PRO-WILD
Protect & Promote Crop Wild Relatives

Grant agreement number: 101134965
Horizon Europe – Research and Innovation Action

Deliverable 4.3

The Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Due date of the deliverable: M6 – February 2025

Actual submission date: M6 – February 2025

WP concerned	WP4	
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Version V1	V1	
Dissemination level	• PU: Public - fully open	

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union (Grant agreement nr 101134965), the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research, and Innovation (SERI, contract nr 24.00389) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI, reference nr 10121521). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the EU, SERI or UKRI. Neither the EU nor the granting authorities can be held responsible for them.

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Acronyms

BIOTECH	Biotechnology
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CWRs	Crop Wild Relatives
EU	European Union
FW	Field Workshop
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
HCC	Highclere Consulting
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MS	Member States
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
PRO-WILD	Protect and Promote Crop Wild Relatives
RW	Reflection Workshop
SH	Stakeholders
WP	Work Package

1. Summary

The Stakeholder Engagement Strategy for the PRO-WILD project is a guiding document, developed by the Highclere Consulting team, with the direct support of the WP4 team and inputs from the project partners. This is a guiding document to support partners in engaging efficiently with the key stakeholders, in order to achieve the project objective.

The document presents some highly relevant analyses about the relevant stakeholders: stakeholder mapping (identification and analysis), objectives, engagement approach, action plan, and risk management framework. All the information was collected by direct input from the partners during the first months of the project (September 2024-January 2025).

The main tool used is the stakeholder mapping, that was implemented with the direct input from project partners. Also, for the prioritisation of the stakeholders, the power grid tool was applied.

In addition to this strategy, relevant guidelines will be elaborated by Highclere Consulting, including dedicated webinars and customised advice for specific partners..

Due to the implementation duration, this document can be subject to changes, and it will be updated regularly when new information is gathered.

2. Introduction

Crop wild relatives (CWRs) are wild species that are genetically related to cultivated crops and constitute a rich resource for crop improvement and food security. They contain genes that can enhance resilience to biotic and abiotic stress and the nutritional quality of their crop relatives. The objectives of PRO-WILD (*Protect and Promote Crop Wild Relatives*) are to identify priorities for in-situ conservation of the selected CWR gene pools, to survey and complement CWR gene bank collections, and to increase the use of CWRs in crop improvement. Overall, PRO-WILD-specific goals will be coordinated with input from **breeders, farmers, and consumers**.

PRO-WILD is a multi-actor project and recognises the **necessity of engaging with value chain actors** in the development phase of the new varieties (researchers, nature reserves, botanical gardens, etc.) to ensure that the needs of all stakeholders, including farmers, seed buyers, through processors, such as bakers, and eventually consumers, are actively consulted throughout the process.

The Stakeholder Engagement Strategy aims to strengthen the multi-actor approach adopted by PRO-WILD and thereby contribute to maximising its overall impact.

The Strategy has the following specific objectives:

1) Facilitate active engagement of relevant stakeholders.
2) Map project stakeholders: clearly define each stakeholder group, prioritise them and identify appropriate engagement methods.

3) Set guidelines for partner interactions: ensuring that the partners will effectively engage with stakeholders, adapting communication and dissemination activities to meet their information needs and raise awareness about PRO-WILD.
4) Elaborate concrete paths for engagement by developing methods and facilitation techniques to contact stakeholders, build long-term relationships and reach out to practitioners, researchers and decision-makers to encourage the use of project results.
5) Build capacity: by training partners on stakeholder engagement and facilitation techniques.

The Stakeholder Engagement Strategy sets out the framework for stakeholder engagement within the PRO-WILD project, and it is intended to serve as a guide for the project partners. The Strategy is developed by HCC (Highclere Consulting) with support from all partners. It takes into account the communication, dissemination and exploitation plans developed by WP4 to increase the impact and engagement of all relevant stakeholders. The Strategy is built around describing the stakeholder identification and analysis, engagement objectives, approach and action plan, as well as the risk management.

IMPORTANT: The Stakeholder Engagement Strategy is designed to help and guide project partners to effectively manage the stakeholder engagement process in order to achieve the project goals and objectives. This strategy **does not** propose monitoring and evaluation measures but may be subject to updates as and when partners identify areas for improvement in the engagement process. However, HCC is available for any guidance that may be required based on the concrete situations encountered during the implementation of the project activities.

Within the PRO-WILD project, the consortium partners are fully responsible for planning and implementing the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy. This requires them to:

1. **Identify stakeholders** at national, regional, and international levels, based on analysis done in Chapter 3.
2. **Adjust the objectives** outlined in Chapter 4 and Chapter 6 to fit their specific national/regional contexts.
3. **Plan engagement activities**, aligning them with the meetings and actions already budgeted in the project, as presented in Chapter 6.
4. **Implement the strategy** effectively.

Additionally, each partner is responsible for **evaluating** their engagement activities to ensure success and alignment with project goals, using a simple table structure outlined below. The table will be created as a separate document and sent out to partners. This will also facilitate the monitoring and reporting of communication, dissemination and exploitation activities according to the Horizon Europe and Commission guidelines.

Table 1 Evaluation table for stakeholders' interaction

Type of interaction	Number of stakeholders	Stakeholder priority	Interaction feedback	Next steps
Meeting	*10*	*Medium and low*	*The stakeholders were active and engaged, interested in the project, offering feedback and asking questions.*	*A working group will be created to continue the consultations. This group will meet one a month to discuss.*

This document, along with its annexes, provides practical tools and clear guidance to help partners develop and execute these tasks efficiently and comprehensively.

3. Stakeholder Identification and Analysis ("stakeholder mapping")

Stakeholder Identification and Analysis is a critical component of the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy. This chapter provides a structured methodology for identifying, categorising, and analysing stakeholders to facilitate effective engagement and risk management. By systematically mapping stakeholders and assessing their influence, interests, and potential impact, a targeted engagement strategy can be developed that aligns with the PRO-WILD project goals and ultimately contributes to project sustainability.

