

Opening Symposium

Armenia is one of the world importance centers of the origin of agro-biodiversity, with many native organisms, wild relatives of world-famous plants and cultivated varieties.

In this respect, their discovery, inventory, preservation and research are very important in terms of clarification of their features and genetic applicability, which is in the focus of the daily work of many scientific and social organizations. However, they are still not available to the international scientific and social community.

In Armenia most scientific communities do not share global scale biodiversity information through the GBIF network due to a variety of factors, including lack of information of relevant collections, lack of knowledge on data gitization tools and skills, the absence of digital data, specialists, the barrier of language etc.

Armenia has been integrated into GBIF in 2020 in the close cooperation with Armenian National Agrarian University and Environmental Ministry of RA. Armenia is the second country to become a GBIF Participant after taking part in the Norwegian-funded BioDATA project, implemented nationally by International Research Programme Coordinating Unit of the Armenian National Agrarian University (ANAU).

This allows successfully to participate in CESP programme, that has funded by GBIF in 2021. The program will be implemented by the "Agrobiotechnology Scientific Center" of ANAU under the leadership of Dr. Armine Abrahamyan, GBIF Armenian Node Manager and Deputy Head of the Scientific Programs Coordination Department of ANAU.

Opening symposium of "Mentoring GBIF Armenia- GBIF France" program took place in a hybrid way at ANAU on December 16 in 2021. Among the participants were representatives of Yerevan State University, Armenian State Pedagogical University, the Institute of Botany of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia, the Scientific Center of Zoology and Hydrology, Gyumri selection station, ANAU scientific centers, agricultural NGOs (Green Lane, CARD, ISC etc), ANAU deans, heads of departments, students and naturalists. GBIF Scientific Officer Dr. Dmitry Schigel, national representatives of the GBIF France, also Armenian scientists joined online.

ANAU Vice-Rector Dr. Hrachya Tspnetsyan, Dmitry Schigel (GBIF Secretariat, Copenhagen, Denmark), GBIF France National Node staff Sophie Pamerlon made an opening and welcoming speech. They also made a presentation, emphasizing the importance of Armenia's membership in the GBIF and the opportunities for digitization of biodiversity data for the internationalization of science.

Dr Armine Abrahamyan presented the "Mentoring GBIF Armenia-GBIF France" project. As she mentioned, the accurate data is the basis for developing better science and biodiversity conservation policies in the future. Within the framework of the project, a national website will be created, the data of GBIF Armenia staff and national stakeholders will be digitized. It can be a unique open access platform for any research organization or individual on biodiversity conservation, both within Armenia and internationally.

The event was summed up with interesting questions, answers and discussions. The participants expressed great interest in being included in the program both in capacity building trainings and in digitization of biodiversity data.