



**Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations**



**The International Treaty**  
**ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES  
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

**E**

<b>Item 14.3 of the Provisional Agenda</b>
<b>SIXTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY</b>
<b>Rome, Italy, 5 – 9 October 2015</b>
<b>Report from the Secretariat of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture</b>

### Executive Summary

1. The Secretary of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture reports regularly to sessions of the Treaty on the implementation of relevant components of the Commission's Multi-Year Programme of Work, in particular the supporting components of the Treaty that are under the Commission's aegis, including *The State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* and the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for food and Agriculture.
2. This report, prepared by the Commission Secretariat in close collaboration with the responsible technical departments of FAO, focusses on the work of the Commission and activities carried out since the Fifth Session of the Governing Body, in particular activities that are relevant to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and the supporting components of the Treaty.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. According to the *Joint Statement* regarding the Cooperation between the Treaty and the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission), “the Secretary of the Commission will report regularly to sessions of the Treaty on the implementation of relevant components of the Commission’s Multi-Year Programme of Work, in particular regarding the supporting components of the Treaty that are under its aegis, including *The State of the World’s Plant Genetic Resources and Food and Agriculture* and the Global Plan of Action.”<sup>1</sup>

2. This report has been prepared by the Secretariat of the Commission in close collaboration with the responsible technical departments of FAO, for information of the Governing Body. It focusses on major outcomes of the Seventh Session of the Commission’s Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Working Group), held from 9 to 11 July 2014, and of the Commission’s Fifteenth Regular Session, held from 19 to 23 January 2015, as well as on activities carried out since the Fifth Session of the Governing Body (September 2013) that are relevant to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) and the supporting components of the Treaty.

3. Information on developments in the cooperation between the Governing Body and the Commission, including on the functional division of tasks and activities between the Commission and the Governing Body, and on on-going and possible future joint activities in specific areas of common interest is provided in the document, *Cooperation with the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.<sup>2</sup>

## II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SECOND GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

4. Recognizing that the rolling Global Plan of Action is important to the Treaty, Contracting Parties should promote its effective implementation of the Global Plan of Action, including through national actions and, as appropriate, international cooperation to provide a coherent framework, *inter alia*, for capacity-building, technology transfer and exchange of information, taking into account the benefit-sharing provisions of the Treaty.<sup>3</sup>

5. During the reporting period, FAO continued to support countries in strengthening their capacities for the implementation of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Second GPA), in close collaboration with the Treaty and other partners. The Commission, at its Fifteenth Regular Session, following up on recommendations from its Working Group, also pursued other initiatives and activities relating to the four main groups of Priority Activities of the Second GPA, namely: *in situ* conservation and management; *ex situ* conservation; sustainable use; and building sustainable institutional and human capacities.

### (i) Policy and technical assistance

6. FAO continued to assist countries in the implementation of the Second GPA through policy and technical interventions delivered through the organization’s five Strategic Objectives, in particular Strategic Objective 2. The strengthening of partnerships and linkages is a critical delivery mechanism for FAO’s work in this regard. Work in countries is facilitated by collaboration with various partners, including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), International Agricultural Research Centres of the Consultative Group on International

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<sup>1</sup> *Joint Statement of Intent for Cooperation between the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, see CGRFA-12/09/Report, *Appendix H*; IT-GB-2/07/Report, *Appendix E*.

<sup>2</sup> IT/GB-5/13/11.

<sup>3</sup> See Treaty, Article 14.

Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and regional intergovernmental organizations, e.g. the African Union, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana (SICA). Through these partnerships, activities relevant to the implementation of the Second GPA are implemented with greater levels of efficiency. For instance, FAO develops with the African Union, under the auspices of the Africa Seed and Biotechnology Programme (ASBP), a strategic framework for the strengthening of the African seed sector. ASBP has 6 major components reflecting the entire PGRFA management continuum from conservation through crop improvement to seed delivery and, in addition, addresses disaster preparedness. FAO collaborates with sub-regional bodies in the development and harmonization of policies, laws and strategies that govern the seed sector and other aspects of the conservation and use of PGRFA, including cross-border transfers.

