

Rescue Station for endangered pig breeds in the Buna-Delta, Albania

Within the framework of nature observations and the SAVE Balkan project, pigs of the "Siska type" were found at the Albanian Adriatic coast. They very closely resemble the European primeval pig. Apart from these primeval pigs there are two other highly vulnerable, indigenous pig breeds in the region: the spotted Shkodra pig and the "Albanian landrace" race. With the generous support of Heidehof Foundation, Stuttgart, Germany, and with funding from the GEF Small Grants Programme, SAVE Foundation could initiate a rescue station for these pig breeds in Baks Rrijoll near the Natural Park Velipoje.



The rediscovered, primitive, autochthonous pig of „Siska type“ with little bacon and ham. The head is long and narrow, the ears short and erect.

Together with representatives of the local government, the national partner organization of SAVE, ALBAGENE and with the support of state agencies and the FAO National Coordinator Animals, Prof. Dr. Kristaq Kume, the interest of local people could be strengthened through discussions, seminars, and meetings on farm. In addition to animal emergency purchases, procurement of feed and veterinary services, a new barn was built, in which the three autochthonous pig breeds of the Bojana-Buna Delta can be kept in separate groups as a nucleus. The need for networking of the breeders and the development of small stocks has also been discussed. Through the mix of theoretical explanation and practical work, the project was anchored in the local population. Meanwhile, six farming families are involved and the interest is growing. Overall there are 29 sows, 6 boars, 11 gilts and 7 young boars (December 2009) included in the conservation program. Local marketing is noticeably worthwhile for the farmers, as the selling price of the animals over the regular price has increased by 80-90%. The low subcutaneous fat and the tastier meat of the local races when compared to the conventional meat has become known among consumers - not least through the project work. This increases the interest of farmers to benefit from the market prices and to breed the local breeds. Currently there are already three other farmers from Baks Rrijoll on the "waiting list" to be involved in the project. Meanwhile, according to this model, breeding groups of other local breeds such as Busha cattle or Velipoje goats are also kept in the region. Baks Rrijoll was therefore recorded in the Arca-Net (www.arca-net.info). Unfortunately, the Albanian government has been unable to pay subsidies up to now. Therefore, it is important to build upon and to strengthen the high motivation of the farmers and the newly launched market interest. A wider genetic support of the rearing is also necessary to preserve the breeds in small populations. Thus, the search for additional animals needs still to be continued. Faced with empty coffers, the implementation, however, is still difficult.