



Our Reference: DRC/ROE/1536//2010

27 August 2010

H.E. Elena Skrynnik
Minister of Agriculture of the Russian Federation
1/11 Orlikov Pereulok
Moscow 107139
Russia

Excellency,

The Pavlovsk Experimental Station collection is without equal in the world. Its true value lies not in the past, and the many economically valuable fruit varieties created from material at Pavlovsk, but in the future, as Russia and the rest of the world struggle to adapt to global environmental challenges and face threats from natural hazards. Consequently, we are writing to voice our concerns that the transfer of the Pavlovsk Experimental Station land puts at great risk the survival of this collection, and to solicit your support on this important issue.

Without access to the diversity conserved at Pavlovsk, and the information about it gathered over decades by dedicated scientists, it is unlikely that the fruit and horticulture sectors, imperative to the Russian economy, will survive coming changes. The rest of the world too, which donated material to Pavlovsk in good faith, expects continued access to this material.

We appreciate the need for houses for the people of St Petersburg, nevertheless, we urge you to bear in mind that while houses can be built almost anywhere, the collection housed at the Pavlovsk Station can survive only there. Moving more than 5000 samples safely to a new site is difficult and expensive, and breaks the long history of research at Pavlovsk that adds so much value to the collection.

As you are aware, the Russian Federation is a Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Convention requires Parties, *inter alia*, to “establish and maintain facilities for ex-situ conservation of components of biological diversity” and “maintain facilities” and “regulate and manage collections”. We are thankful for the efforts that the Russian Federation continues to put into its obligations to the Convention. We further suggest that this year, which has been designated the International Year of Biodiversity by the United Nations, a decision to save the extraordinary collection of agricultural biodiversity at Pavlovsk would send a clear signal to the international community of Russia’s continued commitment to conservation.

We understand that the Vavilov Research Institute for Plant Industry has appealed to the High Arbitration Court against the Supreme Arbitration Court’s decision to transfer the land to the Russian Housing Development Foundation, and that the matter will be decided finally within a month. For the sake of the future of Russian agriculture and in recognition of the global importance of agricultural biodiversity, we respectfully implore you to use your influence and authority to make an appeal to the highest level for the conservation of the collection located at the Pavlovsk Experiment Station.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration,



Achim Steiner
Executive Director
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