7. The Commission, at its last session, endorsed as a voluntary reference tool the *Guidelines for Developing a National Strategy for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture: Translating the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture into National Action*<sup>4</sup>. The guidelines shall assist countries to implement the Second GPA in harmony with other relevant national and international commitments. Cognizant of each country's needs, capacities and constraints, national strategies for PGRFA should identify a national vision, goals and objectives, and the corresponding plan of action, including responsibilities, resources, and timeframes for activities relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA. In practical terms, a national strategy for PGRFA may help a country in setting priorities, assign budgetary and other resources, build capacity, and design the seamless dovetailing of all aspects of national PGRFA management to reach the national goals. It is also a tangible means for demonstrating effectively that PGRFA, and hence their conservation and sustainable use, underpin food security, sustainable crop production systems and rural development. As a direct result, a country will be in a position to safeguard its PGRFA assets; facilitate access to needed genetic materials and govern the sharing of the accruing benefits; add value to them through crop improvement; and sustainably intensify crop production as may be needed.

8. Increasingly, regions develop strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA. Examples include the *Strategic action plan to strengthen conservation and use of Mesoamerican plant genetic resources in adapting agriculture to climate change (SAPM) 2014-2024* and the *Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture Policy Guidelines* of the SADC. FAO worked with six SADC countries (Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia) and is currently working with four more countries (Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Iran) on the development of national PGRFA strategies. FAO also supported the development of a PGRFA strategy in Rwanda. It is expected that the endorsement by the Commission of the *Guidelines for Developing a National Strategy for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* will catalyse similar actions in an increasing number of countries.

#### **(ii) *In situ* conservation and on-farm management**

9. As reported to the last session of the Governing Body<sup>5</sup>, the Commission, at its Fourteenth Regular Session, emphasized the importance of *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of PGRFA and requested FAO to prepare a concept note detailing the governance, structure, functions and financial implications of the establishment of either a global network for *in situ* conservation and on-farm management, or two networks separately addressing these areas.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Inf.21 - <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm566e.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> IT/GB-5/13/Inf.13, paragraph 13.

<sup>6</sup> CGRFA-14/13/Report, paragraph 96.

10. In response to the Commission's request, FAO held between November 2013 and March 2014, a series of expert, stakeholder and member country consultations to consider options for global networking on *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of PGRFA. Subsequently, FAO developed the *Concept note on global networking on in situ conservation and on-farm management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture* which, upon review by the Working Group, was considered by the Commission at its last session<sup>7</sup>. The Commission, in considering the concept note, requested FAO to convene before the next session of the Working Group, subject to the availability of extra-budgetary funds, an informal multi-stakeholder dialogue to discuss options for networking for *in situ* conservation and on-farm management, its functions, governance and budgetary requirements, in particular to ensure its long-term funding. The Commission requested FAO to revise the concept note in the light of the outcomes of the multi-stakeholder dialogue, for consideration by the Commission at its next session.<sup>8</sup>

11. The Commission also invited its Working Group to review and revise two draft technical guidelines, *National level conservation and use of landraces*<sup>9</sup> and *National level conservation of crop wild relatives*<sup>10</sup>, considering inputs received from Members and stakeholders, such as smallholders and indigenous peoples and local communities. The

12. During the reporting period, FAO, in collaboration with international and local partners, supported several field activities relating to *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of PGRFA. FAO supported regional activities, including of the SADC in this regard. Two new projects for mainstreaming agro-biodiversity conservation and use, supported by GEF, have started under the coordination of FAO in Bolivia and Ecuador.<sup>11</sup>

13. As part of its efforts to call attention to the importance of broadening crop diversity on farm, FAO joined Bioversity International and several other international, regional and national stakeholders in the organization of the *3rd International Conference on Neglected and Underutilized Species (NUS): For a Food-Secure Africa*, which was held in September 2013 in Accra, Ghana. FAO led a side event on *Promoting and expanding the use of underutilized fruit and vegetable diversity*, which aimed at engendering strategic partnerships to develop collaborative activities on this theme.

