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COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

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Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems

Executive Summary

In order to safeguard the world's threatened [Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems](#) (GIAHS), FAO launched the GIAHS Partnership Initiative during the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, Johannesburg, 2002) as a cornerstone of the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) component of Agenda 21. The GIAHS Initiative is an integrated policy and action framework that brings pride and self-confidence to the nations and rural communities through global recognition of their agricultural heritage systems and accompanying action plans for their dynamic conservation.

Over the last ten years of implementation, it has been demonstrated in 31 designated GIAHS sites in 13 countries that their dynamic conservation can be achieved through awareness raising of the intrinsic values of GIAHS and accompanying action plans. There are prospects for many other GIAHS around the world that will serve as learning laboratories, network of knowledge sharing and in-situ conservation of biodiversity of global significance. Some countries have adopted policies for recognition of Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (NIAHS) and GIAHS policy advocacy has influenced the global biodiversity agenda resulting in the adoption of [Resolution X.31](#) by the 10th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Wetlands; [Decision X/34](#) by the 10th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity; and [Resolution A/C.2/67/L.48](#) by the 67th Session of the UN General Assembly.

FAO Governing Bodies also considered the initiative on several occasions and supported the overall concept of GIAHS, its goals and principles in view of its successful achievements. This document provides information on the conceptual framework, the coverage and implementation modalities of the GIAHS Programme and seeks further guidance on relevant policy and technical aspects of its formal operation.

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Suggested action by the Committee:

The Committee is invited to review the relevant technical and policy aspects of GIAHS, as reflected in the draft Conference Resolution on the establishment of a Programme on Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems set forth in Appendix 1, and to provide such guidance and comments as deemed appropriate.

Queries on the substantive content of the document may be addressed to:

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I. Introduction

1. Over centuries, generations of farmers, fisher folks and herders have developed complex, diverse and locally adapted agricultural systems¹, managed with time-tested, ingenious combinations of techniques and practices. Building on generations of accumulated knowledge and experience, these ingenious “*agri-cultural*” systems reflect not only the diversity of cultures and civilization, but also the evolution of humanity. They have resulted not only in outstanding rural landscapes, maintenance of globally significant agricultural biodiversity, resilient ecosystems and valuable cultural inheritance but, above all, in the sustained provision of multiple goods and services, food and livelihood security for millions of poor and small scale farmers.
2. Such agricultural and agro-silvo-pastoral systems can be found, in particular, in highly populated regions or in areas where the population has, for various reasons, had to establish complex and innovative land-use/management practices, for example, due to geographic isolation, fragile ecosystems, political marginalisation, limited natural resources, and/or extreme climatic conditions. These systems reflect often rich and sometimes unique agricultural biodiversity, not only within and between species, but also at ecosystem and landscape level. Having been founded on ancient agricultural civilisations, certain of these systems are linked to important centres of origin and diversity of domesticated plant and animal species, the conservation of which is of great global value.
3. Their ecosystem resilience and robustness have been developed and adapted to cope with change so as to ensure food and livelihood security and reduce risks. The dynamic human management and interactions with nature that allow the maintenance of biodiversity and essential ecosystem services are characterised by continuous technological and cultural innovation, transfer between generations and exchange with other communities and ecosystems. The wealth and breadth of accumulated knowledge and experience in the management and use of resources is a globally significant asset that needs to be preserved and allowed to evolve.

II. Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems

Context and definition

4. Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) represent a unique sub-set of agricultural systems that exemplify customary use of significant agricultural biodiversity and merit to be recognized as a legacy of humankind. GIAHS are defined as “*remarkable land use systems and landscapes which are rich in globally significant biological diversity evolving from the co-adaptation of a community with its environment and its needs and aspirations for sustainable development*”².
5. Given the above definition, caring, preserving and cherishing such systems are not the only goal, but also devising an integrated approach to address the well-being of the community, while aiming for sustainable development. GIAHS introduces the need to promote public understanding and recognition of the agricultural legacy, in which the multiple goods and services provided by smallholders, family farming and indigenous communities are important and distinct in many ways.
6. GIAHS are classified based on their ingenuity of management systems, high levels of agricultural biodiversity and associated biodiversity, biophysical, economic and socio-cultural resources that have evolved under specific ecological and socio-cultural constraints and opportunities. Examples could range from mountain rice terrace agro-ecosystems, multiple cropping/poly-culture farming systems, nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoral systems, ancient irrigation, soil and water management systems, complex multi-layered home gardens, below sea level farming systems, etc.

Threats and driving forces

¹ A broad concept of agriculture is applied, including cropping, animal husbandry, forestry, swidden agriculture, fisheries, hunting, gathering and combinations.

² FAO definition, www.fao.org/nr/giahs

7. The short-term focus on increasing agricultural production through unsustainable intensive farming, specialisation, monoculture and industrial agriculture, the rapid technological changes and internationally marketed commodities and associated neglect of externalities, has led to abandonment of agricultural systems that often adapted well to the extreme ecologies. The lack of promotion of diversified and environmentally friendly farming and integrated management practices, weakness of integrating research and development and associated rural services for indigenous and ingenious systems threatens the foundation of agricultural “culture”, and associated livelihood systems. Moreover, the urbanization and rapidity and extent of today's technological and economic changes, including erosion of rural values, overexploitation of resources and declining productivity, as well as imports of exotic species are leading to severe genetic erosion. This poses the risk of loss of unique and globally significant agricultural biodiversity and associated knowledge, land degradation, poverty and threats to livelihoods and food security of many local communities.

8. The driving forces of unsustainable practices, overexploitation of resources, genetic erosion, loss of local knowledge, and associated risks of impoverishment, non-viable livelihood systems and socio-economic instability, vary from one system to another. They include population pressure and poverty, inappropriate policies and legal environment, especially insecure land tenure and external market forces, and lack of capacity to adapt land use-livelihood systems to the rapidly changing environment.

9. Dynamic conservation of GIAHS requires continuous agro-ecological and social innovation, combined with careful transfer of accumulated knowledge and experience across the generations. Trying to conserve GIAHS by “freezing them in time” would surely lead to their degradation and condemn their communities to poverty. The GIAHS approach is centred on the human development and knowledge systems, including their socio-organizational, economic and cultural features that underpin the conservation and adaptation processes in GIAHS without compromising their resilience, sustainability and integrity.

III. The GIAHS Initiative

10. The GIAHS Initiative³ was launched by FAO during the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 and has successfully implemented its objectives and targets through various extra budgetary funded projects and collaborative ventures. It has developed a solid institutional mechanism including a multi-donor Global Partnership covering around 17 countries, over 35 international and national partners, and 31 designated GIAHS sites⁴ supported by the GIAHS Secretariat hosted by the Land and Water Division of FAO.

11. The GIAHS Initiative operates at three levels:

- a) *at global level*, by identification, assessment, selection, and recognition of GIAHS;
- b) *at national level*, by the formation of a cross-sectoral GIAHS national committee and by capacity building in policy, regulatory and incentive mechanisms to prepare and implement a participatory action plan to safeguard these outstanding systems and use them as sustainability benchmark systems; and
- c) *at local level*, by the empowerment of local communities and by providing technical assistance for sustainable resource management, by promoting traditional knowledge and enhancing viability of these systems through a sustainable livelihood approach.

12. GIAHS are expected to contribute to sustainable development through:

- a) promoting mainstreaming of heritage systems through policy and regulatory reforms and support for systemic and institutional capacity-building at national level;
- b) dynamic conservation and sustainable management of outstanding traditional agricultural systems through enhancement of conducive agricultural policies and regulations and

³ The GIAHS Initiative was registered under the [Partnerships for Sustainable Development](#) in 2004 and reinstated in 2012.

⁴ As of 29 April 2014.