The PRO-WILD Stakeholder Identification process employs various data-gathering techniques, including interviews with partners, surveys, and document analysis, to comprehensively identify all parties affected by or capable of affecting the project. This initial step ensures that no critical stakeholder is overlooked, reducing the risk of unexpected challenges later in the project lifecycle.

Once stakeholders are identified, the Stakeholder Mapping Power-Interest Grid is used to categorise stakeholders based on their level of influence, interest, urgency, and legitimacy. This framework facilitates prioritisation by allowing project partners to quickly visualise which stakeholders require closer management and which can be informed with minimal resources.

Stakeholder Analysis then involves an in-depth examination of each stakeholder's motivations, potential concerns, and influence over project outcomes. Key dimensions of this analysis include:

- **Influence and Power**: Evaluating the authority or control a stakeholder has over project resources, decision-making, or key deliverables.
- **Interest and Motivation**: Understanding the specific goals, priorities, and expectations of each stakeholder in relation to the project.
- **Impact and Vulnerability**: Assessing how project decisions or outcomes may affect each stakeholder group, especially those with high vulnerability to project changes.

- **Engagement Risks**: Identifying potential risks related to stakeholder interactions, including conflicts of interest, resistance to change, or communication barriers.

The outputs from this analysis will inform the development of tailored engagement strategies in subsequent chapters. By the end of this chapter, project partners and stakeholders will have a comprehensive, data-driven understanding of stakeholder dynamics, which is essential for risk mitigation, resource allocation, and maintaining positive stakeholder relationships throughout the project lifecycle.

IMPORTANT: All analyses and conclusions in this document are based on the data and information provided by the project partners. It is important to emphasise that this document reflects the state of knowledge available at the time of its preparation (February 2025). During the course of the project, adjustments or updates to the data may be required based on new information or changing circumstances.

3.1 Stakeholder Identification

The success of the PRO-WILD project hinges on the effective engagement and management of its diverse stakeholders. By identifying their interests, expectations, and level of influence, we can proactively address potential challenges and capitalise on opportunities. This section provides a roadmap for building strong stakeholder relationships, fostering trust, and aligning diverse perspectives to achieve shared objectives. This baseline information is essential for efficient engagement planning.

During the first PRO-WILD Stakeholders Mapping Workshop in September 2024, all the relevant stakeholder categories were identified. Working with the consortium teams in 5 rounds, the main aspects of the stakeholder mapping were addressed. See Annex 1, for more details about the workshop.

The first discussions created a solid base for further analysis, especially for the information needed in the next chapters, related to prioritisation and planning activities. Based on this approach, with the support of partners, key stakeholder types were identified and presented below.

There are five main categories that the project needs to work with: Researchers and other technical specialists (1), Natural reserves and biodiversity specialists (2), Farmers and Consumers (3), Educational and civic society groups (4), and Authorities and Policymakers (5).

The first step was to know more about the main stakeholders that we identified:

- Their interests and expectations.
- Level of influence and impact.
- Their roles and relationship to the PRO-WILD project.

Each of these aspects that were debated and further completed, are presented in the separate section below, organised after the stakeholder category.

3.1.1 Stakeholder Interests and Expectations

Misaligned stakeholder interests, concerns and expectations risk posing significant challenges to the PRO-WILD project. To avoid this, together with the partner`s representatives, we have explored and debated the specific motivations, worries, and aspirations of key groups involved, and examined how these factors influence their engagement and impact on the project's development. By identifying and addressing these concerns proactively, we can mitigate risks and ensure the project's long-term success. During the workshop, the participants discussed the level of interests and expectations of key stakeholders, highlighting potential areas of conflict to consider when proposing strategies for building consensus and fostering cooperation.

Table 2 Stakeholders' interests

Stakeholder Category	Interests (are they aligned with the Project?) concerns/expectations
Stakeholder Category 1: Research and technical experts	
Researchers/Scientific community/Other similar projects	Most of these stakeholders may be worried that there is not enough time during the project to do the proper research for relevant results. In general, their interests are aligned with the project. And they can be the best supporters of project activities and results.
Breeders	A main concern can be that the results of the project, the new crops, will be too 'wild' for breeders (and farmers): not so easy to exploit in breeding, cultivating etc. Also, their general interest in having better seeds and crops is a very good motivation to become supporters of the project.
International organisations (CGIAR)	A main concern can be that the results of the project, the new crops, will be too 'wild' for breeders (and farmers): not so easy to exploit in breeding, cultivating etc. Also, their general interest in having better seeds and crops is a very good motivation to become supporters of the project. Sequences in property rights, impact on parenting and development of genome entity (BIOTECH Society); properties of the CWRs we work on.
Seed buyers/vendors	A main concern can be that the results of the project, the new crops, will be too 'wild' for breeders (and farmers): not so easy to exploit in breeding, cultivating

Stakeholder Category	Interests (are they aligned with the Project?) concerns/expectations
	etc. Also, their general interest in having better seeds and crops is a very good motivation to become supporters of the project.
Food & bioeconomy businesses	They are interested in new crops, new traits, and genetic diversity.
Gene bank managers	Sequences in property rights, impact on parenting and development of genome entity (BIOTECH Society); properties of the CWRs we work on.
Industries + biological products +Chemicals	A main concern can be that the results of the project, the new crops, will be too 'wild' for breeders (and farmers): not so easy to exploit in breeding, cultivating etc. Also, their general interest in having better seeds and crops is a very good motivation to become supporters of the project.
Stakeholders Category 2: Natural reserves and biodiversity specialists	
Botanical gardens	They are interested in diversity and beautiful plants.
Natural Reserve Networks/Protected Areas	They are interested in increasing understanding of the value of the plants they are protecting/conserving; and guidelines for land management.
Foresters and Fishers/Groups	Like in all new projects, they can be concerned: resistant to the introduction of new crops/plants etc.
Aquaculture producers	Like in all new projects, they can be concerned: resistant to the introduction of new crops/plants etc.
Stakeholders Category 3: Farmers and Consumers	
Farmers	Very interested in more resilient crops, but also resistant to change and to adopt new ideas.
Advisors	Very interested in more resilient crops. Essential in supporting farmers to adopt new crops.
Processors/Bakers	They expect to have good grain and better flour quality, from more resilient crops.
Consumers and consumer associations	They expect good food quality and healthy food.
Stakeholders Category 4: Educational and civic society groups	