### (iii) *Ex situ* conservation

14. The Governing Body, at its last session, welcomed the *Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (Genebank Standards), as endorsed by the Commission at its Fourteenth Regular Session.<sup>12</sup> The Genebank Standards had been prepared by FAO under the guidance of the Commission and in cooperation with the Treaty Secretariat, the CGIAR and other relevant international institutions and national focal points. The Genebank Standards which provide standards for the conservation of orthodox seeds, non-orthodox seeds and vegetatively propagated plants were also made available to the Governing Body.<sup>13</sup> The Genebank Standards are an important tool for the implementation of the priority activities of the Second GPA related to *ex situ* conservation and aim to contribute to the development of an efficient and sustainable system of *ex situ* conservation, as envisioned by Article 5.1(e) of the Treaty. Article 15.1(d) explicitly refers to the Genebank Standards and requires the International

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<sup>7</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Inf.22.

<sup>8</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Report, paragraph 51.

<sup>9</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Inf.23 - <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm564e.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Inf.24 - <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm542e.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> GCP/BOL/046/GFF *Conservation and sustainable use of agro-biodiversity to improve human nutrition in five macro eco-regions* and GCP/ECU/086/GFF *Mainstreaming the use and conservation of agrobiodiversity in public policy through integrated strategies and in situ implementation in four Andean Highlands provinces*.

<sup>12</sup> IT/GB-5/13/Report, Resolution 4/2013, paragraph 6.

<sup>13</sup> IT/GB-5/13/Inf.9.

Agricultural Research Centres of the CGIAR to undertake to manage and administer their *ex situ* collections in accordance with internationally accepted standards, in particular the Genebank Standards as endorsed by the Commission.

15. In the meantime, the Genebank Standards have been translated into all official languages of FAO, widely distributed and made available on FAO's website.<sup>14</sup> The Genebank Standards will be further disseminated, especially in developing countries with limited internet connectivity, by providing electronic versions on portable storage devices.

16. FAO continues to provide assistance and support in the area of *ex situ* conservation. FAO responds to requests for support in the collection and conservation of PGRFA and contributes to field activities in countries that enhance capacities of genebanks. For instance, FAO assisted in the upgrade of the infrastructure of the SADC Plant Genetic Resources Centre, Lusaka, Zambia which, *inter alia*, provides a safety backup for the *ex situ* collections of its member countries. During the reporting period, FAO also supported reviews of genebanks, carried out under the auspices of the CGIAR Research Program for Managing and Sustaining Crop Collections in partnership with the Global Crop Diversity Trust. In collaboration with the Secretariat of the Treaty, FAO disseminates tools for eco-geographic analysis to detect gaps in *ex situ* collections and develop plans for targeted germplasm collecting<sup>15</sup>.

17. The Commission, at its last session, requested FAO to continue supporting countries in the implementation of the Genebank Standards and propose a mechanism to monitor their implementation.<sup>16</sup>

#### (iv) Sustainable use

18. The Governing Body has repeatedly expressed its deep interest in the implementation of Article 6 of the Treaty, including through the adoption of a *Programme of Work of Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.<sup>17</sup> One of the goals of the Programme of Work is to "implement [...] the Priority Activities of the Second GPA, regarding the sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture." The Commission, at its last session, reaffirmed the need for technical support in the area of crop improvement and for plant breeding capacity and seed systems' development in support of the implementation of the Second GPA and the Treaty, taking into account the work of the Treaty.<sup>18</sup> During the reporting period FAO continued collaborating with partners in capacity development in the areas of plant breeding and seed systems.

#### *Strengthening of Seed Systems*

19. The Commission, at its Fourteenth Regular Session, had requested its Working Group to review a draft *Guide for National Seed Policy Formulation*<sup>19</sup> for consideration by the Commission at its Fifteenth Regular Session. The Working Group, at its Seventh Session, reviewed the draft Guide and agreed that Commission members and observers could further submit written comments to the Secretariat and recommended that the Secretariat would introduce the comments to the extent possible or propose them for discussion, and compile them in an annex to the Draft Guide. The Commission, at its last session endorsed the *Voluntary Guide for National Seed Policy Formulation*.<sup>20</sup> The Commission agreed that nothing in this Voluntary Guide should be interpreted to aim at limiting any rights that farmers have to save, use, exchange and sell farm-saved seed/propagating material, subject to national law and as appropriate. When

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.fao.org/agriculture/crops/thematic-sitemap/theme/seeds-pgr/gbs/en/>.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.planttreaty.org/content/tools-capfitogen>.

