



Food and Agriculture
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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 Southeast Asia Regional Initiatives for Community Empowerment (SEARICE) on 1 August 2019.

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



Basic information

- Title of measure/practice

Community Seed Registry

- Date of submission

July 31, 2019

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

Philippines

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

Municipal Council of Bilar, Bohol Province

Campagao Farmers' Production and Research Association (CFPRA)

Cansumbol Organic Farmers' Association (COFA)

Zamora Organic Farmer-Researcher Association (ZOFRA)

Farmers' Association for Community Development – Riverside (KMKK)

Vieja Sustainable Farmers' Association (PVSFA)

Malitbog Sustainable Farmers' Association (MASFA)

- Type of institution/organization (categories)

Local Government together with Farmers' Organizations

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

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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)
 - Summary of core components
 - Key outcomes
 - Lessons learned (if applicable)

Starting in 2002, the Campagao Farmers' Production and Research Association (CFPRA) of the municipality of Bilar, province of Bohol, in collaboration with Southeast Asia Regional Initiatives for Community Empowerment (SEARICE), established a community seed registry. The registry is not intended to claim property rights but aims to prevent others from doing so by placing knowledge in the public domain. The community seed registry recognizes farmers as the developers of the varieties and upholds the principle that seeds should be freely and widely accessed and exchanged. Through a municipal resolution, the community seed registry was officially recognized. Community seed registries may evolve differently in different contexts, but share common elements, including (1) a community declaration, through which the local communities publicly and collectively assert their rights over local plant genetic resources, e.g. a joint resolution or statements of communities or farmers' organizations, public ceremonies, rituals/oral traditions, audio/video techniques, or other indigenous means of documentation; (2) legal recognition, which obliges the State to recognize the registries and to provide them with a mantle of legal protection; and (3) community protocols or procedures meant to regulate and facilitate access more systematically and to ensure that Farmers' Rights to the accessed materials are recognized.

- Brief history (including starting year), as appropriate

When plant variety protection was introduced in the Philippines in 2002 with the Plant Variety Protection (PVP) Act, as a *sui generis* system in compliance with WTO-TRIPS, many small-scale farmers engaged in participatory plant breeding (PPB) reacted, fearing—among other things—that their innovations could be misappropriated by those who are interested to benefit from the PVP. As a collective response to the Act, the Campagao Farmers' Production and Research Association (CFPRA) of the municipality of Bilar in the province of Bohol, decided to establish a community seed registry. The Community Seed Registry serves as a defensive mechanism of the community to protect their seeds and propagating material against misappropriation. This was done in collaboration with SEARICE.

The CFPRA community registry provided a model for other farmer associations in nearby communities. Experiences were shared at farmers' field days, meetings and seminars. Later, farmers' associations in two more villages established their own seed registries. Through the continued lobbying of SEARICE and partner communities, the seed registry moved to the municipal level.

¹ This mandatory information is required in order for the measure/practice to be included in the Inventory.



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In June 4, 2004, Resolution No. 81, Series of 2004, entitled 'A resolution recognizing the rice community registry of CFPRA, COFA, ZOFRA and KMKK, whose location is based in the Municipality of Bilar, Bohol,' was adopted by the Municipality Council of Bilar, Bohol.

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

The first component is the recognition of farmers plant breeding efforts. Since 1996, the farmers of Bilar have been involved in rice breeding and varietal selection and have already developed stable varieties widely used among farmers in the local communities. The local government recognizes this valuable contribution of the farmers hence they supported the farmers' efforts to protect their varieties including theirs.

It also provided support to farmers' traditional practice of seed saving, exchange, and selling. For years, farmers in the Philippines relied on farm-saved seeds to use, share, exchange, and sell to other farmers. They have been practicing a traditional seed supply system based on free and open access to genetic sources. Activities leading to the establishment of community seed registry highlighted the importance of local seed exchange in maintaining and enriching the genetic resources in the communities.

Lastly, the protection of traditional knowledge. Through the seed registry, farmers in Bilar aim to protect local rice varieties from misappropriation and unfair monopolization, and to assert the community's rights over its genetic resources. Moreover, the people of Bilar believe that the rights of communities to exercise control over their resources will be recognized and respected through the community seed registry.

- 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)

Although the Philippines has a vibrant seed industry, smallholder farmers remain to be the main source of seed supply particularly on rice, the staple food in the country. Ironically, even with their huge contribution in the seed supply, their seed systems are not recognized in a number of relevant laws. The PVP Act or the Republic Act 9168 is one example of such laws. It does not recognize farmers as plant breeders for instance. When the PVP Act was adopted, the farmers felt that they needed to protect their varieties from misappropriation. The threat of local genetic resources being misappropriated and claimed by other people also serves to dampen the farmers' traditional practice of sharing seeds to anybody. Community seed registry was a collective response of farmers to threat they perceived from the PVP Act. It serves as an instrument to avoid misappropriation by putting community materials and knowledge in the public domain. It does not claim ownership nor place plant varieties under a strict and monopolistic property right. It recognizes that the origin and developer of the varieties are the farmers and upholds the principle that seeds should be freely and widely accessed and exchanged.

