

## REPORT OF THE WG 'SWEET AND SOUR CHERRY' FOR YEAR 2020

Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic has entailed the cancellation of numerous meetings and conferences. Several members of the WG should have met during the month of March in Barcelona, at the Rosaceae Genomics Conference (RGC 10) and during the month of June in Dresden, at a 'Cherry days' event jointly organized by JKI and by VSUO (Hologovousy). Furthermore, we had foreseen a specific meeting of our WG, organized by the Ctifl at Balandran (Nîmes), during the months of October or November. For the moment, we have not decided to replace this physical meeting by a virtual one but this possibility is under study.

Following the meeting that was held in Brussels the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 2019, a questionnaire was prepared in order to gather specific information from each institution willing to participate to multi-site sweet and sour cherry varieties evaluation trials. This questionnaire was composed of 15 questions, most of them dealing with expectations/needs/constraints from each participant, such as what type of traits are the most valued in the new varieties, how many reference and new varieties can be planted, what would the rootstock of choice, etc. The second group of questions dealt with the technical description of each site (pedo-climatic conditions, training system, major cultural practices, etc.). Up to date, this questionnaire has been filled by 22 participants from 17 countries. Concerning the questionnaire dealing with sweet cherry, 20 varieties were proposed as 'reference' but three of them clearly emerged: 'Burlat', 'Regina' and 'Kordia'. As for the rootstocks, the most 'popular' were 'MaxMa14', 'GiSelA 5' and 'GiSelA 6'.

Two lists of descriptors have also been established, both for sweet and sour cherry (27 and 26 descriptors, respectively). It is highly likely that all participants will not be able to use all of them for their evaluations and further discussions are needed to define a set of core descriptors that should be, ideally, adopted by all participants.

Concerning the logistics of the implementation of this multi-site network, we have not been able for the moment to find a nurserymen company which would be willing to multiply materials, for instance, reference varieties, for the whole network. Hence, we decided that for those who wanted to initiate, or continue, this type of activity, they could cover the cost of the multiplication of their own reference varieties. Concerning the candidate varieties to be evaluated, several breeders started to 'offer' some new selections, although there haven't been for the moment too many proposals. One highly interesting information that came out from the questionnaires was the fact that some participants had very specific preferences with regards to the new varieties to be tested, and the opposite was true for other participants. Furthermore, among the first group, several participants focused on varieties which are already commercialized, and not so much necessarily on promising selections.

The year 2021 should normally be an important one for the cherry research community since the 9<sup>th</sup> International Cherry Symposium is supposed to be held by the end of May at Beijing. We do not have for the moment any information about a potential cancellation or postponement of the event.

In terms of large collaborative projects involving cherry researchers, I am not aware of any new funded initiative. Nevertheless, the field of research remains highly active. For instance, within the field of genomics, there are already three published full sweet cherry sequenced genomes ('Satonishiki', 'Tieton' and 'Big Star') and three other have been sequenced but not published yet ('Regina', 'Lapins' and 'Bing').