<sup>16</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Report, paragraph 51.

<sup>17</sup> IT/GB-5/13/Report, Resolution 7/2013, *Annex I*.

<sup>18</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Report, paragraph 53.

<sup>19</sup> CGRFA/WG-PGR-7/14/Inf.2.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4916e.pdf>.

using the Voluntary Guide, countries are invited to take into account gender equality and women's empowerment and, as appropriate, the important role of customary use of landraces. The Commission requested FAO to continue its work on strengthening national seed systems.<sup>21</sup>

20. During the reporting period, FAO, at the request of countries, continued to provide technical and policy assistance to strengthen seed sector development and partnerships at the national and regional levels. Seed sector development and/or strengthening activities have been implemented in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean through a combination of Technical Cooperation Projects (TCPs) and Trust Fund projects. The projects involved the preparation and/or review of seed policies and laws, strengthening institutions and the establishment of local seed enterprises.

21. An increasingly critically important component of FAO's seed sector work is the strengthening of local seed systems. This is being achieved by providing support to create the enabling environment for the establishment of seed enterprises and to promote their efficient management at the local community level. In this regard, FAO joined key experts across a range of institutions in three technical consultations which were held in December 2013 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Each of the consultations focused on different, though related topics: community seed production; seed and fertilizer policy, including development of politically feasible seed and fertilizer policy regimes which would feed into the African Union 2014 Year of Agriculture; and seed system security.

22. Furthermore, FAO contributed to the work-stream on agricultural inputs (seed, fertilizer and livestock feed) during the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Partnership Platform, held from 19 to 22 March 2014 in Durban, South Africa. The outputs of this work-stream along with those of the other eight work-streams formed the synthesis paper for the Africa Union Joint Conference of Ministers of Agriculture, Rural Development, Fisheries & Aquaculture held from 28 April to 2 May 2014 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

23. In order to ensure that emergency seed relief interventions form part of the overall seed sector development in the long term, FAO is supporting the use of better seed system assessment methodologies in member countries affected by disasters. In this context, FAO implements a project funded by the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO) with a component aimed at strengthening the capacity of humanitarian professionals, to conduct accurate seed security assessments with reliable outputs in emergency and rehabilitation situations in eight countries in the Sahel and Horn of Africa.

24. Partnerships are being strengthened with relevant organizations including the International Seed Federation (ISF), International Seed Testing Association (ISTA), OECD Seed Schemes, and the Union for the Protection of New Plant Varieties (UPOV) for assisting countries in the development of the regulatory framework and capacities to support the emergence of viable seed industries and the strengthened capacities for the delivery of quality seeds and planting materials to smallholder farmers especially.

#### *Strengthening Plant Breeding*

25. In collaboration with the Secretariat of the Treaty and under the auspices of the Global Partnership Initiative for Plant Breeding Capacity Building (GIPB), FAO held a series of expert consultations in order to develop a roadmap for promoting a public-private partnership (PPP) for pre-breeding. Subject to the availability of the necessary extra-budgetary funds, GIPB will convene a broader stakeholder consultation to advise on ways to mainstream best practices that facilitate PPP in broadening the genetic base of plant breeding parental lines through pre-breeding.

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<sup>21</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Report, paragraph 52.