- through support for an integrated approach, capacity building of local institutions and empowerment of local communities;
- c) improving awareness and education among government agencies, local authorities and communities, and other stakeholders;
 - d) demonstrating linkages between local livelihood benefits and global environmental benefits through agro-ecosystem approaches across government agencies, local communities, indigenous peoples and the private sector; and
 - e) disseminating key best practices and lessons among implementing agencies, recipient communities and countries in order to enhance and sustain the overall impact: locally, regionally and on a global scale.

13. The *dynamic conservation approach*, based on the Sustainable Livelihood Framework and agro-ecological approaches, explores and develops novel political, social and economic incentives thereby strengthening family farming management systems in order to conserve the biodiversity and cultural values of the ecosystem. It emphasizes a balance between conservation, adaptation and socio-economic development in order to assist the people who are the creators and guardians of their agricultural heritage system to address the challenges of today's world and allow them to take advantage of the opportunities of modern living, while conserving the functionalities of the ecosystem.

IV. Relevance of GIAHS to Ongoing Programmes

14. The FAO flagship publication SOLAW⁵ highlighted that a series of land and water systems now facing the risk of breakdown and loss of their productive capacity under a combination of excessive demographic pressure and unsustainable agricultural policies and practices. The physical limits of land and water availability for these systems may be further exacerbated in places by external drivers, including climate change, competition with other sectors and socio-economic changes. Specific policies and practices need to be in place to conserve and sustain finite resource bases and this is what GIAHS are promoting to achieve.

15. GIAHS are under the scope of FAO Strategic Objective 2 (SO2), Outcome 1⁶ and are relevant to a number of existing multi-lateral instruments such as the ITPGRFA⁷, Ramsar Convention⁸ and the CBD⁹. GIAHS supports the International Year of Family Farming 2014 – a basis for countries to join together in identifying the special needs of their family farmers and to develop ways and means to resolve ongoing challenges to rural peoples. GIAHS further support capacity development and gender equality, consider and recognize the role of women in the management of natural resources, and therefore, activities at all levels are addressing the specific role of women, as well as empowerment and capacity building of indigenous peoples, family farmers and local communities. GIAHS address many of the global/regional/national strategic priority areas, and have linkages, support and/or contribution to relevant programmes.

V. Lessons Learned and Experiences in Implementing GIAHS

16. Over the past decade of implementing the GIAHS Initiative and its innovative model of engaging communities and local and national governments in the adaptive management and conservation of agricultural heritage and their ecosystem's goods and services, the achievements and impacts are commendable¹⁰. Some of the lessons learned and experiences are summarized, as follows:

- a) GIAHS are resilient, built and maintained through local resources and knowledge, individual and community investment and commitment. These family farm-scale, agro-

⁵ State of the World's Land and Water Resources.

⁶ Producers and Natural Resource Managers Adopt Practices that Increase and Improve the Provision of Goods and Services in the Agricultural Sector Production Systems in a Sustainable Manner.

⁷ International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, Article 5.1(c) and (d); Article 6.2 and Article 9.1.

⁸ The Convention on Wetlands, Resolution X.31 item 8

⁹ Convention on Biological Diversity, Articles 10c and 8j; Aichi Biodiversity Targets 2, 7, 14, 15 and 18.

¹⁰ GIAHS Steering and Scientific Committee Meeting held on 28-29 April 2014, Rome, Italy.

pastoral, forest and fisheries systems have survived the test of time and continue to be the basis of the livelihoods of many of the farmers around the world.

