

MNCC and MECINET action towards the improvement of the citrus sector in the Mediterranean

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Citrus is a major fruit crop in the Mediterranean region. It has a wide range of genetic diversity and grows in diverse ecological conditions.

The threats of genetic erosion of citrus diversities in the Mediterranean, mainly due to pests and diseases, even if they are not alarming yet, represent the major priorities to be faced as a guarantee of the citrus improvement in this area.

Therefore, without the maintenance and free exchange of citrus biodiversities, mainly the native traditional cultivars, now into disuse, which possess potential diversity to feed back the commercially grown cultivars, it is not possible to continue breeding activity of new races and varieties to meet the needs of local citrus industries.

Different methodologies for the collection, characterization/ evaluation, conservation, safe exchange of germplasm, beside the control and management of some major pests, have been set up and reported in specific workshops (i.e. Brisbane-Australia, 1997).

Relatively to the Mediterranean area, a network approach with active partners was established through the activities of the Mediterranean Citrus Network (MECINET) and the Mediterranean Network on Citrus Certification (MNCC), aimed to the pomological and sanitary enhancement of citrus productions.

Activities of MECINET and MNCC are reported in specific proceedings.

Thanks to the different expertise within these two networks, representing most of the Mediterranean countries, a common approach for the evaluation, conservation and utilization of citrus biodiversities is now necessary for a better use of human and economic resources.

Within MNCC a protocol for the production, maintenance and utilization of

healthy citrus selections in the Mediterranean was set up and most partner countries have been surveyed to assess the sanitary status of citrus and to select citrus stocks of native ecotypes.

Within MECINET four working groups have been established and approved by the Coordination Board made by country representatives, officially appointed by governments. These working groups are dealing with the major topics for citrus improvement in the Mediterranean :

1. genetic evaluation and utilization of citrus and its relatives.
2. improvement of planting material
3. improvement of citrus fruit quality

To this aim a proposal of a common program on “Improvements of the citrus sector in the Mediterranean by setting up common conservation strategies for the free exchange of healthy citrus plant genetic resources” was discussed by members of both networks in meetings “ad hoc” organized in Algiers, Algeria and Cairo, Egypt.

Improvement of the citrus sector in the Mediterranean by setting up common conservation strategies for the free exchange of healthy citrus plant genetic resources

