

GPGR3 - Gene Bank workshop

Abstract

ARCAD, a structuring node in the French plant genetic resource conservation system

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Agriculture in France has a primal role in economy and in rural organization throughout a very broad climatic and geographic distribution (mainland and overseas territories). Large and varied collections of plant genetic resources (including several labeled Biological Resource Centres) are managed by a large range of stakeholders. While efficient and sustainable, this decentralized system lacks integration and visibility in international debates and programmes.

ARCAD (Agropolis Resource Centre for Crop Conservation, Adaptation and Diversity www.arcad-project.org) is a project that brings together and develops biological, technological, training and knowledge resources scattered throughout the agricultural research community in Montpellier, south of France, to set up a new open multi-function platform devoted to the assessment and improved use of plant agrobiodiversity in Mediterranean and tropical regions. It is supported by Agropolis Fondation and the Région Languedoc Roussillon and jointly developed by CIRAD, INRA, IRD and Montpellier SupAgro.

A new building dedicated to research laboratories and conservation facilities complementing existing technical platforms will be constructed within three years. It will provide facilities for seed conservation, germplasm cryopreservation, DNA banking and analysis mainly for Mediterranean and tropical crops. It will host research teams that create tools and methods to analyze crop biodiversity (genomics, biostatistics, bioinformatics, social sciences including linguistics and ethnobotany) and develop a scientific agenda focussed on the historical, geographical and biological factors of crop domestication and adaptation.

ARCAD will continuously seek partnership with other national and international institutions devoted to plant agrobiodiversity conservation and research.