



**SAVE** foundation



**European Agrobiodiversity Day**

**29th September 2007**

**Use It or Lose It!**

*"Use It or Lose It" is the slogan for this year's European Agrobiodiversity Day. Under the banner of this theme the SAVE Foundation draws attention to the synergism between traditional farming structures, rural development and the conservation of agrobiodiversity. There are many ways in which the use of traditional farm animals, plants and agricultural systems can enhance modern lifestyles. From tasty products through to beautiful landscapes, these plants, animals and ways of life bring so many benefits. Protecting the agricultural biodiversity of Europe aids rural development, promotes tourism, provides a healthy, local diet and provides a good genetic basis for future food security. If we don't want to lose it, we should use it!*

### **Lose It:**

**Around 20 percent of animal breeds are at risk of extinction, with one breed lost each month.**

Of the more than 7 600 breeds in FAO's global database of farm animal genetic resources, 190 have become extinct in the past 15 years and a further 1 500 are considered at risk of extinction.

FAO Press Release 15 December 2006

The promotion of a healthier diet, along with the epidemics and 'food scares' of the last decade have increased consumer awareness about the range of fruit, vegetables and grains available, as well as creating a consumer focus on animal husbandry. Consumers are also interested in their own health and safety and in tasty, varied and attractive food.

### **Use it: Products of Endangered Livestock Breeds**

Example: The Mangalitsa Pig

*The Mangalitsa pig is a local breed of N. Serbia, Hungary and Romania. Its curly hair has earned it the name 'woolly pig' in many languages. It can be found in a variety of colours, from yellowish-white through black or swallow-bellied to red. Due to its qualities both as a farm animal and as a meat producer, the Mangalitsa was a popular pig breed for many years. The intensification of pig-rearing and the preference towards the English pig breeds was its doom. However, according to latest research its meat and fat contains a much larger amount of LDL cholesterol or so called "positive" cholesterol, so it can to treat people with problems of high cholesterol.*

*Sausages and cured meats made from the Mangalitsa breed are still produced by various farmer's cooperatives and individuals.*

Farmers, just like anyone else, cannot afford to live solely for their ideals. Without the ability to market agricultural products, the agricultural community becomes less attractive. Young people growing up in rural areas are moving away to urban centres. In the more remote and poverty stricken rural areas of Europe, there is a trend towards depopulation. This can only be halted if farming becomes a task that is re-valued by society. For people in marginal areas, where the landscape often prohibits intensive, modern agriculture or the infrastructure to move products from producer to consumer are poor, keeping 'old fashioned' livestock and growing 'old fashioned' crops is becoming increasingly important.

## Use it: Forgotten fruit, vegetables and grains

### *Example: Emmer Wheat (*Triticum dicoccon*)*

*Emmer Wheat has been domesticated for over 7000 years. Emmer was already used by the Ancient Egyptians for bread and beer making.*

*Today Emmer is hardly grown and it is only found as a relict crop in mountainous areas. Its value lies in its ability to give good yields on poor soils, and its resistance to fungal diseases.*

*Emmer can be found growing in Europe in Spain, the Carpathian mountains on the border of the Czech and Slovak republics, Albania, Turkey, Switzerland and Italy.*

*In Italy Emmer cultivation is now well established. In Tuscany, Emmer (known as farro) is grown by farmers as an EU-Protected Designation of Origin product, with its geographic identity protected by EU trade law.*

Traditional crop types and breeds of animals tend to be robust, fertile and adaptable. They do not require high quality fodder and soil. Often, animals do not even require a barn, even in winter. This means that these livestock breeds are cheap to keep, which makes them more attractive than their modern high-input counterparts. Likewise, plants that are adapted to the locality are likely to withstand harsh growing conditions, in a way that modern crops cannot.

A recently published study by the European Nature Heritage Fund (Euronatur) shows the development of on farm product production, direct marketing and services, increases per farm income as well as creating jobs in rural areas. In addition, the re-valuing of the agricultural sector means that young people see a future in farming, thus the rural – urban migration is slowed. Not only is the agricultural sector influenced by this kind of upturn, whole rural areas experience economic upswing as soon as one sector starts to blossom. (Source: <http://www.euronatur.org/Pressemitteilungen>)

## Use it: Traditional Landscapes

Traditional farming methods using the traditional crops and breeds do not only protect the livelihoods of rural communities. Low maintenance, traditional animal breeds can be used in nature reserves, for reclaiming land that has been used for industry and for grazing areas where farming is no longer sustainable. The importance of traditional farming methods is internationally recognised both by environmental organisations and by tourists. The recognised beauty of many areas of Europe is due to centuries of land management using locally adapted crops and breeds. In 2002 the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations initiated a programme to acknowledge, conserve and manage systems that were deemed to be globally important agricultural heritage systems.

## **Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)**

<http://www.fao.org/sd/giahs/>

### **Example 2: Lemon Groves - Amalfi Sfusato Lemon**

*The peninsula sorrentino-amalfitana represents an outstanding example of how an agricultural landscape can characterize a complete geographical area. Lemons are cultivated in terraces, this traditional cultivation of lemon preserves the soil from hydro-geological instability.*

*Lemons are cultivated mostly on small farms, which are often less than a hectare in size. Their maintenance requires an intensive cultivation and heavy use of man-power, due to the difficult and particular farming system. The varieties grown in the area are Citrus limonum var. amalphanum and Citrus limonum var. pusillum, which are well adapted to the soil type and climatic conditions of the area.*

*Lemons from Costiera sorrentino-amalfitana are unique products. The lemons are the base for the production of the world renowned liqueur, limoncello, the sale of which has a positive impact on the economy of the region. Also valuable to the economy is the production of artefacts inspired by the lemons and the creation of pergola used to grow the lemons.*

*The economic activity which has the highest benefit from the presence of the cultivation of traditional lemons is tourism. Thousands of tourists every year are attracted by the scenery of the Costiera, to enjoy not only the beautiful small villages but also the landscape.*

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In many countries in Europe, there are organisations supporting and promoting the conservation of Agro-Biodiversity. The SAVE Foundation, founded in 1993, acts as a European umbrella organisation for these organisations. It promotes and coordinates activities to conserve endangered breeds of domestic animals and cultivated plant varieties. The SAVE Foundation does not work with a romantic ideal of how it once was, rather the SAVE Foundation undertakes practical work to ensure a sustainable future for the diverse genetic material stored within the traditional breeds and species of Europe. The SAVE Foundation supports, plans and realises on-farm conservation projects alongside collecting and disseminating information about the traditional and endangered European Agro-Biodiversity. This work is undertaken in conjunction with the SAVE Partner Organisations. The European Monitoring Institute for Rare Breeds and Seeds is the scientific research unit of the SAVE Foundation.

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