Stakeholder Category	Interests (are they aligned with the Project?) concerns/expectations
Local communities	They expect better results from the use of the new technologies. There is a specific need to communicate that this project is not using GMOs. Most people believe that any project related to genetics, also involves GMOs. This is not the case.
Students	Interested in adaptation to agroecology and Climate Change
Professors	Interested in adaptation to agroecology and Climate Change
Schools/teachers	Interested in adaptation to agroecology and Climate Change
NGOs	Interest in the project results. They expect better results from the use of the new technologies. There is a specific need to communicate that this project is not using GMOs. Most people believe that any project related to genetics, also involves GMOs. This is not the case.
Citizens	Environmental concerns. Interested in adaptation to agroecology and Climate Change
Stakeholders Category 5: Authorities and Policymakers	
Government representatives (Public authorities)	Expect advice on how to protect the CWRs.
Policymakers	Expect advice on how to protect the CWRs.
Academic bodies	Interest in the project results.
EU institutions	Very interested in solutions to address challenges: maybe this project is considered too ambitious?
UK and Swiss funding institutions	They expect that the project will have the promised results.

3.1.2 Stakeholder Level of Influence

Stakeholders are likely to play a critically important role in shaping the outcomes of the PRO-WILD project. Stakeholder influence refers to their ability to directly or indirectly impact the project's decisions, policies, and long-term success. We examine how various stakeholders can influence PRO-WILD, either by supporting or potentially challenging project initiatives.

Understanding stakeholder influence is essential for the PRO-WILD team to anticipate actions, align interests, and adapt strategies to achieve conservation and research goals. This section explores the mechanisms through which these stakeholders influence PRO-WILD, as well as strategies for managing this influence. By analysing the power dynamics and potential actions of each stakeholder group, the project can better anticipate challenges, foster collaborations, and leverage the influence of key partners to achieve its conservation and sustainability goals.

Table 3 Stakeholders' influence

Stakeholder Category 1: Research and technical experts	Influence (they have the power to influence the project results/how can they influence the project results)
Researchers/Scientific community/Other similar projects	They are very important for the project, influencing the quality of the results.
Breeders	Because the new crops can be considered "too wild" to integrate/testing and validating our products-introgression, can be a problem for the final results.
International organisations (CGIAR)	Because the new crops can be considered "too wild" to integrate/testing and validating our products-introgression, can be a problem for the final results. They can influence the providing of genetic material and related international agreements.
Seed buyers/vendors	Because the new crops can be considered "too wild" to integrate/testing and validating our products-introgression, can be a problem for the final results.
Food & bioeconomy businesses	Very interested in new materials, new products, they can put more pressure on the project team to have the results sooner.
Gene bank managers	They are the KEY to provide genetic material and setting international agreements.
Industries + biological products +Chemicals	Because the new crops can be considered "too wild" to integrate/testing and validating our products-introgression, can be a problem for the final results.
Stakeholders Category 2: Natural reserves and biodiversity specialists	

Stakeholder Category 1: Research and technical experts	Influence (they have the power to influence the project results/how can they influence the project results)
Botanical gardens	They can support or not support the project actions. This can influence the partnership to be established.
Natural Reserve Networks/Protected Areas	They are a big help to survey CWR habitats and diversity. Their support can influence directly the results.
Foresters and Fishers/Groups	Protected areas targeted by the project can be impacted, especially ones near the seashores, if these SH are not supporting.
Aquaculture producers	Protected areas targeted by the project can be impacted, especially one near the seashores, if these SH are not supporting.
Stakeholders Category 3: Farmers and Consumers	
Farmers	Farmers' choices can influence the project results.
Advisors	Essential in supporting farmers to adopt new crops.
Processors/Bakers	Reaching the end consumers depends on their will to adopt new seeds and adapt to new products.
Consumers and consumer associations	
Stakeholders Category 4: Educational and civic society groups	
Local communities	They can negatively influence the project if they do not receive the right message about its objective and results.
Students	Low influence
Professors	Low influence
Schools/teachers	Low influence
NGOs	NGOs vs Genetic Editing Breeders. They can negatively influence the project if they do not receive the right message about its objective and results.
Citizens	They can negatively influence the project if they do not receive the right message about its objective and results.

Stakeholder Category 1: Research and technical experts	Influence (they have the power to influence the project results/how can they influence the project results)
Stakeholders Category 5: Research and technical experts	
Government representatives (Public authorities)	Influence on resources for partners on top of the EU funding
Policymakers	Influence the support in implementing policy for the adoption of the project results on a larger scale (national, regional etc.).
Academic bodies	They can support the lobby activities at the national level, and they have influence at the higher level.
EU institutions	They can promote the project activities/results.
UK and Swiss funding institutions	They can promote the project activities/results.

3.1.3 Stakeholder Impact

In the PRO-WILD project, stakeholders are both affected by the project and have a significant impact on its success. Understanding this two-way relationship is crucial for strategic planning and effective engagement.

How might stakeholders be impacted by the PRO-WILD project?

Here are some examples. For local farming communities, the new crops can be challenging to cultivate and use, but can offer long-term benefits by improving crop resilience and biodiversity. Government agencies as regulatory bodies may need to develop new policies supporting the adoption of new crops and making sure that the natural reserves needed for wild crops are protected and/or enlarged, considering the results of the project. Also, PRO-WILD can expand research opportunities, influencing priorities and funding focused on CWRs, for the scientific world. Gene banks will have more diverse material. For environmental NGOs, the project aligns with their biodiversity goals, though they may advocate for adjustments to ensure ecological integrity. As for the Private Agriculture Sector, agribusinesses benefit from access to CWR genetic resources, but may face restrictions that impact commercial interests.

