

**Submission by BELGIUM to notification NCP GB8-020 MYPoW/DSI:
Invitation to submit views and other information on “Digital sequence information”**

Belgium is pleased to provide views and information on Digital sequence information, more specifically on terminology used in this area and the relevance of DSI on PGRFA for food security and nutrition.

Belgium emphasizes the importance of adopting a science-based approach when exploring a possible common understanding of the scope, definition and concept of DSI. Belgium would like to underline that a process was set up under CBD decision 14/20 in order to provide such a science-based approach and assist in further clarifying the concept and the scope of DSI in the context of the CBD and its protocols, as well as assist with the identification of possible appropriate terminology. Belgium believes that this process could be useful to FAO in its endeavour to come to an approach to “DSI”. Although we believe it is important not to pre-empt the results of this approach, Belgium would like to stress that a definition of DSI should be based on appropriate relevant terminology and clear terms. To identify appropriate and more precise terminology, it can be useful to explore the terms commonly used by the scientific community in the context of genetic research. These terms include, for instance, genetic sequence data, nucleotide sequence data, and genetic sequences.

We note that relevant terminology is used also in international organizations in the context of their activities, such as the WHO. In particular, the WHO PIP Framework uses the term genetic sequence data, and defines genetic sequences as: “The order of nucleotides found in a molecule of DNA or RNA. They contain the genetic information that determines the biological characteristics of an organism or a virus”. It would be useful to take into account relevant existing and agreed terms and definitions for the eventual establishment of a clear terminology for DSI.

Belgium believes that generation, access to and use of DSI may have important and positive effects on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, including of plants for food and agriculture. We believe that accessibility to data for research purposes should be as open as possible, in order to foster information sharing and further increase knowledge and innovation.

We emphasize that public or open access databases are maintained by public funding, and data published in these databases are the results of researchers’ work made available to freely share information, including DSI. Bearing this in mind, public databases and open access to their data are a form of non-monetary benefit sharing and contribute to the fair and equitable sharing of benefits.

Finally, Belgium acknowledges, however, that many countries may lack capacity to generate, access and use digital sequence information on genetic resources for food and agriculture. In general, Belgium strongly supports the development, maintenance and increase of capacity in all States to generate, access and use DSI.