- b) Communities at GIAHS sites conserve traditional knowledge and local socio-economic forces and networks and remain adaptable and responsive to external influences. The heritage has an intrinsic economic value that can contribute to sustained viability of rural incomes and local environment.
- c) Maintaining GIAHS sites can transform and sustain economic value: for example, conversion of conservation activities into marketable incomes, and as attractions for tourists and for recreation. Thus “conservation” is appreciated at local level and the impacts benefit the communities, the environment and the nation.
- d) The family agriculture differentiates the roles and responsibilities in the community according to gender, age and other criteria. GIAHS resilience offers opportunities for gender-sensitive economic diversification to adapt to climate change, reduce out-migration and to face other challenges with great potential to strengthen the economic productivity and social status of women, as well as attracting youth to till land and to build their families and lives in rural areas.
- e) The 31 designated GIAHS sites in 13 countries (and many countries have expressed interest to designate their agricultural heritage) - have increased the world’s area devoted to biodiversity conservation given the combination of cultivated varieties, landraces and plant and animal species associated with diverse agro-ecosystems and landscapes.
- f) The recognition of agricultural heritage highlights agricultural cultures and returns respect and dignifies local communities and their way of life which can provide security, peace, rural employment and sustainable development.

17. GIAHS are also supported through various statements and declarations¹¹, including the Beijing Declaration¹² and the Noto Communiqué¹³. The latter recommends: (i) that GIAHS designated sites should be periodically monitored and their viability maintained; (ii) the progressive designation of further GIAHS sites to promote the conservation of agricultural heritage; (iii) the promotion of on-the-ground projects and activities, particularly in developing countries; (iv) that existing GIAHS support the recognition of candidatures of GIAHS areas in less developed countries; and (v) the promotion of twinning of GIAHS sites between developed and developing countries.

¹¹ The International Conference on Biodiversity in Relation to Food and Human Security in a Warming Planet convened in Chennai, India, from 15-17 February 2010, highlighted the importance of GIAHS in the conservation and enrichment of unique biodiversity sites.

¹² Beijing Declaration: a Ten-Point Charter to promote dynamic conservation of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems adopted by the members and partners of GIAHS during the International Forum on GIAHS held from 9-11 June 2011, Beijing, China

¹³ Adopted during the International Forum on GIAHS held from 29-31 May 2013, Noto Peninsula, Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan

Paragraph 2, Noto Communiqué

- m) *Acknowledge the need to mainstream GIAHS at all levels, integrating economic, social and environmental aspects and recognizing their inter-linkages, so as to achieve sustainable development in all its dimensions; GIAHS is the result of an outstanding key element underpinning human basic welfare of family farmers, indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as opportunities for future development.*
- n) *Recommend to the FAO Conference, international organizations, the private sector and other actors, to support agricultural heritage and the GIAHS Initiative, for revitalizing rural areas and achieving the goals of sustainable development*
- o) *Commit to mobilize human and political resources to further identify GIAHS sites, and scale up their dynamic conservation as living models of sustainability.*
- p) *Request all governments and constituencies to support and safeguard their agricultural heritage systems.*

VI. The Global Role of FAO

18. The FAO Governing Bodies considered GIAHS on several occasions and supported the overall concept, its goals and principles, in view of its successful achievements¹⁴. The 148th session of the Council agreed that the GIAHS initiative be vested with formal status within the FAO framework and endorsed the initiation of a process for the development of a draft Conference Resolution for anchoring GIAHS within the Organization and for securing its international status. The draft Conference Resolution in Appendix 1 would be discussed and endorsed during the 99th Session of the CCLM in October 2014, for subsequent review and approval by the Council, and final adoption by the Conference in June 2015.

19. The expectations arising from FAO Members to further support GIAHS, the engagement of FAO management to mainstream GIAHS in the Programme of Work and Budget, as well as the process of CCLM endorsement of the adoption of a Conference Resolution on GIAHS¹⁵, brings additional opportunities to recognize the importance of smallholders, family farmers, and indigenous communities through GIAHS that constitute remarkable examples of such livelihood systems. This was further supported by the 32nd Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific, held in March 2014, which requested FAO to promote regional implementation of GIAHS¹⁶.

