



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



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

**Item 17.4 of the Provisional Agenda**

**SEVENTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY**

**Kigali, Rwanda, 30 October - 3 November 2017**

**Report of the Secretary of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research and  
Innovation on the Collaboration with the International Treaty**

**Note by the Secretary**

This document contains the report from the Global Forum on Agricultural Research and Innovation (GFAR) on the activities undertaken in the framework of the partnership with the International Treaty during the current biennium. It is being provided for the information of the Governing Body in the form and language it was received.

## **The Global Forum on Agricultural Research and Innovation (GFAR)**

GFAR is pleased to inform on the activities undertaken since the Sixth Session of the Governing Body held in 2015, in the framework of its partnership with the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. These activities have been reported at different meetings in this intersessional period, including the Third Meeting of the Ad hoc Technical Committee on Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources (2016); the Global Consultation on Farmers' Rights (2016); and the Sixteenth Regular Session of the Commission of Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (2017).

During the past two years, GFAR has undergone a major transformation and now brings together a vibrant and fast-growing community of self-declared partners (presently reaching almost 500 partner organizations: CSO-NGOs, women, youth, donor investors, farmers and agricultural workers, higher education, international public agricultural research, G20, regional and national agricultural research, private sector and rural services), who recognize that the current world complex challenges to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals can only be met through working together for success.

GFAR, a global network for concerted action, knowledge exchange and advocacy, acting and reaching impact through collective action, jointed efforts with the Treaty Secretariat to cooperate in the implementation of the International Treaty towards achieving food security and nutrition, improving the conservation of plant genetic diversity and the livelihoods of the most vulnerable population: the smallholder farmers.

GFAR cooperation with the Treaty has been focused mainly on Farmers' Rights and the sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

### *Farmers' Rights*

At its last session, the Governing Body of the International Treaty requested the Treaty Secretariat to implement, subject to the availability of financial resources, a Joint Capacity Building Programme, with the Global Forum on Agricultural Research and other relevant organizations on Farmers' Rights as set out in Article 9 of the International Treaty.

The Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation from India and the Environmental Research Services in Pakistan sent letters to both Secretaries (Treaty and GFAR) formally expressing their interest in becoming partners of the Joint Capacity Building Programme. Other organizations have directly joined practical efforts in the framework of the Programme, developing activities to increase capacity and awareness on Farmers' Rights at national and local levels. These organizations include the Development Fund of Norway, GEF-UNDP Small Grants Programme, national seed offices, national agricultural research institutions, farmers' organizations, NGOs and CSOs (i.e. ASOCUCH, FIPAH and CEPa) FAO national offices, CGIAR Centers, women farmers' organizations, higher education institutions and media organizations.

The Joint Capacity Building Programme on Farmers' Rights has been able to contribute in:

- Enhancing trust and communication between national stakeholders from the formal and informal seed systems
- Enhancing national consensus on what Farmers' Rights means under the International Treaty
- Increasing awareness on Farmers' Rights among smallholder farmers, relevant stakeholders and policy makers
- Increasing awareness on the role women farmers' play in agriculture, food and nutrition security
- Promoting and strengthening multi stakeholder dialogue platforms at national and local levels on Farmers' Rights
- Increasing national capacity for the review, adjustment and development of national policies and legal measures relevant for the implementation of Farmers' Rights

- Advocating for the co-existence and complementarity between the formal and informal seed systems
- Facilitating the dissemination of best practices, lessons learned and experiences relevant for the implementation of Farmers' Rights

The following is the report of activities undertaken since the Sixth Session of the Governing Body to implement the Joint Capacity Building Programme on Farmers' Rights.

#### 1. Development and dissemination of capacity building materials on Farmers' Rights

GFAR has supported the implementation of the Joint Capacity Building Programme, by bringing its capacity and ability to get relevant stakeholders together for transparent, open and inclusive discussions, as well as its technical and legal expertise on Farmers' Rights, increasing Farmers' Rights awareness and capacity development through collective action.

During the last biennium, the development of capacity building materials on Farmers' Rights for Honduras was finalized. This material was developed with the participation of national farmers' organizations, including FIPAH; the Development Fund of Norway; the National Commission of Plant Genetic Resources of Honduras; the Escuela Agrícola Panamericana Zamorano de Honduras; the Programa Colaborativo de Fitomejoramiento Participativo en Mesoamérica and other relevant national organizations. A national meeting was organized by FIPAH in Siguatepeque in 2017 where the capacity building material on Farmers' Rights was launched. FIPAH is currently disseminating the material among farmers' organizations, policy makers and relevant stakeholders in the country.

Additionally, as a result of the joint cooperation with GEF-UNDP Small Grants Programme, capacity building materials on Farmers' Rights are currently under development for smallholder farmers and policy makers of Costa Rica. The material is being developed by the National Seed Office of Costa Rica, the National Commission on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture of Costa Rica, national farmers' organizations and other relevant stakeholders.

Regarding the already developed capacity building materials on Farmers' Rights for Guatemala and Malawi, local NGOs in both countries continued during this inter-sessional period to disseminate the material among farmers' organizations, policy makers and other stakeholders, organizing training workshops, etc.

