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Contact points

Greece:

Amaltheia

Konstantinos Papaioannou

Argyrokastrou 51 str,

Papagos 15669

Athens.

Tel: 2310-467287 and 210-

6540814.

email amaltheia.org.gr@gmail.com

www.amaltheia.org.gr .

Italy:

Razze Autoctone a Rischio di Estinzione

Prof. Dr. Riccardo Fortina

Corso G. Agnelli, 32

I-10137 Torino

Italia

info@associazionerare.it

www.associazionerare.it

SAVE Foundation, Head Office,

Joseph-Belli-Weg 5, D-78467

Konstanz

office@save-foundation.net

www.save-foundation.net

www.elbarn.net

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Summary of Actions

This Area is made up of the following countries: Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Malta and Cyprus, all EU members. The recommended goals, requirements and actions were discussed in an Area Workshop in Legnaro, Italy from 24th to 26th April 2009 with participants from the above-mentioned countries. Those discussions laid the basis for this Area Action plan. A main goal of ELBARN is to build up a functioning network of Ark and Rescue Centres (A&RCs). Those stations will be used in emergencies, such as old age of important breeders or the outbreak of contagious diseases, to prevent the loss of animals from autochthonous livestock breeds. They also have an important function of raise public awareness of rare and autochthonous livestock breeds and traditional farming, and to conserve the breeds through active breeding work.

Agricultural development in the Area is generally hampered by land fragmentation, shallow soils and lack of adequate water supplies for agriculture. This Area is characterized by a high number of local breeds, but the concept of A&RCs is not yet well known. Breeders are generally aware of the role of animal biodiversity, but most of the conservation programmes are managed by single groups of interested people or organizations. For these reasons, the Mediterranean area needs:

- The rapid setting up of a Task Force, with the inclusion of stakeholders on all levels, to promote the idea of A&RCs, raising awareness and making efforts to involve new, younger farmers, to work on contingency plans, and to identify a suitable number of new A&RCs
- A&RCs need to be financed by local, regional or national administration. Due to limited funds, human resources and cultural reasons, criteria for breed conservation in the Mediterranean countries should include not only the risk status, but also the economical value (actual and potential) of the breed, and its scientific, environmental, social, historical, cultural and aesthetic values

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- For critically endangered breeds, generally kept by old farmers that have difficulties in gaining access to information and EU funds, one or more nucleus herds is needed
- Completion of breed identification and registration, followed up by continuous monitoring
- **A specific 'add-on' label for marketing and promoting the products and services of local livestock breeds should be supported. The promotion of a wide variety of products helps to conserve a wide variety of genes. The products sold under these labels are aimed at the high-earning sector of society as 'quality', 'exclusive', 'fine food', and so on.**

The complexity of the Mediterranean area, the large number of breeds, and the diverse ways with which they are approached and managed makes it difficult to reach a general agreement between all participants assessing the needs of the area. There was agreement that the EU subsidies for rare breeds should be given following a new approach, based not only on the risk status of a breed, but also on their scientific, economic, cultural, historical, aesthetic and environmental role. Southern Europe has experience in adding value to products from local breed; this strategy has proven to be efficient in many cases for saving endangered breeds and increasing their competitiveness. Improvements in legislation, information resources, awareness raising, mobilizing funds for emergencies and sharing research findings are all urgently needed.