

*Support to cultivation and realization of Economically Important Species of Adjara  
Wild Flora in the Buffer Zone of Mtirala National Park*

Under Eco-Awards 2009 Program, the **Association for Environment Protection and Sustainable Development MTA-BARI** implemented a project aimed at supporting sustainable use of economically important and endangered indigenous species of Adjara wild flora (*Galanthus woronowii* and *Cyclamen coum*) included in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and involving local population in marketing of these species.

The project was implemented in the buffer zone of Mtirala National Park and covered three districts of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara: Kobuleti, Khelvachauri and Keda.

During the recent years, anthropogenic stress on the environment has been increasing, jeopardizing genetic erosion of unique species of plants.

Especially this refers to the plants, having economic importance, such as *Galanthus woronowii* and *Cyclamen coum*. These plants have decorative and therapeutic features and are widely spread in the buffer zone of Mtirala National Park and adjacent territories. Population residing on these territories is poor and strongly dependent on local resources, resulting in uncontrolled use of the given species. The plants are collected directly from nature, while according to the CITES convention, for commercial purposes they have to be grown and collected in specially designated territories and plots under special control (*ex situ*, off site). Apart from that, since there is strong demand on the bulbs of *Galanthus woronowii* in Europe, there is a potential for exporting them. Thus, propagation of these two species *ex situ* (off site) can serve as an alternative source of income for the local population.



*Photo by: Association Mta-Bari  
Cyclamen coum*

**Project Objectives:**

- Involve farmers in cultivation of commercially important species of Adjara wild flora: *Galanthus woronowii* and *Cyclamen coum*, which are protected under CITES convention (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora)
- Support marketing of commercially important species of wild flora: *Galanthus woronowii* and *Cyclamen coum* through direct contacts.



Photo by: Association Mta-Bari  
*Galanthus woronowii*

## Implemented Activities and Results

- Based on the preliminary meetings, 22 families, residing in the buffer zone on Mtirala National Park, were selected. The families were handed the bulbs of *Galanthus woronowii* (4800kg) and *Cyclamen coum* (200kg) free of charge for cultivation of these species on their private plots. The farmers were also provided consultations on cleaning and planting of those bulbs.
  - Farmers received special informational brochures, entitled *Support to cultivation and realization of Economically Important Species of Adjara Wild Flora in the Buffer Zone of Mtirala National Park*, containing guidelines on cultivation, marketing and export strategies of the target plant species.
- On September 19, 2009 a seminar was organized in Batumi, where attendees included experts, representatives of local and central government, NGOs, farmers and other stakeholders. During the meeting an agreement was reached among the Ministry of Environment Protection, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development and experts involved in the project to take measures for tackling the problems existing in this field.
  - The plots were inspected several times by an inspector from the Caucasus Wild Plant Certification Center to ensure that among the bulbs that were gathered during inspections, did not include ones prohibited by CITES for export. Today, the growth and development cycle of the cultivated bulbs completely corresponds to its biological rhythm. In 2013, the caliber of the bulbs will fully conform to the realization standards and the farmers will have an opportunity to increase the scale of the propagation of the plants so that they can later provide them to the producers licensed by the Ministry of Environment or to other foreign companies interested in this field.
  - The Association Mta-Bari closely cooperated with another winner of Eco-Awards 2009 Program: Wild Plant Conservation Association (WPCA), which was implementing a similar project in Tbilisi and its vicinity. The two organizations exchanged experiences and lessons learned. In addition, WPCA staff visited Adjara and collected *Galanthus woronowii* seeds, which were later stored in the seed bank.

### Project Duration:

April, 2009 - November, 2010

### Donors and Partners

The following project was implemented within the framework of the Eco-Awards 2009 Program. Eco-Awards Program is initiated and financed by BP, on behalf of its oil and gas co-venturers (BTC Co. SCP Co.) and administered by Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF).

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