

# A window to Europe's plant diversity

March 2006

## Meeting National and International commitments

In 2001, the need for a European plant genetic resource information system was met with the development of national inventories of plant genetic resources and the creation of EURISCO, a searchable catalogue of *ex situ* plant collections maintained in Europe. Such a system was called for in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and in the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

EURISCO also meets the obligations of the Convention on Biological Diversity to facilitate information exchange regarding the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, and it contributes to the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy.

The EURISCO catalogue was publicly launched in September 2003.

## What it is

EURISCO is a web-based catalogue that provides information about *ex situ* plant collections across Europe. It currently contains passport data for more than 970,000 samples of crop diversity representing 1300 genera and 8200 species from 33 countries. These samples of crop diversity represent one third of



*Today's demand for more diverse food products, strengthens the use of a wider variety of crop genetic diversity*

the *ex situ* accessions maintained in Europe and roughly 15% of total worldwide holdings.

Developed according to international standards, EURISCO is a "one stop shop" for information on *ex situ* plant collections that enables users to search and access information on crops, forages, wild and weedy species, farmers' varieties and breeding lines; EURISCO makes it possible to search by crop, taxonomy, origin, geography, acquisition, sample status and other criteria.

## How it works and who participates

By strengthening capacities for the creation of national inventories, EURISCO created a quick entry point from which to search them. Each country has full responsibility and sovereign rights to decide on the data availability, accuracy and uploads of its national inventories.

As national EURISCO focal persons across Europe have gradually uploaded their national inventories of plant genetic resources, the catalogue has been expanding and improving.

*Genebank accessions represent a repository of actual and potential useful genetic material for breeding, research and training, thus promoting food security*



### What it does

EURISCO allows access to information that serves not only decision makers but also genebank managers, curators, scientists, breeders, farmers, students and the general public by answering queries on information of *ex situ* samples maintained in European countries.

### Looking to the future

In its second phase, EURISCO will focus on providing support to national inventories and their focal points, continuing to improve the accuracy and range of information available, and enriching functionalities. It will also tackle the challenge of establishing a European information system that brings together *ex situ* and *in situ* information through a global entry point with links to other information sources through web services.

The future is being built by ensuring access to information as a public good and raising awareness of plant genetic resources for future generations.

Initiatives to start similar activities in other regions of the world are currently underway.



*Traditional knowledge and cultural diversity, promote crop diversity being used in different ways for different purposes*