20. The responsibility of safeguarding GIAHS and the sustainable development of their belonging communities falls clearly in the remits of FAO's mandate. The designation of GIAHS and achievement of its objectives and action plans would depend upon member countries with FAO's support, while a strong international mandate through the Conference Resolution would boost both FAO's and member countries' visibility and actions.

VII. The Way Forward

Towards a Lasting Legacy Platform – formalize the GIAHS process

21. Over the past decade, GIAHS has gained considerable recognition both globally and domestically. In the international arena, GIAHS was appreciated in various intergovernmental fora,

¹⁴ Recently, the 115th Session of the Programme Committee underlined the value of experience sharing among regions, for example work in GIAHS (CL 149/5, para 4-i).

¹⁵ CL 148/REP, para. 20-h.

¹⁶ APRC Report, C 2015/15, para 24-g.

such as the Conferences of the Parties of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 2008¹⁷, and of the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2010¹⁸. GIAHS was also acknowledged by the UN General Assembly in its Resolution 67/228 on 'Agriculture development and food security' adopted on 21 December 2012¹⁹. Currently, there are 31 designated GIAHS sites and many more candidate sites²⁰ are being considered for future recognition. Also, in order to further scale up the status of their sites, several countries have adopted GIAHS-specific national policy and/or regulatory frameworks.²¹

22. Stemming from the GIAHS supported projects intervention, designation, and consolidated 10-year experiences gained globally and locally, the GIAHS designation should continue to be mainstreamed and sustained. FAO's role is important in engaging its global, regional and country-level partners in identifying, supporting, safeguarding and recognizing such agricultural heritage as globally important to "giving back the pride and identity" of the family farmers, indigenous peoples and local communities.

23. FAO will ensure that mainstreaming of GIAHS will draw from already existing mechanisms and government institutions that will be used to support the process at the national level. FAO will support governments, institutions and civil society organizations that request its technical assistance in knowledge management, sharing and learning and/or up-scaling GIAHS sites. In this context, twinning of GIAHS sites and South-South Cooperation will be initiated, and project formulations are currently underway in many countries to support the dynamic conservation of their GIAHS.

VIII. Guidance sought from COAG

24. In the light of the accomplishments of the GIAHS initiative, and so as to ensure the continuance of its activities in the long run, its operational framework should be formally approved by the Governing Bodies. To achieve this, a resolution of the FAO Conference would provide a suitable basis for anchoring GIAHS within the Organization and for securing its international status. As an authoritative decision of the highest policy-making Governing Body of FAO, a Conference resolution would properly uphold GIAHS, addressing formally its essential features, structure, working arrangements, designation modalities and procedures. It should be noted that Conference resolutions have been used in the past for similar purposes.²² Likewise, the Man and Biosphere Programme, which is comparable to GIAHS, was launched by UNESCO through a resolution of its General Conference.²³

25. In terms of its contents, the draft Conference resolution is structured as follows: (i) a preamble recalling the origin, concept and benefits of GIAHS, underlining its wide recognition and growing

¹⁷ Resolution X.31 invited Parties to consider recognition or protection of rice paddies "through mechanisms such as the FAO Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems Programme".

¹⁸ Decision X/34 called for strengthening approaches which promote the sustainability of agricultural systems and landscapes such as 'the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations'.

¹⁹ The resolution took "note of the report of the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on its 144th session, which stresses the importance of the Organization's support to globally important agriculture heritage systems".

²⁰ <http://www.fao.org/giahs/giahs-home/en/>

²¹ For example, a Decree on the protection of Oasis Ghout in El-Ougla site was passed in Algeria; Regulations on Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems were adopted in China; Memorandum of Agreement was signed between several ministries in the Philippines to mainstream GIAHS concept; an Agricultural Heritage Policy was approved in the Republic of Korea and a Charter on Oases was enacted in Tunisia.

²² Examples include: (i) Resolution 3/2001, *Adoption of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and Interim Arrangements for its Implementation*; (ii) Resolution 3/95, *Broadening of the mandate of the FAO Commission on Plant Genetic Resources to cover genetic resources relevant to food and agriculture*; and (iii) Resolution 8/83, *International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources*.

