Interviewing landrace farmers: how to get information?
- Examples from Finland

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Documenting landraces in cultivation

- Knowledge on landraces is typically scattered, non-organized, oral knowledge, rarely written down, local knowledge.
- The generation is vanishing to whom landraces has been part of the every day life.
- First: locate / find the landrace (with local knowledge) and place it (with GIS-method).
- Then: gather diverse knowledge (biological, cultural, historical, local).
Find / reach LR farmers

Direct contacts to LR farmers

Undirect contacts to LR farmers

Collecting preliminary information of LR (To evaluate could it be a LR)

Letters / emails / phone calls from/to LR farmers

Collecting LR inventory data

Face-to-face interviews at the farm

Detailed questionnaire filled by interviewing by phone

Detailed questionnaire filled by the LR farmer (mailed/www)
Find / reach LR farmers

Starting point in Finland in 2006: only 5 cereal LR farmers were registered to subsidiary system of on-farm management

→ there are more
→ how to reach them

→ National call for cereal LRs and old varieties
→ a research project to study of farmers’ motivation to grow cereal LRs and old varieties

Very time consuming part in the inventory
Received notifications of landraces and old commercial varieties of cereals

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<td>Landrace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Old variety</td>
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Channels to find /contact LR farmers

**Direct contacts to LR farmers**

- Registers of different organisations (registered conservation varieties in the official list of plant varieties; seed savers organisations and other);
- Contact lists of the earlier inventories and studies (new generation may continued the LR cultivation)
- e-mail lists (NGO’s)
- social media?

**Undirect contacts to LR farmers**

- Local informants: rural advisors and other local authorities; actors in local heritage work (local associations), other local informants
- Plant breeders and other scientists and experts
- Announcing national/local calls for LRs via different forums

→ Parallel use
National call for cereal LRs in Finland

- Announced by the National Programme for PGR in Finland in the early 2006
- Cereals, also some other species (flax, pea, and hemp) were quested
- Interest on
  1) landraces in cultivation
  2) those old commercial varieties bred in Finland that are not yet stored *ex situ* at the genebank (gaps)
WANTED: CEREAL LANDRACES

- make visible the search for landraces

→ In Finland: A poster and a leaflet (both in pdf format and paper format)
**Main message:** Finnish National Programme for Plant Genetic Resources need citizens’ help to save landraces

**What we are searching for:** List of target species. In this case landraces and old varieties of barley, oats, wheat and rye.

**What is a landrace:** Definition of a landrace in (in this case also a definition of and old varieties) written popularly

**Why the inventory is important:** Landraces have become rare but possibilities to find still them in cultivation
WANTED OLD VARIETIES
List of those old varieties bred in Finland in early 20th’s, which are still missing from NordGen (genebank)

How to contact: “write us about your landrace”. NOTE: we asked not to send seeds.

Asked for preliminary LR information:
- Where and for how long it has been cultivated?
- Where it has been originally obtained?
- Is it still cultivated?
- How does it look like?
- Is there a story or event linked to it?

Motivation to answer to the Call:
With your help we can save together the cultural heritage of cultivated plants (PGR)
Contact addresses
Preferably contact by a letter or an email

Presenting the context: General Information about the National Programme for Plant Genetic Resources and about *ex situ* conservation in genebank

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**Vilja- ja nurmikasvien maatiaisten ja vanhojen lajikkeiden ETSINTÄKUULUTUS**

Ota mihin yhteyttä mikään kirjoittamalla Ali sähkösi siemenin!  

**Kasvi geenivarajelma:**  
MERJA VETELÄINEN  
psh. (01) 2708 4227  
MERJA KÄRMINKISIINEN  
psh. (03) 4108 2452  
MTT, Maa- ja metsätalouslaitoksen tutkimuskeskus  
E-tale, 31600 Jokioinen  

ekasviennilaituri@mtt.fi, www.mtt.fi

**SUOMEN KASVI GEENI-VARAJELMA**  
Kasvien kasvittamisvarajelma perustettiin vuonna 2003  
lehdistöön maa- ja metsätalous liitteen kasvaniympäristöjen suojelua  
Suomessa. Suomi on allekirjoitettu kasviiinvaurioiden biologista  
monimuotoisuutta koskevan yleisopimukseen (CBD, 1993),  
jonka korostaa kasvupihalla tapahtuvan suojeluun merkittyä  
elsäätä geenipankkia pelloilla ja puutarhoilla.  
Maa- ja metsätalousministerio (10) siirtyi geenivaraukeavirtoihin  
ja harkitti kasvi  

