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Mediterranean Citrus Network MECINET



Ö. Tuzcu
General Coordinator

The Mediterranean Citrus Network - MECINET was established in Adana in December 1993, within a "FAO Expert Meeting" gathering fourteen countries (Albania, Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey) to promote Inter-Country Co-operation on Citrus Production Improvement. Mr. A. Nicotra was designated as General Coordinator of the MECINET.

During an international technical meeting organized by MECINET in Acireale, Italy, in December 1997, the Global Citrus Germplasm Network, GCGN, was set up, in order to promote relations with other citrus networks being active in different areas worldwide.

The second General meeting of MECINET was held in Adana in September 1999. The meeting was convened and hosted by the University of Çukurova. Representatives from each of the following countries attended the meeting: Albania, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Greece, Iran, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey. Georgia, Iran and Jordan joined as new members of the Network.

During the meeting, particular emphasis was placed on activities for conservation and use of citrus diversity in the Mediterranean and the establishment of an appropriate computerized information system for the network.

The meeting recommended new activities should be carried out to face the current needs identified in country status reports and in line with the objectives of the Global Citrus Germplasm Network, Italy, in 1996. In particular, research activities should be furthered to increase fruit quality and improve varieties.

The network had to clearly define priority activities in the field of citrus

genetic resources conservation and utilization for food and agriculture, and to focus on initiatives to identify self-financing mechanisms for the network and/or possible donors for project funding.

Three Working Groups were set up :

1. *Working Group on Genetic Evaluation and Utilization of Citrus and Its Relatives*

Mrs. D'Onghia from MAIB, Italy, was designated to guide this Working Group, in consultation with the General Coordinator of MECINET, in order to promote activities and harmonize the expected outputs with respect to the above-mentioned topics.

2. *Working Group on Planting Material Improvement*

Based on the Italian national project "List of Citrus recommended varieties" led by Mr. Nicotra, the CB decided to launch a field evaluation of rootstocks and scions in the different climatic and soil conditions of MECINET countries. Mrs. A. Georgiou, from ARI, Cyprus, was designated to guide this working group.

3. *Working Group on Research on Citrus Fruit Quality Improvement*

Cooperative research activities to improve fruit size, appearance, sugars and acid content. Mr. Y. Erner from Volcani Center, Israel was designated to coordinate the research activities of this working group.

The General Meeting took note of the following country representatives: Mr. B. Nelaj from Albania, Mrs. A. Georgiou from Cyprus, Mr. R. Cottin from France, Mr. M. Khurtsilava from Georgia, Mrs. E. Protopapadakis from Greece, Mr. A. Luni from Iran, Mr. Y. Erner from Israel, Mrs. A.M. D'Onghia from Italy, Mrs. Al-Hallaq from Jordan, Mr. H. Zouhry from Morocco, Mr. L. Ben Mahmoud from Tunisia, Mr. Ö. Tuzcu from Turkey. Representatives from Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Malta, Portugal, Spain, and Syria remained officially unconfirmed.

The General Meeting took the decision to urge institutions to provide specialized training to scientists and technicians of MECINET countries on a specific subject on a short, medium and long-term basis.

Prof. Ö. Tuzcu, from the University of Çukurova, Turkey, was appointed as General Coordinator of MECINET for 1999- 2003.

In conclusion, as first step, it is advisable that FAO and CIHEAM should start a close collaboration on MECINET and MNCC activities, in particular, concerning the project proposal on "*Improvement of the citrus sector in the Mediterranean by setting up common conservation strategies for the free exchange of healthy citrus plant genetic resources*", which may be regarded as a model for a broader Mediterranean regional project.