Views, Experiences and Best Practices as an example of possible options for
the national implementation of Article 9 of the International Treaty

Note by the Secretary

At its second meeting of the Ad hoc Technical Expert Group on Farmers’ Rights (AHTEG), the
Expert Group agreed on a revised version of the template for collecting information on examples
of national measures, best practices and lessons learned from the realization of Farmers’ Rights

This document presents the updated information on best practices and measures of implementing
Article 9 of the International Treaty submitted by South Africa on 26 July 2019.

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

- Title of measure/practice
  Farmers seed systems and the conservation of agrobiodiversity in South Africa: the establishment and support of community seed banks.

- Date of submission
  31 July 2019

- Name(s) of country/countries in which the measure/practice is taking place
  South Africa

- Responsible institution/organization (name, address, website (if applicable), e-mail address, telephone number(s) and contact person)
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- Type of institution/organization (categories)

  The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Forestry (DAFF) is a national sphere of the South African government responsible for implementing the laws and policies decided by the South African parliament. Within the DAFF and more specifically the Agricultural Production, Health and Food Safety Branch of the DAFF, the Directorate Genetic Resources is mandated to regulate and provide an integrated national management system in support of the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture. This involves the development and implementation of policies, legislation, strategies and norms and standards on the management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, the regulation and promotion of propagating material of genetic resources for food and agriculture and to provide for a risk mitigating system in support of agricultural biodiversity.
Description of the examples

Mandatory information:¹

- Short summary to be put in the inventory (max. 200 words) including:
  - Implementing entity and partners
  - Start year
  - Objective(s)

¹ This mandatory information is required in order for the measure/practice to be included in the Inventory.
To strengthen farmer seed systems through establishment of community seed banks in identified provinces of South Africa and participation of farmers in national conservation programmes of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

- **Summary of core components**
  
  Consultation with provincial extension services and farmers  
  Survey of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture availability.  
  Establishment community seed banks  
  Training of farmers  
  Monitoring community seed banks activities

- **Key outcomes**
  
  Three community seed banks established  
  Traditional food fair/seed were conducted  
  Seed exchange among farmers from different provinces  
  Training farmers of community seed bank management

  The accumulated experiences of establishing and supporting three community seedbanks in South Africa have been used as input for the development of two community seedbank manuals, one for facilitators (Vernooy et al. 2017) and one for farmers (Vernooy et al. 2018).

- **Lessons learned (if applicable)**
  
  All stakeholders have to be involved from the initial planning process and throughout the implementation of all activities. Communication is vital, about all aspects, and between everyone involved; the funding agency, the collaborators and especially the farmers/communities. National and/or provincial government could provide incentives, such as awards to farmers for their great efforts to conserve traditional crops and maintain crop diversity.

- **Brief history (including starting year), as appropriate**

  The original project was funded through Bioversity International and received technical support from Bioversity International and the Provincial Departments of Agriculture in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo provinces from 2013 – 2015. Beyond this first period, DAFF and Bioversity International agreed to extended funding in order to spread the efforts to other parts of the country and to expand the activities with the inclusion of crop improvement/participatory breeding with the current recipient farmers/communities in three provinces.

  By the end of 2018, the Gumbu community seedbank had received about 234 seed contributions (donations) and the Sterkspruit community seedbank about 110 contributions. Seeds were exchanged between the two community seedbanks, with the newly established Jericho community seedbank, and with the National Plant Genetic Resources Centre. Reported
benefits include safely stored seed, new seed storing techniques leading to higher quality seed, increased quantity and diversity of seed stored in the community, seed of landraces multiplied and distributed (increased availability), exchanges of knowledge and seed, collaboration with the National Plant Genetic Resources Centre (the national genebank), collective sharing of experiences.

- Core components of the measure/practice (max 200 words)

The initial aim was to determine the extent to which the farmers are still engaged in growing landraces, identifying the main factors that influence the choice of crops and crop varieties, assessing the occurrence of loss of crop diversity, and whether farmers were experiencing the impact of climate change as well as farmers response to these questions. Furthermore, the project researched if farmers were saving seed on-farm or at the community level, if farmers were exchanging seeds and with whom, when and how, and whether seed-saving and exchange practices were changing and how. Methods used included historical analyses of crop use, four-cell analysis of crops and crop varieties and mapping of seed networks. Based on the answers to these questions, discussions were held with farmers in targeted communities about the concept and practice of (establishing and managing) a community seed bank. The research was complemented by the organization of seed and food fairs and capacity development activities. So far, three community seed banks have been established, one in Limpopo Province (in the community of Gumbu village), one in Eastern Cape Province (located in the town of Sterkspruit but serving 8 villages), and one in the town of Jericho in North-West province.