²³ Resolution 2.313, *Intergovernmental Programme on Man and the Biosphere*, Sixteenth Session of the General Conference, Paris, 12 October - 14 November 1970.

relevance at the global, national and local levels, and acknowledging the need to provide for its operational framework; (ii) operative paragraphs providing for the promotion of GIAHS and its formal recognition through the establishment of a GIAHS Programme; and (iii) an annex setting forth the GIAHS Programme working arrangements;

26. Taking into account the above considerations, a draft Conference resolution is attached to this document as Appendix 1. The Committee is invited to review the draft Resolution and provide such guidance and comments on its technical and policy aspects as deemed appropriate.

Appendix 1: Draft Conference Resolution on the establishment of a Programme on Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)

THE CONFERENCE,

Acknowledging that communities of farmers, herders, fishers and forest dwellers have developed, for millennia, locally adapted ingenious agricultural systems that have led to food and livelihood security as well as the maintenance of natural and cultural diversity and that, in addition to providing multiple goods and services, such systems have resulted in the preservation of significant agro-biodiversity, resilient ecosystems, outstanding landscapes, and valuable knowledge systems and cultural heritage;

Recognizing that many of these remarkable land use systems and landscapes, which are rich in globally significant biological diversity evolving from the co-adaptation of a community and its needs and aspirations for sustainable development with its environment, constitute Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS);

Recognizing further the resiliencies and time-tested adaptability of such systems to shocks, disasters and environmental changes and their potential contributions to in-situ conservation of biodiversity for the benefit of present and future generations;

Appreciating the importance of GIAHS as outstanding examples of family farming, smallholders and indigenous peoples' livelihood systems to contribute to food security and the recognition and celebration of the International Year of Family Farming in 2014;

Noting with concern that GIAHS are threatened by several factors such as inadequate policies and management models and unsustainable technological changes that undermine family farming and traditional agricultural systems;

Affirming the need to identify, support and safeguard GIAHS, including related forestry, fishery and pastoral systems and their livelihoods, agricultural and associated biodiversity, landscapes, knowledge systems and cultures around the world;

Mindful that GIAHS call for the safeguarding of threatened national and local food and agricultural legacies by mobilizing worldwide recognition and support, enhancing local, national and global benefits derived from their dynamic conservation and economic viability;

Recalling paragraph 40(r) of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development which called for actions to promote the conservation, sustainable use and management of traditional and indigenous agricultural systems and the strengthening of indigenous models of agricultural production²⁴;

Recalling further that GIAHS were specifically acknowledged in UN General Assembly Resolution 67/228 on 'Agriculture development and food security'²⁵, in [Resolution X.31](#) of the 10th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands²⁶, and in [Decision X/34](#) of the 10th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity²⁷;

Recalling also the International partnership initiative on dynamic conservation of GIAHS launched by FAO, in its capacity as Task Manager for Chapter 14 of Agenda 21 on 'Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development' (SARD) at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and the successful implementation of GIAHS as part of the efforts intended to achieve SARD objectives;

²⁴ Resolution 2 adopted by the Summit in 2002, A/CONF.199/20.

²⁵<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/N12/615/90/PDF/N1261590.pdf?OpenElement>

²⁶ http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/res/key_res_x_31_e.pdf

²⁷ <http://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/default.shtml?id=12300>

Recalling further that, at its 148th Session, the Council agreed that the GIAHS initiative should be vested with formal status within the FAO framework, in the light of its accomplishments and its growing relevance at the global, national and local levels, in order to secure its international status and to provide for its operational framework;

Desiring to give formal recognition to GIAHS;

Requests the Director-General:

- 1) to further review and pursue how the potentials offered by GIAHS may contribute to the Strategic Objectives of FAO and the Post-2015 Development Agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals;
- 2) to establish a Programme on Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (“the GIAHS Programme”), which shall operate in accordance with the Working Arrangements²⁸ set forth in Annex 1;
- 3) to afford the GIAHS Programme the priority, profile and resources needed for its effective operation.