On the other hand, how do stakeholders impact the project?

The support of Local Farming Communities is essential for sustainable CWR habitat management and also to adopt new crops and create new products/food recipes, etc. Government Agencies can shape project scope and feasibility using policy and funding decisions. Researchers' and Gene Banks' expertise and data drive project methodologies and validate outcomes. Through advocacy and partnerships Environmental NGOs can boost project support or raise concerns if goals misalign. Private Agriculture Sector: Agribusinesses provide funding and influence but may press for access to specific CWRs.

By recognising these impacts, PRO-WILD can align stakeholder interests, reduce risks, and foster collaborations that strengthen the project's conservation objectives.

Table 4 Stakeholders' impact

Stakeholder Category 1: Research and technical experts	**Impact (they are impacted by the project/they impact the project)**
Researchers/Scientific community/Other similar projects	Their impact on the traits of the new crops is to be considered!
Breeders	They are an important source of diversity for breeding. They can impact the project results but also can be impacted by the project (in a positive way, by providing learning experiences and the possibility of new crops).
International organisations (CGIAR)	An important source for breeding and reaching farmers. They can have an important impact on project results.
Seed buyers/vendors	They are an important source of diversity for breeding. They can impact the project results but also can be impacted by the project (in a positive way, by providing learning experiences and the possibility of new crops).
Food & bioeconomy businesses	Key stakeholders for implementing the project results into the economic dynamic, make it easier to adopt the new products, etc. Can be impacted by the project results: new products based on the new crops.
Gene bank managers	Difficulties with new/wild forms; Optimisation of databases of collection. Their impact can be important to the project results.
Industries + biological products +Chemicals	They are an important source of diversity for breeding. They can impact the project results but also can be impacted by the project (in a positive way, by providing learning experiences and the possibility of new crops).
Stakeholders Category 2: Natural reserves and biodiversity specialists	Impact (they are impacted by the project/they impact the project)
Botanical gardens	The project will have positive impact for them: new plants to grow. Also, their good collaboration can have a positive impact on project results.

Natural Reserve Networks/Protected Areas	New or enlarged protected areas CWR-oriented; material/results to raise awareness of the value of CWRs for conservation. The impact of the project can be very positive for them.
Foresters and Fishers/Groups	Low impact/ impacted
Aquaculture producers	Low impact/ impacted
Stakeholders Category 3: Farmers and Consumers	Impact (they are impacted by the project/they impact the project)
Farmers	Farmers' choices can impact the project results, regarding the support. They can be impacted by the project also. Breeding for resistance to the future environment for farmers.
Advisors	Essential in supporting farmers to adopt new crops. Can have a positive impact for the project.
Processors/Bakers	Reaching the end consumers depends on their will to adopt new seeds and adapt to new products. They can have an impact on creating and promoting new products. Positive impact from the project
Consumers and consumer associations	They can have an impact in adopting new products. Positive impact from the project.
Stakeholders Category 4: Educational and civic society groups	Impact (they are impacted by the project/they impact the project)
Local communities	Positive impact from the project: healthier environment with les chemical treatment for corps/ final products. If not properly informed, they can have a negative impact on accepting the project.
Students	Important new information for learning processes.
Professors	Important new information for learning processes.
Schools/teachers	Important new information for learning processes.
NGOs	Positive impact from the project: establishment of new protected areas and healthier environment with less chemical treatment for corps/ final products. If not properly informed, they can have a negative impact on accepting the project.
Citizens	Positive impact from the project: healthier environment with less chemical treatment for corps/ final products. If not properly informed, they can have a negative impact on accepting the project.

Stakeholders Category 5: Research and technical experts	Impact (they are impacted by the project/they impact the project)
Government representatives (Public authorities)	Dealing with different countries' laws can have an impact on project results. Their support is important.
Policymakers	A lack of understanding of the positive impact of the project can be a barrier to promoting good policy for using the end results.
Academic bodies	They can have a positive impact on promoting the project results at the higher levels, for policy.
EU institutions	They can impact the funding of similar projects to follow, if they do not have the right information about this one.
UK and Swiss funding institutions	They can impact the funding of similar projects to follow, if they do not have the right information about this one.

3.2 Prioritisation of Stakeholders

Based on the analysis done in the above sections, there are some stakeholders that are high priority in planning a more focused engagement and in all the communication, dissemination and exploitation activities. **This category, key stakeholders with high priority, will be the focus of this strategy**, but there will be some recommendations for the medium and low-level priority stakeholders, that need to be also kept at a different level of engagement.

The main stakeholders that need a high priority level of engagement are: Researchers, the Scientific community, Representative from other similar projects, Breeders, International organisations (CGIAR), Seed buyers/vendors, Gene bank managers, Botanical gardens, Natural reserve networks/, Farmers (Farmers' Associations), Advisors, Government representatives (Public authorities), Policymakers. All these are very important to engage with, to build long term relationships and to have them informed using customised communication tools and messages.

The medium priority stakeholders: Food & bioeconomy businesses, Industries + biological products +Chemicals, Processors/Bakers, Local communities, Students, Professors, NGOs, Academic bodies

The low-priority stakeholders: Foresters and Fishers/Groups, Aquaculture producers, Consumers and consumer associations, Schools/teachers, Citizens, EU institutions, UK and Swiss funding institutions.

3.3 The Power-Interest Grid

The Power-Interest Grid is an essential tool for developing a focused and effective Stakeholder Engagement Strategy. By categorising stakeholders based on their levels of power and interest, project teams can prioritise efforts where they will have the most impact. High-power, high-interest stakeholders are critical to project success and require close management to ensure their needs and concerns are addressed. Meanwhile, low-power stakeholders can be monitored with minimal resources, while still keeping them engaged to build broader support. This strategic focus allows teams to allocate resources more efficiently, align project goals with stakeholder expectations, and proactively address potential challenges. Ultimately, the Power-Interest Grid not only improves communication and trust with stakeholders but also strengthens project resilience by ensuring that the most influential voices are heard, fostering collaboration and increasing the likelihood of project success.

