

The Dutch German collaboration on Plant Generic Resources

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The Dutch German collaboration on Plant Generic Resources (PGR) effectively started 1974. It was initiated by the two Ministries of Agriculture from the Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands, who had annual meetings in the German Dutch Commission for Agricultural Research (since 1968), which should promote the collaboration between the two countries in the field of Agriculture. The acquisition, maintenance and evaluation of PGR was considered to be a strategic task supporting food security, from which private breeding companies, consumers and the environment could also profit.

In the preceding years a Europe wide initiative on *Solanum* PGR had been discussed, following the idea of crop specific collaboration and concentrating the work in regional genebanks. For example at a meeting at the OECD in Paris in 1971 (with prof. Hawkes representing EUCARPIA) the establishment of a European *Solanum* Germplasm station was discussed. It included a common potato collection in Braunschweig (Germany) and targeted for tomato conservation at regional genebanks in Izmir (Turkey), responsible for the eastern Mediterranean, and Bari (Italy) responsible for the central and western Mediterranean. The European countries were interested but reluctant in making (financial) commitments, possibly also being afraid that their national institution working in this field would be marginalized. For potato, only the negotiations between Germany and the Netherlands continued, involving e.g. a documentation specialist as well as potato researchers discussing the traits to be evaluated and the screening methods.

February 1974 the bilateral agreement was signed by the Ministers of Agriculture and the German Dutch collaboration on potato genetic resources started. Any wild and primitive potato material from within the sphere of competence of the two ministers would be placed at the disposal of the collaboration in Braunschweig. A Programming Board to guide the work was established. Its members included a representative of both Ministries, the directors of the cooperating Institute of Crop Science & Plant Breeding (FAL, Braunschweig) and the Foundation of Plant breeding (SVP, Wageningen) as well as two potato researchers from each country. The Board had to report to the German Dutch Commission for Agricultural Research. The costs of the collaboration were to be split between the two countries. Besides the pure genebank tasks, also some research (on hard to cross species) was foreseen. In September 1974 a Dutch scientist moved to Braunschweig and the Dutch German potato collection started to operate with the scientist acting as curator. The working collections Erwin Bauer Sortiment (EBS) and Wageningse Aardappel Collectie (WAC) from the Max Planck Institute (MPI, Köln) and the Institute for Plant breeding (IvP, Wageningen) were merged in the national German genebank at Braunschweig-Völkenrode. Additional germplasm collected during expeditions (1974/75; 1980; 1993/94; 1995; 1996) was included. The collection was rationalized by identifying probable redundancy, based on passport data. Research and breeding institutes from both countries contributed to the collaboration by extensively evaluating the germplasm on disease resistance and quality traits. In those days the research institutes were almost

completely financed by national governments. 1984 the Programming Board was replaced by a Board of trustees.

In 1986 the collaboration was extended to *Beta* & *Cichorium* and a German scientist moved to Wageningen, to join CGN and become curator of the common beet collection. A series of *Beta* collecting expeditions were organized. Private breeding companies supported the screening of the germplasm. Besides the running program, the Board of trustees also discussed PGR developments and possible collaborations in other crops (*Brassica's*, *Lolium*, oat, etc.). It clearly was in favor of concentrating the management of PGR per crop. Behind the scenes, it was a driving force in pushing the EU to start the GENRES program in 1995.

The PGR & crop research landscape changed in Germany after its reunification in 1989. In 1991 the *Beta* collection moved to Braunschweig and in 1995 the potato collection moved to Wageningen, following its repatriating curators. The common collections were integrated in the national genebanks. The last Board meeting took place in 1999.

The German Dutch cooperation was worldwide recognized as an excellent example of collaboration in the field of PGR, and it was mainly due to the changing political situation in Germany that it ended. However, many lessons regarding collaborations between genebanks can be learned; the lessons for AEGIS will be discussed.