

## ELN-FAB NEWSLETTER

No. 1, March 2010

### Welcome

Welcome to the first newsletter of the European Learning Network on Functional AgroBiodiversity (ELN-FAB)!

The realization that agriculture has to become more sustainable is incorporated in policy instruments from national to global level. Knowledge is being increasingly accumulated on how biodiversity can be mobilized to make agriculture sustainable. Throughout Europe, farmers, researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders are implementing various forms of functional agrobiodiversity. This practical experience is extremely fragmented and barely accessible. The ELN-FAB initiative aims to change this by bringing together experience, knowledge, views and case studies.

The project aims to accumulate knowledge on how biodiversity can be mobilized to increase sustainable agricultural production, to provide a platform for exchange of knowledge and practical experiences between farmers, policymakers and scientists to enable fast and effective implementation of best practices, and to promote sustainable agriculture in the 27 Member States of the EU, plus Norway and Switzerland.

ECNC in cooperation with DIVERSITAS agroBIODIVERSITY International Project Office (AB-IPO) took up the coordination of this Network, and the Netherlands Ministry of

Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM) provided funding for the first phase of the project. In 2010, the second phase of the project started.



Photo: Brabants Landschap

The second phase of ELN-FAB is currently financially supported by:

- Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM), the Netherlands;
- European Environment Agency (EEA);
- Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), Switzerland;
- Ministry of Agriculture, Estonia;
- Flemish Land Agency (VLM), Belgium.

Fundraising continues in order to expand the Network in the long term.

### Steering group meeting and the new chair

The project team and steering group of ELN-FAB met for the second time on 26 November 2009 to discuss the progress made during 2009 and the future of the initiative. The meeting was hosted by COPA-COGECA in Brussels. Dr Felix Wäckers from the University of Lancaster, UK accepted to be the chair for the next two years (2010-2011).

Following the introductory presentation about the mission and first achievements of the Network, the project website, launched in September 2009, was discussed in detail. The participants exchanged information on processes, publications and meetings of relevance to ELN-FAB. The steering group members provided input to set priorities for the next phase of the project (2010-2011).

## 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the ELN-FAB initiative has started

ECNC-European Centre for Nature Conservation, the host of the ELN-FAB Secretariat, is very grateful for the contribution of numerous organizations. This enables us to continue the work in the next phase of broadening and intensifying the activities of the Network in order to achieve the objective of integrating biodiversity concerns in agriculture in Europe and to help to optimize agrobiodiversity benefits.

Since its establishment, the Secretariat has made sure that the Network functions properly in providing the different stakeholders with a means to share knowledge and experience. The key outputs of the project during 2010–2011 will be:

- the ELN-FAB website, providing information on functional agrobiodiversity, examples of good practices from all over Europe, news and more;
- a register of projects throughout Europe covering the subject of functional agrobiodiversity;
- annual European seminars, bringing together representatives of the target

groups from several countries, and collecting and exchanging experience;

- communication and outreach activities, presentations at events;
- a series of awareness-raising workshops about FAB throughout Europe with the aim of forming working partnerships;
- a handbook on FAB to help the stakeholders to strengthen the role of FAB in their operations.



## Identified fields of cooperation with the European Environment Agency (EEA)

Based on the previous exchange of information about the ELN-FAB initiative between the EEA and ECNC, and given the objectives of both organizations with respect to biodiversity and agriculture, dialogue has started to identify joint concrete steps during 2010. The meeting took place on 19 January 2010 in Copenhagen, Denmark with the participation of Ivone Pereira Martins, Head of biodiversity and ecosystems group, Elena Cebrian Calvo and Katarzyna Biala, Project Managers from the EEA. ECNC was represented by Ben Delbaere, Head of Programme Development, and Veronika Mikos, Project Manager.

In the framework of the ELN-FAB, annual seminars are organized in order to bring together representatives of various stakeholder groups and national and international organizations throughout Europe to collect and exchange experience about functional agrobiodiversity. The EEA is very much in favour of cooperating in the organization of the

European Seminar in 2010. It is intended to hold the event in Slovenia at the end of September or in November. The host organization is still under discussion.

The planned handbook on FAB will help the stakeholders to strengthen the role of functional agrobiodiversity in their operations, promote sustainable agriculture, and help the land managers to integrate functional agrobiodiversity into their agricultural practices. It was agreed that this kind of handbook would be a good entry point to clarify the concept in a practical way, and it would supplement the current analytical work of the EEA about the effectiveness of the rural development measures very well.