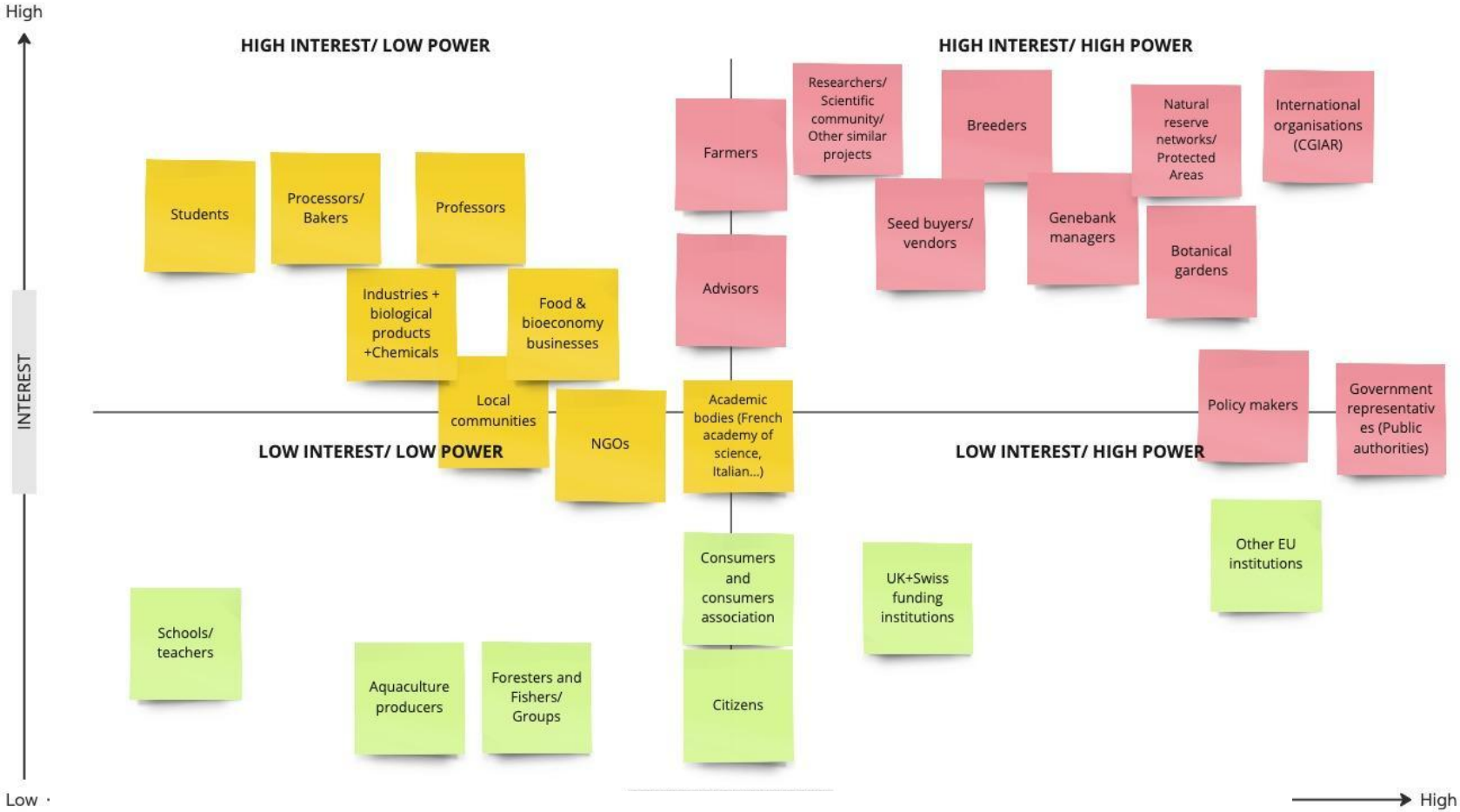

Figure 1 PRO-WILD Power-Interest Grid

4. Stakeholder Engagement Objectives

The primary objectives of stakeholder engagement within the PRO-WILD project are fostering collaboration, building trust, and ensuring the active participation of all relevant parties. By engaging key stakeholders such as researchers, breeders, gene banks, government agencies, farmers, NGOs, and the private sector, the project aims to align interests, gather diverse perspectives, and secure support for the conservation and sustainable utilisation of crop wild relatives (CWRs). The chapter highlights how targeted engagement strategies enhance project outcomes, address potential challenges, and promote shared ownership of the project's goals. The 3 degrees of priority are also important for engaging effort and resources.

The following objectives are intended to be achieved by December 2026. This timeline allows for the strategy to be updated to reflect field progress and realities, ensuring that revised objectives are prepared for the next phase by the project's conclusion.

IMPORTANT: Each partner needs to adapt the objectives to its specific work frame and context.

4.1 Objectives for the high-priority stakeholders' categories

By September 2026, the PRO-WILD project will **establish collaborative partnerships with at least 20 of the identified high-priority stakeholder groups**, including researchers, breeders, international organisations (CGIAR), gene bank managers, seed vendors, and farmers.

This stakeholder engagement objective will facilitate achieving the project's technical objectives, as:

1. Facilitate the integration of crop wild relatives (CWRs) into at least five existing or consolidates breeding programs.
2. Ensure the inclusion of CWR conservation in at least three national policies or strategies.
3. Provide training and resources to at least 300 breeders/farmers and advisors to adopt CWR-friendly practices.
4. Document and share CWR data across three international platforms (e.g., CGIAR, botanical gardens, gene banks).