²⁸ Presented and discussed at the CCLM 97th Session (CCLM 97/10), 21-23 October 2013 and endorsed by the Council at its 148th Session, 2-6 December 2013 (CL 148/REP, para. 20-h).

Annex 1: Working Arrangements for the Programme on Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (the GIAHS Programme”)

1. The GIAHS Programme

- 1.1. The GIAHS Programme shall identify, recognize, support and safeguard Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems and their livelihoods, agricultural and associated biodiversity, landscapes, knowledge systems and cultures around the world.
- 1.2. The following general principles shall guide the work of the GIAHS Programme:
 - 1.2.1. The major custodians of the world’s GIAHS – their primary stewards – are those people who have developed and maintained the agricultural heritage systems, and continue to depend upon them for their livelihoods;
 - 1.2.2. The overarching objective of GIAHS is to enhance their adaptive capacity to provide crucial products and services at the local, national, regional and global levels;
 - 1.2.3. The disruptive forces that erode the viability of GIAHS must be tackled through their recognition by the international community and national governments, by appropriate policies, laws and practices, participatory action plans for their dynamic conservation and other concerted action to address the negative drivers and support the resilience of these systems.

2. Structure

- 2.1. The GIAHS Programme shall consist of the following:
 - an International Steering Committee (ISC);
 - a Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC);
 - National Steering Committees (NSCs);
 - Partners; and
 - the Secretariat.

3. International Steering Committee

- 3.1. **Functions:** The ISC shall be the policy-making body of the GIAHS Programme. It shall provide overall strategic orientation for the objectives, priorities and activities of the Programme, including the *Selection Criteria for GIAHS Sites* set forth in Annex 2 to the Conference Resolution establishing the GIAHS Programme. The ISC may adopt *Guidelines on the processes for the designation and certification of GIAHS sites* and amendments thereto. The ISC shall be responsible for screening and approval of applications for the designation of GIAHS sites in accordance with the designation and certification procedures set out below. The ISC may amend the *Selection Criteria for GIAHS Sites*. The ISC may also adopt and amend other operational procedures and guidelines, as necessary, for the efficient operation of the GIAHS Programme.

- 3.2. **Composition:** The ISC shall be composed of 15 Member Nations taking due account of the need to ensure equitable geographical distribution and appropriate representation of Member Nations (3 members from each geographic region). Members of the ISC shall be appointed by the Director-General.
- 3.3. **Meetings:** The ISC shall normally meet once each biennium. The ISC may meet through electronic means, including videoconferences. The ISC may develop and adopt guidelines for meetings to be conducted through such electronic means.
- 3.4. **Rules of Procedure:** The ISC shall adopt and may amend its own rules of procedure, which shall be consistent with the Constitution and the General Rules of the Organization.
- 3.5. **Observers:** Meetings of the ISC shall be open to observers from Member Nations and Associate Member Nations that are not members of the ISC, from States that are not Members of the Organization, and from relevant international organizations, civil society and non-governmental organizations, private sector entities and other stakeholders, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the ISC.
- 3.6. **Expenses:** Expenses incurred by representatives of members of the ISC when attending meetings of the ISC, as well as the expenses of observers at meetings, shall be borne by the respective governments and organizations, or covered by any voluntary contributions.
- 3.7. **Reporting:** The ISC shall report to the Director-General, who shall bring to the attention of the Conference through the Council any recommendations adopted by the ISC which have policy implications or affect the programme and/or finances of the Organization.

