

Stakeholder involvement and ethics in conservation of animal genetic resources in gene banks

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Cryoconservation of reproductive triggers ethical concerns of stakeholders amongst others for the choice of the breed to be conserved. To mitigate any negative responses, stakeholders need to be consulted. 'Dialogue fora' were implemented by the Innovative Management of Genetic Resources (IMAGE) H2020 project to strengthen communication, knowledge exchange and to get direct feedbacks from stakeholders. The topics covered during these fora were: (1) the general role of gene banks; (2) sanitary regulations; and (3) economics of conservation. During the first meeting opinions were shared about gene bank collaborations, material exchange, ethical issues in biotech and standardization of gene bank management. The sanitary regulation meeting resulted in a clear call to identify and list exceptions for derogations from the EU Animal Health, specifically considering the needs of gene banks. The awareness regarding these needs has to be raised also within the European Commission, with the help of European gene bank network (EUGENA). Discussions about economics in conservation made clear that there is a need to support the exchange of material through public funding, but management should run through (public) research and breeder societies. Anonymous surveys were conducted among different actors, such as breeders and NGOs, commercial breeding and governmental bodies. The questions focused on the motivations for breed conservation, criteria of breed choice and funding sources for cryobanks. Innovations in bio-banking methods and trade-offs like the acceptance of further research on improvement of semen freezing, support for cloning methods and the sacrifice of animals for cryoconservation were asked in another part of the survey.