The project partners must establish a collaborative framework that leverages their expertise, influence, and resources to support the conservation and sustainable utilisation of crop wild relatives (CWRs). This can include, but is not limited to the following actions:

1. **Researchers, Scientific Community, and Similar Projects**: Foster knowledge exchange and partnerships to advance research on CWRs and ensure the integration of scientific findings into conservation strategies.
2. **Breeders**: Engage in dialogue to identify CWR traits that enhance crop resilience and productivity, facilitating the development of innovative breeding programs.
3. **International Organizations (e.g., CGIAR)**: Collaborate on global initiatives to align efforts and ensure access to shared resources and expertise for CWR conservation.
4. **Seed Buyers/Vendors**: Raise awareness of CWR value and involve them in market-driven approaches to promote sustainable use and commercialisation of CWR-based products.
5. **Gene bank Managers**: Coordinate efforts to secure, catalogue, and provide access to CWR germplasm, ensuring its long-term preservation and utilisation.
6. **Botanical Gardens**: Partner on in-situ and ex-situ conservation initiatives and public education campaigns to highlight the ecological importance of CWRs.
7. **Natural Reserve Networks/Protected Areas**: Integrate CWR conservation into existing management plans and leverage their expertise in habitat preservation.
8. **Farmers**: Empower farming communities to adopt sustainable practices that preserve CWR habitats and benefit from improved agricultural systems.
9. **Advisors**: Involve technical and agricultural advisors in disseminating knowledge and best practices related to CWR conservation and utilisation.
10. **Government Representatives/Public Authorities**: Secure regulatory support and funding for CWR-related policies and initiatives.
11. **Policy Makers**: Advocate for policies that promote CWR conservation, sustainable land use, and equitable access to genetic resources.

This multi-stakeholder engagement approach ensures that all key actors contribute to and benefit from the project, fostering long-term sustainability and impact.

4.2 Objectives for the medium-priority stakeholders' categories

By December 2026, the PRO-WILD project **will engage with at least 10 of the identified medium-priority stakeholders**, including food and bioeconomy businesses, local communities, academic bodies, and NGOs.

This stakeholder engagement objective will facilitate achieving the project's technical objectives, as:

1. Facilitate the inclusion of crop wild relatives (CWRs) derived crops in at least three new food, bio-based, or chemical product initiatives.
2. Organise a minimum of four outreach or educational events involving professors, students, and local communities to promote CWR awareness and sustainable practices.

3. Establish partnerships with at least two academic bodies and one NGO to co-develop policy recommendations or advocacy programs for CWR conservation.
4. Provide educational materials and resources to at least 200 students and 50 community representatives to enhance understanding and action for CWR preservation.

This objective ensures measurable outcomes, focuses on actionable stakeholder contributions, and aligns with the broader goals of the PRO-WILD project.

The project partners must raise awareness about the value of crop wild relatives (CWRs) and their role in food security, biodiversity, and sustainable bioeconomy development. By fostering collaboration, the PRO-WILD project aims to engage in the following actions:

1. **Food & Bioeconomy Businesses, Industries, and Processors**: Encourage the integration of CWRs into innovative products, sustainable food chains, and eco-friendly bio-based solutions through workshops and joint initiatives.
2. **Local Communities**: Promote the socioeconomic benefits of CWR conservation, emphasising their role in cultural heritage and sustainable livelihoods, through participatory events and local outreach programs.
3. **Professors, Students, and Academic Bodies**: Strengthen research and education on CWRs by facilitating academic partnerships, providing learning opportunities, and supporting CWR-related curricula and studies.
4. **NGOs**: Collaborate with NGOs to advocate for sustainable policies and practices related to CWR preservation, leveraging their networks for broader community engagement.

This engagement strategy focuses on building long-term partnerships, fostering knowledge-sharing, and encouraging active contributions to the project's conservation and sustainability objectives.

4.3 Objectives for the low-priority stakeholders' categories

By December 2026, the PRO-WILD project **will engage with at least 5 of the identified low-priority stakeholders,** including foresters, fishers, aquaculture producers, schools, consumers, EU institutions, and funding bodies.

This stakeholder engagement objective will facilitate achieving the project's technical objectives, such as:

1. Organise three educational workshops for schools and teachers, reaching at least 150 students to raise awareness about the importance of crop wild relatives (CWRs).

2. Develop and distribute one consumer-focused awareness campaign highlighting the role of CWRs in sustainable agriculture, targeting at least 1,000 individuals through online and local channels.
3. Participate in two EU-level or funding body discussions to align CWR conservation efforts with international biodiversity goals and funding priorities.
4. Share CWR-related conservation materials with various foresters, fishers, and aquaculture producers' organisations and associations to build an understanding of their role in preserving biodiversity.

The project partners must raise awareness and build broad-based support for the conservation and sustainable use of crop wild relatives (CWRs) among low-priority stakeholders by fostering education, advocacy, and indirect contributions. Through targeted engagement:

1. **Foresters, Fishers, and Aquaculture Producers**: Encourage recognition of CWRs' role in biodiversity and sustainable ecosystems by integrating conservation messages into relevant forums and resource-sharing initiatives.
2. **Consumers and Consumer Associations**: Promote the value of CWRs in food security and biodiversity through awareness campaigns that highlight the environmental benefits of sustainable agriculture.
3. **Schools/Teachers and Citizens**: Inspire future generations by providing educational materials and organising activities, such as school workshops, to emphasise the importance of biodiversity and CWRs in climate adaptation.
4. **EU Institutions and UK/Swiss Funding Bodies**: Maintain communication to align the project with broader EU and international funding priorities, seeking opportunities for long-term support and policy alignment.

This engagement seeks to create a ripple effect, ensuring that even indirect stakeholders contribute to and benefit from the overarching goals of CWR conservation and sustainable development.

An important aspect is that each partner should adapt these objectives to their available resources and local or national context before proceeding to the next planning steps.

5. Engagement Approach

The following engagement approach is tailored based on the priority levels established in the above chapters. It is essential to establish clear engagement levels with appropriate tools and methods to optimise resources and minimise risks. This will help the partners build a strong long-term relationship with this person, not only for the purpose of this project.

