



## **Society for the Conservation of old and endangered Livestock Breeds in Germany (GEH)**

### **The conservation of endangered breeds of farm animals in Germany**

#### **Conservation of diversity - a common task**

Each week, one breed disappears. National and international efforts are necessary to conserve the diversity of farm animals. Since the UNCED Conference in Rio in 1992, the disappearance of biodiversity has increasingly become the focus of public attention, and the responsibility for its conservation has become a governmental matter.

#### **The UNCED - Conference**

Within the framework of the UNCED conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, an agreement on biodiversity was reached which has, amongst other things, the objective to conserve and to sustainably use the species used by man. In 1993, the Federal Republic of Germany ratified this agreement and passed a law on a national level. Thus, the Federal Republic of Germany is under obligation to elaborate national programs and strategies which guarantee the identification and monitoring of endangered breeds, their in situ as well as their ex situ conservation and their sustainable management.

#### **The AEU - Decree and funding by the Federal States**

In 1992, the Decree No. 2078/92 (by the Council for environmentally friendly agricultural production systems which protect the natural biosphere) became effective. Within the decree, the conservation of genetic resources is a small fringe subject. However, this is at present the only means of supporting these issues with EU funds.

The EU drew up a list including all those species whose population size has decreased below a certain minimum. The number of reproductive female animals is not to exceed 5000 animals for cattle breeds, and 7500 for sheep and goat breeds. Funding is carried through via the specific programmes of the respective country, at present, 100 Euro per LU. The Federal States subsidise the keeping of endangered breeds from their own funds. In Germany, 15 breeds of cattle, 12 horse breeds, 5 pig breeds, 15 sheep breeds, 3 goat breeds, 1 duck breed, 2 goose breeds, 2 dove breeds and 2 rabbit breeds are being supported.

Within the framework of the EU decree only premiums for the keeping of animals are set aside. Financial support measures in the form of litter premiums, foal premiums, rearing premiums, purchase premiums, support of breeding associations, subsidising the harvesting and conservation of spermatozoa and embryos for use as well as for long-term conservation. In some federal states, very specialised funding systems have already been put into operation. Starting from 2000, the endangered breeds are being funded via a new decree, which basically follows the present decree 2078/92.

### **The German Livestock Breeding Act**

The aspect of conserving genetic diversity has already been integrated into the 2nd amendments of the Livestock Breeding Act in 1996 and 2006 ( § 1 paragraph 2 „Purpose and Objectives of the law“). In paragraph 7, it is guaranteed that breeding programmes may not only be formulated under the aspect of output or performance, but also as conservation breeding programmes. Selective performance breeding would, within a very short time, lead to changes of the original breed and reinforce the problem of inbreeding.

### **The organisation of conservation activities in Germany**

The responsibility for conservation of endangered breeds as livestock is entirely in the hands of private animal breeders. Most endangered breeds are now integrated into the official herdbooks of the breeding organisations. However, overall conservation breeding programmes do not exist. Activities and co-ordination is mostly carried out by dedicated breeding organisations (societies) or by the respective breed coaches of the Society for the Conservation of old and endangered Breeds of Farm Animals (GEH).

### **The Society for the Conservation of old and endangered Breeds of Farm Animals (GEH)**

is a non-profit organisation acting on a national level. In 1981, the GEH was founded in Bavaria with the objective of conserving old and endangered breeds of farm animals as a living population in practical agriculture. Today, more than 2200 members are scattered all over Germany. They support the tasks of the society with active animal breeding, participation in regional fairs, events and farm days.

The GEH initiates conservation measures, co-ordinates animal keepers, keeps contact with the governmental animal breeding organisations, ministries, research institutions as well as nature conservation and environmental protection associations. The demands of conservation breeding on co-operation are fairly high.

In order to raise public awareness of the loss of agricultural diversity, the GEH publishes a yearly revised „Red list of endangered breeds of animals“ for Germany, where more than 90 breeds of cattle, sheep, horse, pig, goat, donkey, dog, rabbit, chicken, duck, goose, turkey and bee are mentioned.

Since 1989, the **Working Committee for the Conservation of the Genetic Diversity of Farm Animals** of the German Society for Animal Breeding draws up recommendations for the protection of animal genetic resources and meets twice a year. The committee is composed of experts for practical breeding, administrators from the governmental breeding administration of the zoological gardens, animal breeding scientists, and of the Working Committee of German Animal Breeders and the GEH.

The **Information Centre for Biological Diversity (IBV)** is integrated into the German Ministry of Agriculture and Nutrition (BLE) and manages the Central Documentation of Animal Genetic Resources in Germany (TGRDEU) directed by the Federal Ministry for Food, Agriculture and Forests. Here, existing data from research institutions, breeding organisations and umbrella organisations, from associations for the conservation of rare breeds as well as from governmental and federal data are summed up, processed and made available via the internet. The IGR is able to initiate measures and co-ordinate real projects.

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