26. In response to requests by Members, FAO implemented several field activities funded through both regular programme and trust fund resources to strengthen capacities for plant breeding. Through a regional TCP, for example, the crop improvement programmes of six countries of the SADC region – Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia – have been strengthened through human capacity development and the upgrade of infrastructure. Also, the enhanced collaboration between the germplasm curators and plant breeders in these countries, through training in pre-breeding and co-participation in the respective country's PGRFA committees, is leading to improved use of germplasm accessions in plant breeding. Regional stakeholder meetings and national stakeholder workshops for all participating countries were held. Additional funds are critically needed to fund joint activities as means to nurturing the partnerships fostered. Likewise, additional funds will be required to support increased use of crop germplasm in countries in the Near East region that, through the development of national PGRFA strategies, are fostering closer collaboration between genebank curators, plant breeders and the seed sector.

#### (v) Building sustainable institutional and human capacities

27. Commission Members continue establishing or enhancing the National Information Sharing Mechanisms (NISMs). NISMs will continue to play an essential role for gathering and exchanging of PGRFA information. They will be instrumental for the monitoring and implementation of the Second GPA and the preparation of periodic assessments of the state of the world's PGRFA. Information on the upgraded computer application, including its new and improved functionalities is provided in section III below.

### III. TARGETS AND INDICATORS FOR PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

28. According to the Second GPA, the overall progress in its implementation and the related follow-up processes are monitored and guided by FAO Member Countries through the Commission. For monitoring the implementation of the Second GPA, FAO together with the Secretariat of the Commission, the Secretariat of the International Treaty, the Global Crop Diversity Trust and Bioversity International prepared indicators for monitoring its implementation, building on the previous work on indicators and the reporting format.

29. As reported to the last session of the Governing Body<sup>22</sup>, the Commission, at its Fourteenth Regular Session in 2013, adopted the indicators for monitoring the implementation of the Second GPA as well as three mutually supportive targets for PGRFA:

**Target 1 - PGRFA Conservation:** By 2020, an increasing proportion of the genetic diversity of cultivated plants and their wild relatives, as well as of wild food plant species is maintained in situ, on farm and ex situ in a complementary manner;

**Target 2 - PGRFA Sustainable Use:** By 2020, there has been an increased use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture to improve sustainable crop production intensification and livelihoods while reducing genetic vulnerability of crops and cropping systems; and

**Target 3 - PGRFA Institutional and Human Capacities:** By 2020, many more people are aware of the values of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and institutional and human capacities are strengthened to conserve and use them sustainably while minimizing genetic erosion and safeguarding their genetic diversity.

30. At its last session, the Commission considered higher-order composite indices for PGRFA and stressed their importance as a synthetic measurement of progress in the

<sup>22</sup> IT/GB-5/13/Inf.13, paragraph 7.

implementation of the Second GPA and for communicating achievements towards the three targets for PGRFA, including to the general public. The Commission endorsed the proposed model of higher-order composite indices and requested FAO to continue working on and developing the higher-order composite indices. The Commission further requested its Working Group to continuously monitor and revise, if necessary, the application of the higher-order composite indices model based on data provided by Members as part of the monitoring of the Second GPA.<sup>23</sup>

31. The Commission, at its last session, also welcomed the full integration of the preparation of *The Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (Third Report) with the monitoring process for the Second GPA. It welcomed the upgrading of the computer application for NISMs and its full integration with the World Information and Early Warning System (WIEWS), which will facilitate reporting on the implementation of the Second GPA.<sup>24</sup>

#### *World Information and Early Warning System*

32. WIEWS is FAO's information system for PGRFA and operates since 1983 as the key information system for the preparation of global assessments of the status of PGRFA. In 2000, WIEWS was among the first databases of FAO that provided access to officially appointed users for reporting and updating through the Internet. In the follow-up to the adoption of the new approach for monitoring the implementation of the GPA, Commission Members established NISMs for which a computer application was developed and supported under WIEWS.

