



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



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

**Report on the implementation of the Programme of Work on Sustainable Use of PGRFA and Supporting Initiatives**

*Note by the Secretary*

*This document presents the Report on the implementation of the Programme of Work on Sustainable Use of PGRFA and Supporting Initiatives submitted by Switzerland on 12 December 2018.*

*The submission is presented in the form and language in which it was received.*



Swiss Confederation

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**Submission: implementation of the Programme of Work on Sustainable Use of PGRFA and Supporting Initiatives**

Dear Secretary,

With notification of the 25<sup>th</sup> October 2018, you invited Contracting Parties to submit report on the implementation of the Programme of Work on Sustainable Use of PGRFA and Supporting Initiatives. We are pleased to provide you with the following information.

The ordinance for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA) provides a legal framework to ensure the conservation of PGRFA and regulates the management of the national gene bank. Access to PGRFA can be obtained under the conditions of the Standard Material Transfer Agreement of the International Treaty for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA). In addition to conservation, this ordinance promotes the sustainable use of PGRFA and regulates the funding of projects for this purpose. Furthermore, the Federal Act on the Protection of Nature and Cultural Heritage (NCHA) and the Nagoya Ordinance (NagO) regulate the PGRFA which are not covered by the ordinance for PGRFA nor by the multilateral system of the ITPGRFA, as well as PGRFA which are used for purposes other than conservation or research, breeding and training activities related to food and agriculture.

National Plan of Action

Sustainable use within the National Plan of Action aims to promote a broad genetic diversity of PGRFA through a diverse, innovative or sustainable production based on locally adapted varieties. Key measures for the sustainable use of PGRFA are the characterization and evaluation of plant genetic resources, making available propagation material according to the phytosanitary requirements and the enhancement of PGRFA for niche production. Furthermore, efforts are made on public relations, with demonstration gardens, awareness raising and an annual national conference on PGRFA.

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The National Plan of Action for PGRFA is based on articles 5, 6 and 9 of the Plant Treaty, i.e. the articles on conservation, sustainable use and Farmers' Rights. Based on the experience from the implementation of the National Action Plan, the following factors are seen to have conducive effects:

- Maintenance of diverse farming systems
- Participatory Plant Breeding / Participatory Varietal Selection
- Farmer innovation / Farmers' Rights
- Maintenance / marketing of landraces / farmers' varieties
- Use of under-utilized species
- Conservation of plant genetic diversity *in situ* and *ex situ*
- Use of a wide diversity of species and varieties on-farm
- Seed (exchange) networks
- Recognition of the value of traditional knowledge
- Access to plant genetic diversity for use in breeding programmes
- Access to information on plant genetic diversity
- Policy amendment/development leading to conservation of crop diversity
- Knowledge management and capacity building

#### Funding of projects

The funding of projects for the sustainable use under the National Plan of Action on PGRFA follows certain conditions. Funding is primarily provided as 'seed money', and not as a permanent subsidization. Funding is limited to a maximum of eight years. There needs to be a high level of self- and third-party financing. Furthermore, solidarity contributions from the arising benefit to the Benefit-sharing Fund under the ITPGRFA are encouraged. In addition, recipients of project funds are encouraged to pose genetic material arising from their work in the national gene bank.

Examples of projects, which received funding under the National Plan of Action for PGRFA, include the following (a complete list can be found here <https://www.bdn.ch/pan/>):

- Evaluation of grain legumes and their potential use
- Development of new niche varieties in vegetables
- Improvement of pear-shaped onions, "Gniff" carrots and turnips to successful niche marketing
- Old tomato varieties: Breeding for increased disease tolerance especially against *Phytophthora infestans*
- Old potato varieties: Increasing disease tolerance against *Phytophthora infestans*
- Positive mass selection in two types of spelt
- Sustainable use of land maize varieties
- Promoting sustainable use of NAP-PGREL varieties through crowd funding
- Using apple genetic resources for organic farming
- Evaluation of genetic diversity in Emmer (*Triticum dicoccum*)
- Evaluation of genetic resources to develop an anthracnose-tolerant white lupine
- Vineyard peaches - evaluation of the most valuable varieties of Switzerland
- Seed Community Breeding "Sagezu"
- Development of new niche varieties of tuber fennel and Brussels sprouts
- Securing and using the Swiss sorb tree varieties
- Promotion of a local variety of artichoke "l'artichaut violet de Plainpalais"

#### Relevant provisions in the seed legislation

In addition to the ordinance for PGRFA, Switzerland's seed legislation regulates the production and putting into circulation of plant reproductive material for commercial use in agriculture and horticulture (farmers, cut flower production etc.). In general, the production of plant reproductive material of agricultural crops requires an additional registration of the respective varieties. In many cases, PGRFA neither fulfill the requirements to be registered nor meet the high production standards as defined by the ordinance. To ensure the sustainable use of PGRFA, the Swiss legislation provides for the authorization of niche varieties, including conservation varieties. The production of seed and propagating material of a niche variety can be limited by the Federal Office for Agriculture. Plant reproductive material of niche varieties has to be indicated by an unofficial label (since it is not certified by an official

body) and cannot be exported. So far, the Federal Office of Agriculture has authorized the marketing of 59 niche varieties, which complement the market of commercial varieties. In addition, Switzerland's seed legislation is in harmony with the EU legislation. This enables the Swiss farmers and breeders to have access to all registered varieties in Europe. Overall, the Swiss legislation is adapted to the need of different systems for seed and propagation material and to the needs of different user groups of PGRFA, supplying them with appropriate and diverse varieties or PGRFA.

Kind regards

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