

Alfalfa Wild Relatives Collected from Northwestern Kazakhstan

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Although Central Asia is considered the primary center of origin for alfalfa, few accessions from this area can be found in ex situ germplasm collections. An exploration trip was carried out in Kazakhstan in August 2000 to collect wild relatives of alfalfa. A second objective was to survey areas that were proposed as potential in situ reserves in



the 1970's. A total of 138 accessions were collected including *Medicago sativa* nothosubsp. *hemicycla*, *M. sativa* subsp. *falcata*, *M. sativa* nothosubsp. *varia* and *M. sativa* subsp. *caerulea*. Taxonomy has been verified based on chromosome counts and flower color and regenerated seed will be available in 2003 from the USDA National Plant Germplasm System. The Mugodzhar Mountains, in the Aktyubin province continue to be a rich source of wild alfalfa relatives. Following independence, the regions collective farms had been abandoned and grazing pressure is minimal. Further north, in the Khobdinsk region, along the Bol'shaya Khodba River, wild *Medicago* were scarce due to unrestricted grazing resulting from pasture management changes since the independence of Kazakhstan.