33. Updating WIEWS, improving its functionalities, increasing its accessibility and user-friendliness are therefore key concerns for FAO. Accordingly, FAO redesigned WIEWS to fully integrate the monitoring system of the Second GPA based on the indicators adopted by the Commission in 2013. The databases of WIEWS and NISMs have been merged into one integrated database achieving efficiencies in terms of system administration, maintenance and data management. The new system that was pre-released in 2014 and became operational during the first semester of 2015 allows countries to provide information, on the basis of the agreed indicators, on the level of implementation of the Second GPA.<sup>25</sup> The system is accessible through the internet to the officially nominated National Focal Points and the stakeholders designated by them. The multi-language feature of NISM has been preserved. Other features, including data input, data search, dataset import and dataset export have been improved with the latest available web technology and a more user-friendly and portable interface. Monitoring data will be made publicly available in the future through the redesigned WIEWS portal.<sup>26</sup> WIEWS continues to provide the WIEWS *instcode*, a globally used unique identifier system for institutions holding germplasm.

34. WIEWS continues to be a crucial repository of PGRFA data, which is widely used by key global institutions. A recent set of studies analyzing the potential monetary and non-monetary benefits arising from the Treaty relies to a considerable extent on data drawn from WIEWS.<sup>27</sup> With the full integration of the implementation monitoring component with the country reporting process for the Third Report, WIEWS is expected to play an even more important role in the future.

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<sup>23</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Report, paragraph 17-18.

<sup>24</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Report, paragraph 56.

<sup>25</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Inf.9.

<sup>26</sup> [www.fao.org/wiews](http://www.fao.org/wiews)

<sup>27</sup> Moeller, N.I. & Stannard, C. (2013). Identifying benefit flows. Studies on the potential monetary and non-monetary benefits arising from the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, pp. 41; 44; 257 (available at: [http://www.planttreaty.org/sites/default/files/Identifying\\_Benefit\\_Flows.pdf](http://www.planttreaty.org/sites/default/files/Identifying_Benefit_Flows.pdf))

#### **IV. THE THIRD REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

35. Contracting Parties shall cooperate with the Commission in its periodic reassessment of the state of the world's PGRFA in order to facilitate the updating of the rolling Global Plan of Action.<sup>28</sup>

36. The Commission, at its last session, reviewed and endorsed the outline and the timeline for Third Report, and took note of the provisional budget.<sup>29</sup> The Third Report will be prepared by FAO for the consideration of the Commission at its Eighteenth Regular Session, in 2019.

37. While building upon previous reports, the Third Report will provide up-to-date information on the global status of the conservation and use of PGRFA. The Third Report will document the developments in policies, processes, practices, advances in science and technology that impact PGRFA at the global, regional and national levels especially in regard to their contributions to food security, nutrition and the safeguarding of ecosystems. It will aim to identify gaps and needs that must be addressed in order to attain the dual goals of conserving PGRFA while utilizing them sustainably.

38. The Third Report will reflect the structure of the Second GPA. It will cover the four key areas and identify gaps and needs within them, focusing on the main changes since the last report. The Third Report will therefore consist of the following main chapters: (1) Introduction; (2) Conservation of PGRFA; (3) Sustainable use of PGRFA; (4) Institutional and human capacities for PGRFA conservation and use. While the Third Report will be primarily based on country reports, there will also be ancillary in-depth thematic studies that provide further information on specific aspects of the developments and trends in the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA.

#### **V. THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S AQUATIC GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

39. The farming of seaweeds and freshwater macrophytes to produce chemicals for the food and other industries, as well as products for direct consumption as human food, is the world's largest aquaculture operation.<sup>30</sup> The genetic resources of these important aquatic plants will be covered by the first report on *The State of the World's Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.

40. At its last session, the Commission requested FAO to continue preparing *The State of the World's Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*. The Commission endorsed the timeline for the preparation of the report, the indicative list of thematic background studies and cost estimates.<sup>31</sup> In order to facilitate the preparation of *The State of the World's Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, the Commission agreed to establish the *Ad Hoc* Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture specifically with the task to guide the preparation of and review the report. The Commission will consider, at its next session, whether this Working Group shall continue to exist.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> See Treaty, Article 17.3.

<sup>29</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Report, paragraph 56.

<sup>30</sup> CGRFA-15/15/17, *Appendix 3*.

<sup>31</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Report, paragraph 60.

<sup>32</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Report, paragraph 63.

