

ILCB: a web site about Italian landraces of common bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris* L.).

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Over the centuries, Italian farmers have selected and maintained common bean populations having the best adaptation to the pedoclimatic conditions of cultivation areas. Due to dissimilar criteria of selection and pressure adopted from region to region, a high degree of diversity for the most important traits both of plant and seed was generated. In the last century, a progressive decline of pulse cultivation took place in Italy. Moreover, in response to market demand, the local populations have been gradually replaced by improved cultivars. As a consequence, a large fraction of old landraces is disappeared, other are *ex situ* stored in some gene-banks, while only a small fraction is still cultivated in marginal areas where traditional agriculture is practiced. Though the importance to safeguard this remnant germplasm is unboubted, Italian landraces of common bean have been little investigated until now (Limongelli et al. 1996; Lioi, 1989; Piergiovanni et al. 2000a, b). Therefore, the promotion of studies of Italian common bean landraces should be given a high priority.

The knowledge of the populations still cultivated coupled to the availability of basic information about them could play an useful role to promote their on-farm conservation. Nowadays, the information technology (Internet) offers very interesting opportunities to exchange and acquire basic information about genetic resources not only among scientists but also with local associations, non-governmental organizations (NGO's), seed savers, common people, etc.

To promote the distribution of the information, a web site about Italian landraces of common bean called 'ILCB' was developed. ILCB has a user-friendly layout, contains the flowing information: collection site, indigenous name (if its exists), digitized photographs of the seeds, allows easy access to the results of biochemical analysis. References on international journals for more detailed data are reported if they exist. In the present form the web site contains information about 44 populations collected in five regions of central and southern Italy. The address of ILCB is:

<http://www.ba.cnr.it/~germap14/ilcb/>

References

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