

THE EUROPEAN SAFENUT PROJECT: AN EFFORT TO IMPROVE THE MANAGEMENT OF THE *CORYLUS AVELLANA* AND *PRUNUS DULCI* GENETIC RESOURCES

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Corylus avellana, germplasm, endangered genotypes, traditional knowledge

Corylus avellana and *Prunus dulci* are commodities of international economic importance. Different Countries conserved the hazelnut and almond genetic resources, but often the numerous local repositories are not made uniform at the European level and the problems of synonymous and mislabelling are common in the national collections. Moreover, traditional genotypes handed by father to son are conserved *on farm*. The exploitation and evaluation of such germplasm allow to recuperate the main part of the genetic variability present even at low frequencies. Within the Council Regulation (EC) N. 870/2004 AGRI GEN RES, which established a Community programme on the conservation, characterisation and utilization of genetic resources in agriculture, the project 'SAFENUT' (Safeguard of almond and hazelnut genetic resources from traditional uses to modern agro-industrial opportunities), represents an effort to coordinate the hazelnut genetic resources to share them in a more efficient manner, focussing on the recovery of old traditional endangered almond genotypes. One of the main objective of the project is the centralization of available hazelnut germplasm by harmonizing the standard descriptors for a common characterization of cultivars. Regarding *Prunus dulci*, which was one of the species considered in a previous *Prunus* AGRI GEN RES, the main goal is to recover all the local endangered varieties as well as to characterize germplasm not yet included in the reference collections. This aims at the creation of a core collection and gene banks as well as at the realization of the European virtual inventory, in order to share and spread all this information. Particular attention was paid on the cultural meaning of the genetic resources. The project benefits from the participation of a strong partnership (11 partners) from 6 European Countries, including the NGO Lega Ambiente and

Farmer Association. In the first year of the project, a survey was performed in different areas of traditional cultivation and novel hazelnut ecotypes: local almond varieties were pre-selected. SSR analysis were carried out to identify synonymous and homonyms present in the national collections. Biochemical analyses were performed on 60 genotypes. With respect to traditional knowledge, a review on the existing hazelnut exhibitions was realised and questionnaires were designed with the aim to recover historical memories on hazelnut and almond traditional knowledge and uses.