## **VI. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION, SUSTAINABLE USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES**

41. The Commission adopted at its last session the Strategy for the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources. It called upon countries to implement the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources and to assist others in this endeavour. It stressed that the Strategy is fundamental for achieving the goals of the Global Plan of Action and called for the implementation of the Strategy in coordination with the Committee on Forestry and relevant international organizations.<sup>33</sup>

## **VII. CROSS-SECTORAL MATTERS**

42. While the different components of biodiversity for food and agriculture have distinct characteristics, they also share common features. All contribute to meeting the basic needs of food and livelihood security and many depend on human management. The different components face both unique management challenges, as well as common threats, such as climate change.

43. The Commission is committed to addressing cross-cutting issues that can impact any or all components of biodiversity for food and agriculture, such as climate change or the issue of access and benefit-sharing. A number of international bodies deal with these issues. However, the Commission provides a permanent forum where Governments discuss all matters, including cross-sectorial matters, specifically relevant to genetic resources for food and agriculture. It follows carefully policy developments in other international fora and aims to ensure policy coherence through close collaboration with other international organizations and instruments.

### **(i) *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture***

44. The Commission, at its last session, acknowledged the progress made in the preparation of *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*. It reiterated that the information is expected to be preliminary and incomplete in a number of areas and that assessing and highlighting these gaps will be important. It recognized that data collection was challenging for countries and that, given the nature of data, caution should be exerted when compiling information from country reports and drawing conclusions.

45. The Commission thanked the countries that had already submitted their country reports and invited the other countries to submit their country reports by 30 June 2015 and no later than 30 September 2015, with the understanding that the draft global report may not be completed fully when submitted to the Sixteenth Regular Session of the Commission.

### **(ii) Access and benefit-sharing**

46. The Commission, at its Fourteenth Regular Session in 2013, put in place an intersessional process with the aim to develop *Elements to Facilitate Domestic Implementation of Access and Benefit-Sharing for Different Subsectors of Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (ABS Elements). The Commission established a Team of Technical and Legal Experts on Access and Benefit-sharing (ABS Expert Team) consisting of up to two representatives from each of the seven FAO regions and mandated it to, *inter alia*, participate in relevant portions of the meetings of the intergovernmental technical working groups. The ABS Expert Team met twice: in July 2014 (when it also met with the Working Group) and in November 2014.

47. The elaboration of the ABS Elements and the work of the Commission's intergovernmental technical working groups built upon inputs compiled at the Commission's request, namely: government submissions on the conditions under which specific GRFA are exchanged and utilized; stakeholder submissions on voluntary codes of conduct, guidelines and best practices,

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<sup>33</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Report, paragraphs 45-46.

and/or standards in relation to access and benefit-sharing for all subsectors of GRFA; and explanatory notes to the distinctive features of GRFA, taking into account the specificities of the different subsectors.<sup>34</sup>

48. As proposed by the Commission<sup>35</sup>, the FAO Conference, at its 39<sup>th</sup> session in June of this year, welcomed the ABS Elements.<sup>36</sup> The Commission also encouraged close collaboration between its Secretariat and the Secretariats of the Treaty and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in capacity-building activities and meetings, organized to discuss access and benefit-sharing for genetic resources for food and agriculture. The Commission also requested its intergovernmental technical working groups to continue elaborating “subsector-specific ABS Elements including consideration of the role of traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources for food and agriculture and their customary use, and bearing in mind the on-going activities or processes under the International Treaty”.<sup>37</sup> The ABS Expert Team will reconvene in September 2016 to consolidate the outputs of the meetings of the intergovernmental technical working groups on subsector-specific ABS Elements.

### (iii) Biodiversity and nutrition

49. The Commission, at its Fourteenth Regular Session, highlighted the importance of biodiversity for food and nutrition and noted that its potential role in nutrition is underexplored and undervalued.<sup>38</sup> The Commission requested FAO to develop draft guidelines for mainstreaming biodiversity into policies, programmes and national and regional plans of action on nutrition.<sup>39</sup>

50. At its Fifteenth Regular Session, the Commission endorsed the *Voluntary Guidelines for Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Policies, Programmes and National and Regional Plans of Action on Nutrition*,<sup>40</sup> which provide examples of how mainstreaming could be implemented depending on each country’s needs and capabilities. The implementation of the Guidelines should be based on scientific evidence and consistent with relevant international obligations.