4. Scientific Advisory Committee

- 4.1. **Functions:** The SAC shall provide technical guidance, scientific advice and independent opinions to the ISC and the Secretariat on further development of the dynamic conservation and adaptive management of GIAHS, as well as for the selection of GIAHS sites.
- 4.2. **Composition:** The SAC shall be composed of 12 experts, including scientists, academia, researchers, practitioners, appointed by the ISC on the basis of their competence and experience in GIAHS-related matters.
- 4.3. **Meetings:** The SAC shall meet in parallel with the meetings of the ISC. It may also meet as and when needed, including through electronic means such as videoconferences.

5. National Steering Committees

- 5.1. **Functions:** Country-based, multi-stakeholder NSCs shall be established by national authorities to provide general oversight for the execution of GIAHS activities at the national level. Their functions shall include overall policy direction and coordination of activities.
- 5.2. **Composition:** NSCs shall be composed of representatives of the institutions concerned, including non-governmental and private entities with a stake in GIAHS activities. The NSCs shall be chaired by senior officials of the relevant government ministries/agencies.

6. Partners

6.1 Partners supporting the GIAHS Programme shall be stakeholders which share the vision of GIAHS and whose work is of relevance to sustainable agriculture and rural development, natural resources management, biodiversity and cultural diversity. Partners may be from global, regional and national institutions and organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, including agencies of the UN system, financial institutions and donors, universities, research centres, private entities, indigenous peoples and local community groups, and farmer associations.

7. Secretariat

7.1. The Secretariat of the GIAHS Programme shall be provided by the Director-General who shall place at the Programme's disposal the staff and other resources necessary for its operation. The expenses of the Secretariat shall be determined and paid by the Organization within the limits of the relevant appropriations in the approved Regular Budget of the Organization.

7.2. The Secretariat shall provide the necessary services for the meetings of the ISC and the SAC. It shall take all steps required to convene such meetings, including the preparation of documents, organization and servicing of meetings.

7.3. The Secretariat shall undertake day-to-day management of the GIAHS Programme, including the functions entrusted to it under the *Guidelines on the processes for the designation and certification of GIAHS sites*, as well as monitoring, evaluation and reporting on activities, technical assistance, and coordinating and supporting collaboration for the execution of the activities of the Programme.

7.4. The Secretariat shall maintain the GIAHS Registry in which all designated GIAHS sites are to be recorded.

8. Expenses

8.1. Except as otherwise specified in these Working Arrangements, the expenses of the GIAHS Programme shall be met as described in this section.

8.2. Expenses of the GIAHS Programme that are not met from the Regular Budget, such as evaluation of proposals, monitoring activities or technical assistance, shall be covered by voluntary contributions, including contributions from members applying for GIAHS site designation and partners willing to promote the GIAHS programme, as well as through resources provided by funding agencies, including multilateral financial institutions.

8.3. Funds of the GIAHS Programme will be administered in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the Organization.

9. Selection criteria, designation process and certification procedures

9.1. The selection of GIAHS sites shall be based upon the *Selection Criteria for GIAHS Sites* as provided for in paragraph 3.1.

9.2. Proposals for designation and certification must be submitted in accordance with the *Guidelines* adopted by the ISC as provided in paragraph 3.1.

- 9.3. The final screening and approval of the designation of a GIAHS site shall be made by the ISC, upon completion of the review process set forth in the *Guidelines* referred to in paragraph 9.2.
- 9.4. Following approval by the ISC, the formal designation of a GIAHS site shall be recorded by the award of a designation certificate, issued by the Director-General and the Chairperson of the ISC, certifying the site as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System for present and future generations, which provides an outstanding contribution to promoting food security, biodiversity, indigenous knowledge and cultural diversity for sustainable and equitable development. The designation shall also be recorded in the GIAHS Registry maintained by the Secretariat in accordance with paragraph 7.4.

10. Final clauses

- 10.1. Amendments to these Working Arrangements shall be subject to approval by the Council.
- 10.2. The ISC may propose amendments to these Working Arrangements which shall be consistent with the Constitution and the General Rules of the Organization. Any proposal for such amendments must be transmitted to the Director-General in time for inclusion in the agenda of a forthcoming session of the Council.