The engagement approach functions on different levels. For the purpose of this project, based on the consultation with the partners, we identified four levels of engagement.

Furthermore, we associated methods, tools and communication channels to help better understand the ways in which the stakeholders can be approached.

Table 5 Level of stakeholder engagement with methods, tools and communication channels

Engagement level	Stakeholder group	Methods	Tools	Communication channel
Inform	Low priority	Newsletters, reports, press releases,	Email tools, documents	Website, email
Consult	Low and medium-priority	Surveys, focus groups, workshops and interviews	Online forms, meetings	Website, emails and social media
Collaborate	Medium and high-priority	Surveys, focus groups, workshops and interviews	Collaboration platforms (google drive, Nexcloud, MS Teams)	Website, social media, emails
Empower	High priority	One-to-One meetings, workshops, trainings	Meetings, workshops, Collaboration platforms (google drive, Nexcloud, MS Teams), Mentimeter, Qualtrics	Website, email groups, dedicated working groups (WhatsApp or teams), social media

Frequency of Engagement:

Based on the information offered by the analysis from the first chapters, each partner should evaluate the level of engagement necessary to reach the proposed objective. The frequency of the engagement actions should reflect the working plan established for each key stakeholder, also, should follow the task budgeted in the project. Some ideas/suggestions are outlined below:

- **Monthly Updates**: Email summarising project progress, events, and opportunities. Any other information that can be useful in building the relationship with the stakeholders should be shared voluntarily. Also, it will be better to call and have a direct connection via voice.
- **Quarterly Meetings**: Virtual or in-person meetings to align partners on progress and objectives.
- **Annual Workshops**: Comprehensive training sessions and stakeholder meet-ups to evaluate milestones and set future goals.

- **Ad-hoc Consultations**: Rapid-response dialogues for emerging issues, such as unexpected climatic challenges affecting CWR habitats or other crisis situations.

Guides and training for stakeholders:

Partners can identify the fields in which they can offer technical support and plan training. HCC can help support with the learning process and other information. Various trainings, open-door events or field trips are perfect occasions to connect and engage the key stakeholders. Also, if there are opportunities in other related projects, partners should invite the stakeholders to other educational events.

Reflective Dynamic Learning

Within the project, in task 3.4, there is a specific tool for organising workshops for some of the key stakeholders." The Reflective Dynamic Learning is a way to solve problems by continuously thinking about what the open questions are, discussing challenges and potential solutions, communicating with others who might be facing similar problems, and trying out new ideas. In a group, participants share experiences, reflect on what works and what doesn't, think about what problems have already been solved, and learn together. This approach encourages collaboration and adaptation, where everyone can contribute ideas, test solutions, and refine their methods based on real feedback and reflection, leading to better problem-solving over time. The methodology is based around alternating workshops that we call Field Workshops (FW) and Reflection Workshops (RW)", PRO-WILD Workshop Guidelines for conducting workshops: interactive stakeholder engagement with a Dynamic Learning Agenda by Robert Home (FiBL) and Tetiana Grabovska (FiBL). The complete guideline is available on the project workspace and more information will be available directly from the authors.

6. Stakeholder Action Plan

In the planning activities, the main focus will be on the high-priority stakeholders. The communication activities can contribute more to the engagement and information of the medium and low-priority stakeholders, as each stakeholder category should be involved in the first level of involvement, as presented below.

Level of involvement

Levels of stakeholder engagement is a framework that outlines various degrees of stakeholder participation in decision-making or project processes, based on the relevance, and typically includes the following levels:

1. Communication

- **PRO-WILD Application**: Disseminate information about the project's objectives, milestones, and outcomes to stakeholders such as farmers, breeders, and academic institutions.
- **Methods**:
    - Disseminate newsletters summarising project progress and research findings.

    - Use social media platforms to highlight the value of CWRs in promoting sustainable agriculture.
    - Share reports about CWR conservation challenges and opportunities at local, national, and international levels.
- **Example**: Informing policymakers about the economic and ecological benefits of integrating CWRs into agricultural practices.

2. Consultation

- **PRO-WILD Application**: Gather feedback from stakeholders on the specific traits of CWRs that could enhance crop resilience or inform conservation strategies.
- **Methods**:
    - Conduct surveys among farmers to understand their needs for more resistant crops.
    - Organise focus groups with seed vendors and gene bank managers to discuss germplasm accessibility.
    - Hold public consultations with local communities near natural reserves.
- **Example**: Consulting breeders about which CWR traits should be prioritised for breeding programs.

3. Participation

- **PRO-WILD Application**: Actively involve stakeholders in the implementation of conservation and utilisation activities.
- **Methods**:
    - Facilitate workshops for farmers to teach CWR-friendly agricultural practices.
    - Engage botanical gardens in the in-situ and ex-situ preservation of CWRs.
    - Include students in hands-on fieldwork for cataloguing and conserving CWR species.
- **Example**: Collaborating with advisors to design and test on-farm conservation strategies for wild relatives of key crops.

4. Representation

- **PRO-WILD Application**: Ensure that key stakeholders are formally represented in decision-making processes to integrate their perspectives into project activities.
- **Methods**:
    - Include representatives from international organisations, such as CGIAR, in the project's advisory board.
    - Form committees with participants from local communities, breeders, and gene bank managers.
    - Invite government representatives to sit on panels reviewing the project's conservation strategies.
- **Example**: A farmer representative sits on the committee reviewing the feasibility of integrating CWR traits into regional cropping systems.

5. Partnership

- **PRO-WILD Application**: Form partnerships with stakeholders to co-develop and co-deliver solutions for CWR conservation and sustainable use.
- **Methods**:
    - Establish MoUs with international organisations for joint breeding programs.
    - Collaborate with processors and bakers to develop and market products based on CWR-derived crops.
    - Partner with natural reserve networks to align conservation initiatives with the project's goals.
- **Example**: Partnering with botanical gardens to co-manage a database cataloguing the diversity of conserved CWR germplasm.