**SUOMALAISTEN SIEMEN ENSI SEKÄ  
VAPAASTI SAATAVILLE ja maksutta**  
Voit tutustua geenipankin  

**www.ngb.se**  

**stored material**  

**SESTO information system**

Suomkilastiset NGB tiedostojen käyttöohjeet:  
http://ter.ngb.se/Library/ tutorials/kasikki.pdf
Distributing/Announcing the Call

- Different forums in parallel use
- Finnish Call was distributed nation wide through:
  - municipal libraries (a dense library net in Finland → reached every municipal)
  - local rural advisors and other local informants (turned out important and efficient, because they may already have or will have direct contacts to LR growers)
  - NGOs and their e-mail lists and magazines (promoting articles)
  - websites and seminars
Preliminary information of LR

• First hand information of LR: cultivation history, site of cultivation

→ Important to select out those which are definitely not LRs (it can be a bred variety)
→ Cost effectiveness
Collecting LR data by interviewing

• preliminary LR information → select the farmers to be interviewed

• Interviews at farms: face-to-face contact
  - possibility to ask further questions
  - observation
  - possibility to motivate to continue on-farm conservation
  - possibility collect seed samples
The old farmer (e.g. father of the farmer) may have the best knowledge on the origin, cultivation history and traditional cultivation methods → silent knowledge not written down, not always passed to or remembered by the next farmer generation

Not only the LR farmer has the knowledge about the LR
Female farmers may know more about the use of harvest (recipes; cooking; baking) and ritual or traditional use
• Questionnaire form to ensure that all questions will be asked
• Interviewer fills it, not the LR farmer
• Also recording of the interview is useful → much other information
• Photographs: farmer and the family, landrace, seed storage, farm buildings, fields → may provide useful information
Collecting LR data by questionnaire

- Also web-questionnaire available in www-sites
- Especially young LR farmers may prefer
- In Finland only few case of LRs found or data collected this way
- Mailed questionnaire (paper format) if direct contacts to LRs
Promotion and information materials

- to increase the understanding about LRs in general
  → also helps to reach LR farmers
  → get press/media interested in (e.g. articles in magazines and newspapers, TV news and a TV programme promoting calls)

In Finland:
- LR Brochure (presenting LR examples);
- website of PGR programme; including landrace information service for general audience
Historical data as background information

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Use of historical data

• To evaluate what LR groups can be still in cultivation
• To locate the LR
• To evaluate the LR (origin)

• As LR (passport) data itself (origin, use etc)
• As promoting, demonstrating LRs, LR based products and services
Example: Historic knowledge of a local apple tree

Diverse sources:

- old scientific literature: pomological, plant breeders publications (studies on landraces as breeding material)
- other old literature: about the site (e.g. manor), cook books etc.
- old photos and maps
- achieve documents
- Statistics (varieties in cultivation)
- interviews of local informants
Share of cereal landraces in cultivation in Finland, 1902—1955; %

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<tr>
<td>Winter wheat</td>
<td>~ 100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>~ 60-70</td>
<td>30,1</td>
<td>2,3 / &lt; 5,0</td>
<td>&lt; 5,0</td>
<td>0,7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring wheat</td>
<td>~ 100</td>
<td>94,3</td>
<td>~ 5</td>
<td>2,9</td>
<td>0,1</td>
<td>~ 0,1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barley</td>
<td>~ 100</td>
<td>69,8</td>
<td>~ 25</td>
<td>23,1</td>
<td>3,9</td>
<td>3,6</td>
<td>1,0</td>
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<td>33,8</td>
<td>~ 5-10</td>
<td>7,2</td>
<td>0,9</td>
<td>2,1</td>
<td>0,2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winter rye</td>
<td>~ 100</td>
<td>100 / 81,9</td>
<td>~ 70-80</td>
<td>23,4 / 35,9</td>
<td>28,9</td>
<td>34,3</td>
<td>18</td>
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Sources: compilation of statistics of national agricultural fairs, official statistics, and plant breeders evaluation of the bred varieties in cultivation; Heinonen 2001
Received notifications of landraces and old commercial varieties of cereals in 2000s

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Local apple variety called "Huvitus"

- In a local project we located its original place
- Garden was disappeared/abandoned for decades ago, only the apple tree (a part of it) was left and some traditional perennials
- Compared local knowledge (to find it) and historical data (about the variety) with DNA-fingerprinting data in variety identification
Demonstrating landraces
- Landrace plants (heritage plants) in public place (in museum garden) allows them to be visible and reachable.
- To find out and test different ways to present historic garden and old plant varieties to visitors → more knowledge on landraces to citizens.