One of the priorities of the ELN-FAB in the longer term is the broadening of the geographical scope in order to develop it into a pan-European network, which meets with the interest of the EEA as well.

## Recent meetings in Estonia

Meetings with the representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Environment, and the Agriculture Research Centre took place on 1-2 February 2010 in Tallinn, Estonia in order to discuss future cooperation. The meetings were held with the participation of Eike Lepmets, Chief specialist; Marko Gorban, Deputy Head of the Rural Development Department; Siim Tiidemann, Head of the EU and Foreign Affairs Department; Henno Nurmsalu, Head of the Rural Development Department; Peeter Seestrand, Deputy Secretary General for Foreign Affairs and Development; Toomas Kevvai, Deputy Secretary General for Rural Development and Fisheries Policy (Ministry of Agriculture); Taimo Aasma, Head of the Nature Conservation Department; Liilika Käis, Advisor to the Nature Conservation Department, CBD Primary NFP; Kadri Möller, Advisor to the Nature Conservation Department (Ministry of the Environment); Aleksei Lotman (Member of Parliament, Green Party); Margus Friedenthal, Deputy Director; Livi Rooma, Head of the Department of Agricultural Research and Monitoring; Iiri Selge, Chief Specialist of AE Monitoring Bureau; Eneli Viik, Specialist in Charge of AE Monitoring Bureau; Marika Mänd, Estonian University of Life Sciences; Pille Koorberg, Head of Agri-Environmental Monitoring Bureau (Agricultural Research Centre). ECNC was represented by Executive Director Rob Wolters and Veronika Mikos, Project Manager.

The aims of the meetings were to present ECNC and the ELN-FAB project; learn about the policy-

related and scientific understanding of the concept of FAB in Estonia; exchange information on processes, key issues, problem areas of biodiversity and agriculture in the country; and clarify the involvement of Estonia in the future of the ELN-FAB initiative, in particular a regional seminar focusing on the Baltic Sea Region.

This regional seminar about FAB is planned to be held in Estonia for the Baltic Sea Region during the last week of August or the first week of September 2010. The seminar and workshop will result in a better understanding of approaches and best practices of FAB to show its integration in management practices in the target region. The results will be included in the project's overall findings and presented in the FAB Handbook and during the annual European seminar. Demand for future research and further awareness-raising could be specified after the event.

Further cooperation has also been identified through the contribution of the Agriculture Research Centre to the planned FAB Handbook and by examining the possibility of establishing pilot/demonstration farms in Estonia. The need for a national stakeholder seminar in Estonia was also discussed; it is foreseen that this will be held at later stage of the project while targeting solely the farming sector. It is important to make sure that farmers understand and support the objectives of FAB in their management and are made aware of the opportunities offered.

## Updates on the ELN-FAB website

The ELN-FAB website ([www.eln-fab.eu](http://www.eln-fab.eu)) provides the main communication platform to 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.



The screenshot shows the homepage of the ELN-FAB website. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for Home, News, Background, ELN-FAB project, Events Calendar, FAQ, Contacts, and Links. Below the menu is a large banner image of a tractor in a field, with the text "European Learning Network on Functional AgroBiodiversity" and a "Welcome" message. A paragraph of introductory text follows, explaining the network's purpose. Below this, there are three columns of featured content: "Practical Experiences" (Improved capacity and skills for land managers to integrate functional agrobiodiversity into their management practices), "Policies and Initiatives" (Greater impact on agricultural policies at national and European levels to promote the integration of functional agrobiodiversity into policies), and "Scientific Research" (Improved scientific understanding of the contribution of functional agrobiodiversity to ecosystem services). Each column has a "Read more" button. At the bottom, there is a section for "Project Examples".

New projects have recently been uploaded to the agrobiodiversity project database. They focus on reaching voluntary management agreements with farmers, green-blue veining: agrobiodiversity as innovation for sustainable agriculture, and promoting the development of agri-environment support schemes for the conservation of High Nature Value (HNV) farming.

*New scientific publications are available on the website*

### 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.

### Upcoming events

#### **Conference 'Developing spaces in peri-urban areas - value of green investments in the heart of Europe', 12-13 October 2010, Bruges, Belgium**

During the Belgian EU Presidency in the second half of 2010, various meetings and conferences are planned on different aspects of open green spaces and the 2010 Biodiversity target.

