Algeria - Biodiversity conservation data

MAIN PHYTOGENETIC RESOURCES OF ALGERIA AND THE MAIN THREATS

Algeria has a large collection of natural resources, with 3,139 plant species, including 70 trees, as well as several endemic species such as the Saharan cypress (*Cupressus dupreziana*), the Algerian fir (*Abies numidica* L.) and the European black pine (*Pinus nigra*).

The main threats to biodiversity in Algeria are:

- Habitat loss and/or change.
- Excessive exploitation and contamination.
- Invasive and exotic species.

Fire is one of the main causes of forest destruction in Algeria, where losses have risen from 8,000 to 25,000 hectares per year. Fire has also caused problems for genetic stability in forest areas, and total losses are estimated at the equivalent of about 1,300 plant species.

STATUS OF IN-SITU AND EX-SITU CONSERVATION

Conservation of the country's biodiversity is laid down as a priority in the National Strategy and Plan of Action for Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity (Algerian Ministry for Land Planning and the Environment). This establishes several activities to be carried out, such as a programme to combat the degradation of natural resources, a systematic inventory of all the country's flora and fauna, a germplasm bank to conserve genetic resources of wild and cultivated flora and the creation of new protected areas.

In-situ conservation of biodiversity

Algeria has 11 national parks, 5 nature reserves and 4 hunting reserves, 42 wetlands of international importance and 33 places of special interest, accounting for 24% of the country's surface area. Forests cover 4.2 million hectares, 1.7% of the country's surface area.

Up to 2003, protection only covered land but, since then, the Habibas islands have been classified as a marine nature reserve, the Algerian-Tunisian Marine Sanctuary

is being created, a feasibility study has been carried out on extension of the El Kala National Park, classification of the Rachgoun islands is in the final stages, extension of the coastal Gouraya Taza Regional Park is being studied, etc.

The findings of studies on the state of in-situ conservation of biodiversity are alarming, especially:

- Genetic erosion mainly affects taxa of cultivated species. All species have varieties that are at risk. Farmers tend to use high-yielding varieties rather than the more resilient local varieties which do not require modern growing techniques. Imported seeds (first-generation clones and "terminator" seed genes) which cannot be used for planting in subsequent years are negatively affecting the conservation of biodiversity.
- The increased human influence on coasts, mountains, hills, the sub-Saharan steppes and the consequent alteration of natural habitats are reducing wild populations and eliminating ecotypes and taxa which are not even mentioned.

Ex-situ conservation of biodiversity

Algeria's National Strategy and Plan of Action for Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity points to the lack of will and control for ex-situ conservation in Algeria, poor maintenance of ex-situ collections in botanical gardens or parks, weak structures for conservation and research, the lack of central points of reference where scientific information on inventories, collections, etc. can be systematised. All this leads to a lack of conservation of Algerian crop varieties, such as cereals, fruit trees, vines, etc.

In order to hold back this erosion of biodiversity, the National Centre for the Development of Biological Resources (CNDRB) has been created. This is a public scientific and technical entity that is responsible on a national level for the conservation and production of knowledge, supervision, representation and recovery of resources and the national biological heritage. It covers both wild and cultivated fauna and flora, and coordinates all research activities in the country. When searching for information for this study, the following were also found: the Botanic Garden of Algiers University, the Wilaya de Béchar Botanic Garden and the Jardin d'Essais du Hamma, as well as research centres ? the Salle Pédagogique des zones arides, the Beni Abbes Research Station at Wilaya de Béchar, and the

Beni-Ouif Biology Laboratories.

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Centers of Plant Diversity

• Centre de Développement des Ressources Biologiques et Biosécurité
• Saharan Research Institute of Algiers University
• Jardin Botanique Wilaya de Bèchar
• Jardin d'Essais du Hamma
• Laboratoires de Biologie Saharienne de Beni-Ouif

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