

Exchange of animal genetic resources in research.

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Originally, the concept of animal genetic resources was related to the management of populations of domestic animals. Exchanges of reproductive material are handled by breeders' associations or breeding companies, whereas researchers are rather involved in studies of reproductive biotechnologies. Genomics has strongly increased the use of biological samples in animal sciences. DNA banking started in the 90s, with European projects on genetic diversity of a large range of breeds. At that time, getting the samples was straightforward and providers were acknowledged in the first paper.

The principles introduced by the Nagoya protocol are virtuous since traceability of resources used in research is a recommended practice to ensure the relevance of results. Furthermore, offering breeders a feedback on the results obtained with their samples is a way to facilitate their cooperation to a project. However, setting a complex administrative procedure for ABS raises a number of issues which are likely to have counterproductive effects: (1) cost and, particularly, time of collecting samples will increase, staff training and additional administrative work will increase expenses of research institutions which may decrease their capacity to conserve genetic resources; (2) time from the research idea to the start of the work will increase because of the need to obtain permits from foreign administrations, so that reactivity of research will decrease, projects aiming at a large geographic coverage will have to develop dedicated partnerships; (3) an unfair competition will arise for research and exploitation of research results in EU as compared to the USA which are not part of the CDB; (4) heterogeneity of national laws within EU will delay the realization of research. At least, a simplified access for researchers to the resources of their own country could be recommended within the EU.

The starting IMAGE project on animal gene banks could study options for a specific access framework to animal genetic resources, weighting all costs and benefits for research and stakeholders.