The Flemish Land Agency (VLM), member of several networks and partner in various Interreg projects, has also taken the initiative to organize a conference on the development of open space and the value of green investments on 12 and 13 October 2010 in Bruges. Several local, regional and international partners and organizations will cooperate in the organization of the conference.

The main ambition of the conference is to open the dialogue between scientists, policymakers, administrators and stakeholders on the major challenges of developing green investments and their value in peri-urban regions in the heart of Europe.

The conference will also provide the perfect opportunity to learn from other participants, to exchange best practices, to stimulate trans-boundary contacts and to develop learning lessons. Furthermore, the conference also intends to provide lessons learned for the European

Biodiversity is the basis for agricultural production. On the one hand, it is the origin of all crops and domestic livestock and the variety within them. On the other hand, components of wild biodiversity in agricultural and associated landscapes provide and maintain ecosystem services that are essential to agricultural production (e.g. pollination). Learn more about the results of research in the field of functional agrobiodiversity and find new articles, scientific papers and studies on the website.

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.

Environmental Advisory Council conference taking place later that week in Bruges.



Photo: Hanneke Wijnja

If you are an expert in the field of development of open space and green investments and you are willing to share your experience and expertise with a highly motivated, professional audience, please do not hesitate to submit your session proposal.

If you have experience with city farming or farming in peri-urban areas, you are kindly invited to present a case and contribute to the



better understanding of functional agrobiodiversity during the conference.

The first call for speakers is now open and ends on 1 April 2010.

**Green Week 2010, 1-4 June 2010, Brussels, Belgium**

The 10th edition of Green Week, the biggest annual conference on European environment policy, will take place from 1 to 4 June 2010 in Brussels. This year's theme is biodiversity.

Over some 30 sessions, the conference will address the state of biodiversity and nature in Europe and the world, the benefits they bring, current pressures, and possible solutions to the current rates of loss. The path to be taken by EU policies on biodiversity and nature policies post-2010, the economic dimension of biodiversity, ecosystem services and Natura 2000 will also be examined.

For more information please contact Mr Frank Stubbe at [info@vlm.be](mailto:info@vlm.be) or +32 499 99 43 05, or visit the website of the Flemish Land Agency; [www.vlm.be](http://www.vlm.be).

Green Week offers a unique opportunity for debate and exchanges of experience and best practice. Over the past decade, the conference has established itself as an unmissable event for anyone involved with protecting the environment. The 2009 edition attracted some 4,200 participants from government, business and industry, non-governmental organizations, academia and the media.

For more information visit [www.ec.europa.eu/environment/greenweek](http://www.ec.europa.eu/environment/greenweek).

**3rd European Organic Congress, 27 May 2010, Madrid, Spain and 21-22 June 2010, Rome, Italy**

The IFOAM EU Group invites the organic sector twice to a European Organic Congress in 2010. The congress will be in two parts to deal with two issues of urgent importance for the organic sector: the first congress will discuss the potential of the organic movement to contribute to a new green deal for a sustainable European

economy; the second will evaluate the first year of the new Organic Regulation in place and provide space for an outlook on further pieces to be added to the regulation.

For more information visit [www.ifoam-eu.org](http://www.ifoam-eu.org).

**3rd Forum for the Future of Agriculture, 16 March 2010, Brussels, Belgium**

In March 2008, the European Landowners Organization (ELO) and Syngenta came together to create a new Forum in which the future of agriculture can be debated from a European perspective and where the main challenges facing the sector can be addressed and the necessary responses understood, discussed and agreed.

Today, the Forum has a programme of activity focused on the food and environmental security agenda, in Brussels and across the European region. However, the main platform for the

Forum for the Future of Agriculture remains its Annual Conference, which takes place every spring in Brussels. This Conference has now established itself as the premier meeting place for those who have a stake in the future of agriculture and has been addressed by European Commissioners, MEPs, national government ministers, industry leaders, NGOs, international organizations, including OECD and FAO, and academics.

For more information visit [www.forumforagriculture.com](http://www.forumforagriculture.com).

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This newsletter exists to inform the partners, intermediaries and interested stakeholders of the ELN-FAB initiative. For more information visit: [www.eln-fab.eu](http://www.eln-fab.eu), or contact the ELN-FAB Secretariat:

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