

Invitation to submit views and other information on “Digital sequence information”:

Potential implications of the use of “digital sequence information” (DSI) on genetic resources for the objectives of the International Treaty

Views and/or inputs on DSI:

1. I feel that **any grey areas** on the potential long-term (negative) effects or outcome of germplasm exchange through the multilateral system of access and benefit sharing **may increase the potential risk of mistrust between providers and users of PGRFA**.
2. The inclusion of Digital Sequence Information or Genetic Sequence Data on genetic resources for the objectives of the International Treaty would therefore enable continuous tracking of the movement (exchange) of every genetic resources between the various potential users of PGRFA (genetic resources) for various purposes, (including research) up to the point where PGRFA are commercialized.
3. Thus, agreeing on inclusion of GSD for purposes of tracking the movement of PGRFA in the MLS-ABS **may strengthen trust between providers and recipients of PGRFA**, and thus promote transparency in the global efforts to meet some of the Sustainable Development Goals (Zero hunger and improved food and nutrition security).
4. Hence it is against this backdrop that I personally feel that the inclusion of DSI is indispensable, and thus must be ensured in order to avoid possibilities of cultivating division among contracting parties. This is because any division may turn may affect the sustainability of this international instrument (ITPGRFA) which despite being new has already contributed immensely in halting the imminent erosion and extinction of crop genetic diversity. Thus its birth was an important turning point that need to be upheld through strengthening transparency and trust not only among contracting parties but also with non-contracting parties who still wish to eventually also accede and become party to the Treaty.

Regarding the issue of appropriate terminology:

5. While Digital sequence information on one hand seem to be an all-encompassing phrase, it however also sometimes seem confusing. On the other hand, the term or phrase “Genetic Sequence Data” is self-explanatory and thus less confusion. Perhaps, “Genetic sequence information” (GSI) may also need to be considered as a more appropriate phrase or option even though its self-explanatory nature may easily frighten private institutions or breeders who are currently reluctant to divulge or share such information on PGRFA once they have made some desirable improvements or modifications on them. Nevertheless, the inclusion of DSI is still very key in creating or building transparency

and therefore an element of trust among users (receptients) and providers of PGRFA or genetic resources so as not to risk a breakdown of this very important international agreement.

6. Hence there is need to continue engaging and eventually convincing stakeholders on the inclusion or marrying DSI to the genetic resources in order to enhance the flow or exchange of PGRFA under the MLS-ABS of the ITPGRFA.