#### 2. Workshops on Farmers' Rights

On 11 October 2016, the First National Workshop on Farmers' Rights was held in Costa Rica with the participation of 53 representatives of farmers and indigenous organizations, women organizations, ministries, international organizations, universities, national research institutions and the Seed National Office of Costa Rica. Among the recommendations to improve the implementation of Farmers' Rights, participants mentioned the development of capacity building materials on Farmers' Rights, with easy language and accessibility to farmers, indigenous communities, researchers and policy makers; strengthening of the National Commission on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture; development of local workshops on Farmers' Rights; use of media (including local radio programmes) to reach smallholder farmer communities and increase their awareness on Farmers' Rights; strengthen of farmers' organizations and improvement of the national legal and policy framework.

Presentations on Farmers' Rights have been held at local level in Ecuador with smallholder farmers to increase their understanding and awareness in 4 localities of the country (Sierra Sur, Costa, Sierra Norte and Amazonia) with the support of UNDP-Ecuador. In addition, two meetings will be held in Quito, Ecuador on July 2017 with national parliamentarians and new directors of relevant Ministers, as a joint activity with FAO-Ecuador, on Farmers' Rights.

### 3. Review and development of national policy and legislation

Support has been requested by the national government of Honduras, through its national institution for research and development, in the development of the national seed policy with the aim of reaching a holistic policy addressing both the informal and formal seed systems. Information of relevant documents and other holistic policies and legislation recognizing Farmers' Rights, including the Voluntary Guide for National Seed Formulation endorsed by FAO's Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in 2015, has been shared with policy makers from Costa Rica, Guatemala and Malawi when developing new seed policy and legislation.

### 4. Farmers' Rights Webinars

On 30 May 2017, GFAR organized the multi-partner webinar "Farmers' Rights: Achieving Complementarity between the Informal and Formal Seed Systems" with 155 people registered. The webinar was of a great interest, reaching all the GFAR constituencies, including farmers' organizations, NGOs and CSOs, academia, research institutions, international agricultural research organizations and the private sector. A representative of the Treaty Secretariat presented Farmers' Rights under the International Treaty and the recent activities undertaken relevant for Article 9 of the Treaty, highlighting the importance of partnerships to improve Farmers' Rights implementation. Bioversity International and Oxfam Novib exchange information on how to achieve complementarity between the informal and formal seed systems in practice, including complementarity between ex situ and on-farm conservation, participatory plant breeding, and holistic policies and legislation. The private sector also participated in the webinar providing benefit-sharing examples from the private sector to smallholder farmers, strengthening farmers' organizations and empowering farmers at local level.

Another webinar on Farmers' Rights, lead by the CGIAR and co-organized with other organizations as a collective action, is going to be held in August. The theme of this webinar will be how the CGIAR Centers are supporting the implementation of Farmers' Rights in practice.

A third webinar is planned to be joint organized by GFAR Secretariat and the Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition (GODAN) before the next Governing Body Session. The aim of the webinar is to provide information of the concept of open data, ownership rights and its relevance to Farmers' Rights.

### 5. Farmers' Rights agreed as a Key Focus Area of GFAR Medium Term Plan 2018-2021

GFAR Steering Committee agreed on June 2017 on Farmers' Rights as a key focus area of its Medium Term Plan 2018-2021. GFAR partners are aware of the importance and need to increase the advocacy of the rights of smallholder farmers over their genetic resources and traditional knowledge, innovations and practices for farmers to determine their needs and future; reduce poverty and achieve food and nutrition security.

GFAR partners will be joining efforts, through collective actions, to increase the understanding and awareness of Farmers' Rights, increase trust and communication channels between stakeholders from the informal and formal system and policy makers; increase the recognition of the role farmers, particularly women farmers play in food security; contribute with the conservation and sustainable use of crop landraces; and support the implementation of Farmers' Rights at regional, national and local levels.

### *Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*

Since the last Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty, GFAR Secretariat participated as an expert at the Meeting on the Toolbox for the Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, held in Italy in 2016, as well as an observer at the Third Meeting

of the Ad Hoc Technical Committee on Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

GFAR Secretariat was also kindly invited by the Treaty Secretariat to participate at the Regional Seminar for Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Montevideo, Uruguay in 2017, with the aim of sharing with national focal points of the Region the discussions and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Technical Committee on Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and progress made on the implementation of the Joint Capacity Building Programme on Farmers' Rights.

GFAR recognizes the importance of the sustainable use of plant genetic resources for the achievement of food and nutrition security and poverty reduction. Neglected and under-utilized crops could be sources of nutritious and healthy food for local communities and contribute to global food security, increase the generation of environmental services and improve communities' livelihoods due to additional income derived from the commercialization of these traditional varieties.

In this context, the GFAR Steering Committee members agreed in June 2017 to joint efforts to broaden the genetic crop base, to improve smallholder community livelihoods. The aim of this collective action is to empower local communities, including disadvantaged/displaced farmers, particularly rural women, in the conservation and use of neglected and underutilized crops. It aims to improve the lack of information of farmers to better manage their resources, particularly underutilized crops in marginal/crisis situations. This concrete collective action among Partners in the GFAR forum will greatly contribute to the implementation of the International Treaty with regard to the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources at local level.