51. The Commission encouraged governments and stakeholders to implement the Voluntary Guidelines, where appropriate. It called upon them to support research on the nutrient composition of foods derived from different varieties of plants and breeds of animals, as well as of wild, neglected and underutilized species. It requested FAO to report on the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines at its Seventeenth Regular Session.

### (iv) Biotechnologies

52. The Commission, at its last session, considered the application and integration of biotechnologies for the conservation and sustainable utilization of genetic resources for food and agriculture. It requested that FAO continue to strengthen the national and regional capacities of developing countries to develop appropriate biotechnologies for the characterization, conservation and utilization of genetic resources for food and agriculture, taking into consideration relevant national and regional laws and regulations, and international instruments including those related to risk assessment. It further requested that FAO continue its activities for the regular dissemination of updated factual information on the role of biotechnologies and continue assessing trends and progress of applications of biotechnologies in the characterization, conservation and utilization of genetic resources for food and agriculture. The Commission also requested that FAO continue to explore mechanisms for future cooperation with relevant international organizations and recognized that its Members may wish to undertake

<sup>34</sup> See CGRFA-15/15/Inf. 14.; CGRFA-15/15/Inf.13; CGRFA-15/15/Inf.13 Add.1; and CGRFA-15/15/Inf.10.

<sup>35</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Report, paragraph 22(ii).

<sup>36</sup> C 2015/REP, paragraph 52.

<sup>37</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Report, paragraph 22(viii).

<sup>38</sup> CGRFA-14/13/Report, paragraph 42.

<sup>39</sup> CGRFA-14/13/Report, paragraph 46.

<sup>40</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Report, *Appendix C*.

socioeconomic analyses of biotechnology applications where appropriate in the characterization, conservation and utilization of genetic resources for food and agriculture.<sup>41</sup>

**(v) Climate change and genetic resources for food and agriculture**

53. The Commission, at its Fourteenth Regular Session, had adopted its Programme of Work on Climate Change and Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture with two objectives:

- Promote the understanding of the roles and importance of genetic resources for food and agriculture in food security and nutrition and in ecosystem function and system resilience in light of climate change.
- Provide technical information to enable countries to understand the role of genetic resources for food and agriculture in climate change mitigation and adaptation, as appropriate.

54. At its Fifteenth Regular Session, the Commission endorsed the *Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Integration of Genetic Diversity into National Climate Change Adaptation Planning*.<sup>42</sup> The Guidelines were approved by the FAO Conference at its 39<sup>th</sup> Session.<sup>43</sup>

55. The Guidelines have been developed in line with those prepared by the Least-Developed Countries Expert Group of the UNFCCC, so that they can complement and contribute to the NAP process, addressing the genetic resources dimension of adaptation planning. The guidelines build on, *inter alia*, previous work by the Commission on climate change, such as the Background Study Papers No. 53-57, 60, information obtained through a global survey on *Lessons learned about the ways and means to conserve and use genetic diversity to build resilience to climate change in food and agriculture systems*;<sup>44</sup> they take account of the Commission's global action plans for plant, animal and forest genetic resources and of relevant documents covering aquatic genetic resources. They have been reviewed by the Commission's Intergovernmental Technical Working Groups on Animal, Forest and Plant Genetic Resources.

56. The Guidelines seek to ensure the relevance of genetic resources for food and agriculture to the overall national adaptation planning process in a country by identifying clear goals for conservation and use of genetic resources for food and agriculture as part of national adaptation to climate change, and ensuring the fullest involvement of all stakeholders. The process allows the identification of well defined objectives and the development of plans to achieve these. In this way the guidelines can support the identification of priority areas for future investments in conservation and use of genetic resources for food and agriculture.

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<sup>41</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Report, paragraphs 27-32.

<sup>42</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Report, *Appendix D*.

<sup>43</sup> C 2015/REP, paragraph 52.

<sup>44</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Inf.16.