

INTRODUCTION

International scientific conference “Plant diversity towards society”

TERRA MADRE BULGARIA took place for the first time in Sofia, Bulgaria in 23–25 October, 2015. The forum was a platform of academics who work for the study, preservation and sustainable use of genetic resources and the traditional knowledge for their use; local rural communities, small-scale farmers and food producers who preserve the knowledge of sustainable food production; teachers who transfer knowledge to the young generations; chefs who cherish Bulgarian gastronomic traditions and mingle them into modern fusions; consumers whose choices of sustainably produced food turn into co-producers; journalists who spread the knowledge among the Bulgarian public.

Recognizing the need of sound academic research in support of the preservation and sustainable use of genetic resources in the Balkans a network of researchers from the region has been launched. The International scientific conference “Plant diversity towards society” that was a major part of the Terra Madre Bulgaria 2015 forum was the first event for structuring and strengthening such network.

Plant diversity underpins ecosystem functioning and services essential for human well-being. It provides for food security, human health, the provision of clean air and water; it contributes to local livelihoods, and economic development, and is essential for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, including poverty reduction.

The Conference had the following main achievements:

- By bringing together scientist from Bulgaria and the Balkans the conference opened room for discussion how to consolidate our knowledge on the use of plants in the region and how to sustain local communities to preserve this knowledge.

- By involving the relevant state authorities, i.e. Ministry of Environment and Waters and Ministry of Agriculture and Food the scientists demonstrated their support the national policy in support of research, conservation and sustainable use of plant biodiversity at ecosystem, species and genetic level.
- By putting together the existing knowledge on plant diversity, conservation and sustainable use the Conference directly supported the preparation of the mid-term national report on the achievement of Bulgaria in the implementation of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation which is due by the end of 2015.

Following the above mentioned achievements the work of the International scientific conference “Plant diversity towards society” was organized in seven main topics:

1. Plant evolution and climate change
2. Taxonomic and floristic studies. Conservation of wild flora
3. Ethnobotany
4. Fungal diversity and sustainable use
5. Habitat diversity and pastoralism
6. Plant genetic resources and agricultural sciences
7. Socio-economic dimensions of plant biodiversity

The present issue of *Phytologia Balcanica* includes selected reports from the conference. The order of the paper follows the topics of the conference.

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Environmentally Sustainable Socio-Economic
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