals. In such urgent cases, breeding nuclei can then be displaced in Rescue Stations with free capacity on short notice (within 48-72 hours).

We already have quite a few Rescue Stations in many countries, but we need more! I hope that some of you may help us to find additional Rescue Stations in your respective countries.

- Let's join forces for tasty and healthy food!
- Let's do something for our heritage in livestock and crops!
- Let's promote Rural Development with Traditional AgroEcoSystems!

Kössenem – Thanks for your attention!

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