- 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



Art. 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 ²	Also relevant ³
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		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
5	In-situ/on-farm conservation and management of PGRFA, such as social and cultural measures, community biodiversity management and conservation sites		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6	Facilitation of farmers' access to a diversity of PGRFA through community seed banks ⁴ , seed networks and other measures improving farmers' choices of a wider diversity of PGRFA.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7	Participatory approaches to research on PGRFA, including characterization and evaluation, participatory plant breeding and variety selection		
8	Farmers' participation in decision-making at local, national and sub-regional, regional and international levels		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9	Training, capacity development and public awareness creation		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10	Legal measures for the implementation of Farmers' Rights, such as legislative measures related to PGRFA.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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? _____

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.



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- Objective(s)

The Community Seed Registry aims to:

- Assert community control over and access to biological and genetic resources and associated knowledge
- Protect community resources and knowledge from misappropriation arising from biopiracy, application of IPR and plant variety protection (PVP)
- Raise the awareness of community members, especially children and youth, on the richness and value of local biological and genetic resources and associated knowledge
- Target group(s) and numbers of involved and affected farmers⁵

All farmers in the Municipality of Bilar

- Location(s) and geographical outreach

Municipality of Bilar, Province of Bohol

- Resources used for implementation of the measure/practice

The main resources used in this measure were the farmers' knowledge and time. The mapping of rice varieties used in the communities, including the inventory and completion of passport data were done by farmers themselves with SEARICE facilitation. Minimal resources were used in conducting workshops with local government units to craft the resolution and protocol.

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

The community seed registry gives the security to farmers that the varieties they keep and breed will not be misappropriated. This enables them to continue with their traditional practice of sharing their seeds freely without the fear of possible misappropriation. In addition, the community seed registry helps in raising awareness among the members of the community on the value of crop diversity and the need to conserve this diversity for food security.

The community seed registry is instrumental in maintaining varieties. Through the registry, a system has been brought in place which makes it possible to keep track of the varieties at hand and ensure that they are maintained and conserved. The members of the different farmers' associations had experienced an increased understanding of the political aspects of plant breeding. The recognition through the Community Council and the Municipality Council had strengthened their self-esteem. As such, the process had led to more empowerment among the farmers.

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

The initial model of seed registry was established in Campagao, a village in the municipality of Bilar in Bohol Province. From one community the community registry was replicated in 4 more neighbouring

⁵ Any classification, e.g. of the types of farmer addressed, may be country-specific.



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villages, with the community registry recognized not only within the village but was raised to a wider recognition at the municipal level as well. One partner community in Mindanao, the farmers having been exposed and visited the area in which the community registry was established in Bohol, also decided to establish their own community registry. Two more partner communities in Mindanao followed. The concept of community registry as a protection mechanism from misappropriation and unfair monopolization has slowly taken wing in other communities and earning the recognition of organizations who are also working on the protection of farmers' rights.

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

Republic Act 9168 or the Philippine Plant Variety Protection Act of 2002

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

- a) Convention on Biological Diversity
- b) Nagoya Protocol

- 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).

The Community Seed Registry Model goes hand in hand with the idea on Community Protocol, which is the notion that communities, through their own processes, can come up with their own set of rules or standards or guidelines, or mechanisms, through which the use of their resources are governed or regulated. As such, it is crucial that farmers are organized and agreed to establish the registry. The work behind is not easy and cooperation among the members of the community is therefore very important. Another important pre-requisite is the understanding of the issues related to seeds, particularly the issue of biopiracy and misappropriation. Once the members of the community understood the threats, they themselves push for the establishment of the registry.

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

Initially, some local government units were not supportive of the initiative. Their limited understanding of the issues became a hindrance.

- 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)

The support of the local government unit is crucial for the success of this initiative, without which the list and inventory of crop varieties will not have legitimacy and will not have strong impact. It is therefore important to raise the awareness of local policy makers on the issues related to seeds and



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involve them in the activities on securing the local seed systems, i.e. baseline establishment, participatory plant breeding, farmers' field day, among others.

Further information

For more information on this practice, you may visit the following:

searice.org.ph/other-publications

Frequently Asked Questions About Community Registry

routledge.com/Realising-Farmers-Rights-to-Crop-Genetic-Resources-Success-Stories-and/Andersen-Winge/p/book/9780415643849; pp. 82-93