



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



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

**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 Canada 31 July 2019.*

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



**Title of measure/practice :** Western Wheat Breeding Core Support Agreement

**Date of submission :** July 2019

**Name(s) of country in which the measure/practice is taking place :** Canada

**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) :** Department of the Federal Government of Canada

**Collaborating/supporting institutions/organizations/actors, if applicable (name, address, website (if applicable), e-mail address, telephone number(s))**

Western Grains Research Foundation (WGRF)

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### **Description of the example**

#### **Mandatory information:**

#### **Short summary to be put in the inventory (max. 200 words) including:**

Western Grains Research Foundation (WGRF) is a farmer-funded and farmer-directed non-profit organization investing in agricultural research that benefits western Canadian farmers. Since 1995, WGRF and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) have collaborated on western wheat and barley variety development, through a series of collaborative agreements stating contributions of the parties and shared goals. The objective is to provide mutual financial and technical support and to facilitate the development of wheat and barley varieties for Western Canadian farmers with higher yields, improved agronomic traits, end use properties, and better disease and insect resistance. The investment of WGRF relies on check-off payments of farmers in several provinces of western Canada on wheat and barley sold. This money is reinvested in the development of new wheat and barley varieties at AAFC. Farmers are part of the decision-making committee responsible to identify the needs of new varieties and traits creating economic, social or environmental benefits. New varieties may be offered for testing purposes to farmers who contribute to their evaluation. Key outcomes of the collaboration are wheat and barley



varieties that are adapted to various agroecological zones – more than 150 since 1996 – and several research projects focusing on sustainable use of PGRFA.

(200 words)

Implementing entity and partners :

- Western Grains Research Foundation
- Government of Canada – Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Start year:

- 1995

Objective(s):

- The objective of the collaboration between WGRF and AAFC is to provide mutual financial and technical support for the wheat and barley breeding programs, to facilitate the development of wheat and barley varieties for Western Canadian farmers with higher yields, improved agronomic traits, end use properties, and better disease and insect resistance. AAFC and WGRF recognize the importance of this partnership through the core support agreement to maintain competitiveness for the wheat and barley producers and their value chain.

Summary of core components:

- The investment of WGRF relies on check-off payments of farmers in several provinces of western Canada on wheat and barley sold. This money is reinvested in the development of new wheat and barley varieties at AAFC.

Key outcomes:

- Key outcomes of the collaboration are wheat and barley varieties that are adapted to various agro-ecological zones – more than 150 since 1996 – and several research projects focusing on sustainable use of PGRFA.

Lessons learned (if applicable):

- Have clear objectives and common goals and maintain sight of those throughout the process and all along the collaboration.

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

WGRF was created in 1981 bringing together 12 farm organizations who had a vision of building a scientific network on variety development and field crop research that would consult farmers on their needs and work with research organizations to fill that need.

A study commissioned by WGRF to determine how the farmers investment in research in variety development through WGRF benefitted farmers and the study determined that for every check-off dollar invested in varietal development there was a return of \$20.40 in value to Canadian farmers (Gray, R. Nagy, C. and Guzel, A. 2012, University of Saskatchewan).



WGRF and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) have collaborated on western wheat and barley variety development, through a series of collaborative agreements since 1995.

### Core components

WGRF's investment dollars are directly derived from farmers who paid a check-off payment on wheat and barley sold in the Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. This money collected from farmers is reinvested in the development of new wheat and barley varieties at AAFC. Farmers are part of the decision making committee responsible to identify the needs of new varieties and agronomic traits creating economic, social or environmental benefits. The research agenda focuses on public research. These collaborative agreements define the respective contribution of the parties, the objectives of the research and how the results and new varieties will be shared with the farmers. Extension and technology transfer of research results are planned with farmers and agronomists in the agreement. Those new and improved varieties are offered back to the farmers. Varieties may be offered for testing purposes to farmers who then contribute to the evaluation of those new varieties. Doing so, they are developing the know how pertaining to the production of the new varieties.

### 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)

Leaders from 12 farm organizations came together to create WGRF in 1981. Their vision was to establish a robust agricultural research funding organization, one that would consult farmers about what they needed, then work with research providers to fill that need. Today, WGRF invests over \$15 million annually into variety development and field crop research. With the goal of improving Canadian wheat production, AAFC has collaborated on western wheat development through a series of collaborative agreements since 1995.

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

Article 9.1	
Article 9.2 a	
Article 9.2 b	<b>X</b>
Article 9.2 c	<b>X</b>
Article 9.3	



**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):

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

**In case you selected 'other measures', would you like to suggest a description of this measure, e.g. as a possible new category?**

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<sup>1</sup> Including seed houses



- **Objective(s)**

To establish collaboration through a core agreement between WGRF and AAFC on common goals for the wheat and barley breeding program with the purpose of developing wheat and barley varieties for Western Canadian farmers with higher yields, improved agronomic traits, end use properties, and better disease and insect resistance.

- **Target group(s)** and numbers of involved and affected farmers<sup>2</sup>

Mostly wheat and barley farmers but other groups benefit from the core agreements such as canola farmers. WGRF is made up of farmers from different agricultural organizations across western Canada. AAFC however, represents all Canadian farmers.

- **Location(s)** and geographical outreach

The core agreement focuses mainly on the Eastern Prairie, Semi-Arid and Northern Prairie zones in Canada

- **Resources used for implementation of the measure/practice**

Over the past 5 years, WGRF invested \$ 20 million of Canadian dollars to leverage AAFC's contribution to its wheat and barley breeding programs.

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

Various research projects aiming to improve the sustainable use of PGR were conducted via this collaboration. A few examples:

*-Delivery of an innovative winter wheat agronomic package to achieve sustainable wheat production in Canada (2018)*

*-Long term canola production\_all phases rotating (2017)*

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

From 1996 until the present AAFC has licensed or is in the process of licensing over one hundred and fifty wheat and barley varieties suited to various agro-ecological zones of the Canadian prairies.

- **Other national level instruments that are linked to the measure/practice** No
- **Are you aware of any other international agreements or programs that are relevant for this measure/practice?** No
- **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).**

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<sup>2</sup> Any classification, e.g. of the types of farmer addressed, may be country-specific.



Because of the challenges administrating the core agreement, monthly internal governance meetings for all researchers receiving funds from this core agreement were implemented. This ensures that the research is consistent with the objectives outlined in the agreement.

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

Because the core agreement represents many farmers with many perspectives and because AAFC is a government organization, it was challenging to negotiate an agreement. The agreement is a huge document with many researchers involved in receiving funding.

- **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)**

Have clear objectives and common goals and maintain sight of those throughout the process and all along the collaboration.

**Further information**

- **Link(s) to further information about the measure/practice**  
<https://westerngrains.com/>