6. Co-Decision

- **PRO-WILD Application**: Enable equal decision-making power for stakeholders in shaping policies and strategies for CWR conservation and sustainable use.
- **Methods**:
    - Co-create policies with policymakers and NGOs to include CWR conservation in national agricultural strategies.
    - Conduct consensus-building workshops with farmers and breeders to decide on regional conservation priorities.
    - Develop joint governance structures with EU institutions to support long-term funding for CWR research.
- **Example**: Farmers, researchers, and policymakers collaboratively decide on strategies to integrate CWRs into climate-resilient agricultural systems.

From low to high-priority stakeholders, the activities focused on their involvement should follow these levels or steps of involvement. These tailored approaches ensure that stakeholder involvement aligns directly with PRO-WILD's objectives, fostering meaningful collaboration and lasting impact.

For each prioritised stakeholder or stakeholder group, **each partner needs to create a detailed action plan that includes:**

A. Engagement objectives (adapted after the ones in Chapter 4).
B. Key messages to convey (adapted after the one in the Communication plan and local/regional context).
C. Activities or tactics for engagement, based on level of engagement.
D. Roles and responsibilities of team members for engagement.
E. Timeline or schedule for engagement activities.

Please consider the available support from HCC, who can work closely with each partner involved directly in working with key stakeholders in developing and implementing their plan.

In the project workspace, a Table with all the information about the specific stakeholders that partners send is available. This is a living and working document, and the assistance provided by HCC will rely on the needs and specific requests from partners.

7. Risk Management

Based on the information analysed above, each partner should identify the key stakeholders that will be working with. Following this action, the partner should identify the possible risks and how to mitigate them. These risks can differ from country to country or from topics and teams involved. If new risks are identified and there is a lack of mitigation measures, the partners are advised to reach out to the HCC team for support. Together, we can create a plan to reach the engagement goals set up by each team.

However, the table below provides an overview of potential risks associated with stakeholder engagement and mitigation actions.

Table 6 Risks and mitigation actions

Risk	Mitigation actions
Low Stakeholder Awareness and Reluctance Stakeholders may have limited awareness of the benefits of using CWR or may resist engaging due to the perceived complexity of low immediate benefits.	1) Implement intensive awareness campaigns and tailored communication strategies to demonstrate the benefits of CWRs in sustainable agriculture 2) Early engagement of key stakeholders in project activities, including learning partnerships, to build trust and relevance
Lack of Durable Stakeholder Engagement Sustaining stakeholder involvement over the project's duration and ensuring long-term adoption of results might be challenging	1) Provide capacity-building activities and training for partners to help them build trust and long-term relationships with the stakeholders 2) Utilise feedback mechanisms, such as reflection workshops, to adapt to stakeholders' evolving needs
Barriers to collaboration among stakeholders Diverse stakeholder groups may have conflicting priorities or face logistical challenges in collaboration	1) Facilitate stakeholder mapping and establish clear guidelines for engagement to harmonise efforts. 2) Develop a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy with tailored paths and methods for different groups to ensure inclusivity and effectiveness.
Resource constraints for stakeholder engagement Limited time, funding or personnel dedicated to engagement activities can hinder meaningful involvement	1) Allocate adequate resources during planning and leverage digital tools for time and cost-efficient engagement.
Communication barriers Misunderstandings or lack of clarity in communication	1) Tailor communication activities and materials to the audience's needs.

8. Updating the approach

This strategy should be understood as a living document, given the complexity of interactions and stakeholders involved. It can evolve as a result of new or emerging information, opportunities and trends or other local context factors identified by the partners.

9. Conclusion

The effective engagement of the stakeholders remains a priority for all PRO-WILD partners. This strategy sets the direction to follow in reaching the key stakeholders and it is also a first step in engaging more with partners, in developing a more specific action plan correlated with the specific of each work package and each task.

However, since the project has a very complex map of the key actors involved, HCC offers further assistance in developing and implementing the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, through webinars, guidelines, one-to-one meetings and trainings.

As part of the next step actions, HCC will prepare relevant guidelines for partners, regarding organising meetings and facilitation techniques, available on the project workspace, by the end of April 2025. Based on these, HCC will organise a webinar for all interested partners. As a follow-up, regular meetings and updates will be available for the partners that are highly involved in working directly with the stakeholders, to provide assistance.

10. References

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Annex 1 Stakeholder Mapping Workshop

The Stakeholders Mapping Workshop was organised on 5th September 2024 during the Kick-off meeting of the PRO-WILD project in Clermont-Ferrand, France. The workshop, organised by the Highclere Consulting team, had 27 participants, who were members of partners' teams. The workflow was set in 5 separate groups. Each group had around 20 minutes of discussions and the results were gathered on the spot and used further as the base for this strategy.

For a start, the methodology of Stakeholder Mapping was presented, and participants asked questions. All the participants identified the stakeholders they would be working with during the project.

The 5 groups pass through the 5 stages of the mapping, each group on a specific stage.

1. Group 1: Identify/validate the stakeholders list
2. Group 2: Discussing the stakeholders' interests (concerns and expectations) in the project
3. Group 3: Discussing the stakeholders' influence on the project
4. Group 4: Discussing the stakeholders' impact on the project and/or how they are impacted by the project
5. Group 5: Communication channels prefer by the stakeholders.

For each group session the following steps were considered:

1. Short presentation of the mapping tool
2. Short evaluation on the level of each participant's involvement in working directly with the stakeholders.
3. Short presentation on the stage of the mapping (where are we, what have we done so far)
4. Participants began an interactive process of stakeholder mapping.

After this workshop, all the information was collected and structured and sent again for feedback to the partners in the following months. Also, more information about the stakeholders was requested further, as specifically as possible. HCC collected information about the names and contacts of the stakeholders identified by the partners and also some approximate time periods of possible direct interaction. All the information is available on the project workspace.

Figure 2 Photos taken during the stakeholder mapping workshop