- Description of the context and the history of the measure/practice is taking place (political, legal and economic framework conditions for the measure/practice) (max 200 words)

South Africa is a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing and as such, the country has legislation and national programmes towards the achievement of the three pillars of the CBD. Although the South African government has not ratified the ITPGRFA, the South African government is a member of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Through the National Plant Genetic Resources Centre, DAFF administers national programmes on conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. In order to implement the Second Global Plan of Action, a National Plan on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture as well as the National Strategic Action Plan for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Crop Wild Relatives were developed and approved by relevant authorities.

- To which provision(s) of Article 9 of the International Treaty does this measure relate

Art. 9.1 ✔
Art. 9.2a ✔
Art. 9.2b ✔
Art. 9.2c ✔
Other information, if applicable

Please indicate which category of the Inventory is most relevant for the proposed measure, and which other categories are also relevant (if any):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Most relevant²</th>
<th>Also relevant³</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Recognition of local and indigenous communities’, farmers’ contributions to conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, such as awards and recognition of custodian/guardian farmers</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Financial contributions to support farmers conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA such as contributions to benefit-sharing funds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Approaches to encourage income-generating activities to support farmers’ conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Catalogues, registries and other forms of documentation of PGRFA and protection of traditional knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>In-situ/on-farm conservation and management of PGRFA, such as social and cultural measures, community biodiversity management and conservation sites</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Facilitation of farmers’ access to a diversity of PGRFA through community seed banks, seed networks and other measures improving farmers’ choices of a wider diversity of PGRFA</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Participatory approaches to research on PGRFA, including characterization and evaluation, participatory plant breeding and variety selection</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Farmers’ participation in decision-making at local, national and sub-regional, regional and international levels</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Training, capacity development and public awareness creation</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Legal measures for the implementation of Farmers’ Rights, such as legislative measures related to PGRFA.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Other measures / practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² Please select only one category that is most relevant, under which the measure will be listed.

³ Please select one or several categories that may also be relevant (if applicable).

⁴ Including seed houses.
In case you selected ‘other measures’, would you like to suggest a description of this measure, e.g. as a possible new category?

Objective(s)

Target group(s) and numbers of involved and affected farmers

58 farmers who are registered members of community seed banks as well farmers/community members from neighbouring villages

Location(s) and geographical outreach

Sterkspruit Eastern, Cape Province; Jericho, North West and Gumbu, Limpopo Province.

Resources used for implementation of the measure/practice

Financial support: DAFF and Bioversity International
Technical support: DAFF and Bioversity International
Stakeholder engagements: Advisory services form Provincial Departments, tribal authority leader and communities

How has the measure/practice affected the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture?

Through training and technical support by the NPGRC, community seed banks members/farmers has improved their way of conservation plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and notice the value and importance of introducing landraces back for utilisation. Through this measure communities managed to increase locally adapted crop diversity.

Please describe the achievements of the measure/practice so far (including quantification) (max 200 words)

Two practical handbooks for establishing and supporting community seed banks have been published
Host traditional seed exchange and learning workshops
Training sessions on community seed banks management
Training of government officials including advisory services
Undertook a fact finding mission to Zimbabwe
Developed a booklet on indigenous recipes

Other national level instruments that are linked to the measure/practice

National Plan on the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

Are you aware of any other international agreements or programs that are relevant for this measure/practice?

Convention on Biological diversity – Nagoya Protocol

5 Any classification, e.g. of the types of farmer addressed, may be country-specific.
Other issues you wish to address, that have not yet been covered, to describe the measure/practice

Lessons learned

• Describe lessons learned which may be relevant for others who wish to do the same or similar measures/practices (max 250 words).

All stakeholders have to be involved from the initial planning process and throughout the implementation of all activities. Communication is vital, about all aspects, and between everyone involved; the funding agency, the collaborators and especially the farmers/communities. National and/or provincial government could provide incentives, such as awards to farmers for their great efforts to conserve traditional crops and maintain crop diversity.

• What challenges encountered along the way (if applicable) (max 200 words)

Attracting youth
Security of the community seed bank
Maintaining commitment and interest of farmers
Effects of climate change

• What would you consider conditions for success, if others should seek to carry out such a measure or organize such an activity? (max 100 words)

It is important to get all relevant stakeholders such as advisory extension service, research institutions, the national genebank and farmers. In a traditional system such as in some jurisdictions of South Africa, the inclusion of traditional authorities before the implementation of the project should not be overlooked. Community seed banks can be important platforms for farmer empowerment, but it takes time to set them up and develop into a dynamic and viable entity.

Further information

• Link(s) to further information about the measure/practice

Books and book chapters


Technical reports


Briefs and articles


[http://hdl.handle.net/10568/79179](http://hdl.handle.net/10568/79179)

[http://hdl.handle.net/10568/78666](http://hdl.handle.net/10568/78666)


Gómez César, M.; Sthapit, B.; Vernooy, R. (2016) Safeguarding local crop knowledge: the use of community biodiversity registers. Rome (Italy): Bioversity International; South Africa: Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. [http://hdl.handle.net/10568/78415](http://hdl.handle.net/10568/78415)


Manuals


Blogs

https://grpi2.wordpress.com/2013/11/13/embracing-diversity/