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STATUS OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORLD INFORMATION AND EARLY WARNING SYSTEM ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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CGRFA 17

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission, at its Sixteenth Regular Session, considered the World Information and Early Warning System (WIEWS) on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) and stressed its key role for exchange of information on PGRFA.¹
2. The Commission welcomed the coordination with the Genesys database hosted by the Global Crop Diversity Trust. It requested FAO to complete the restructuring of WIEWS, and publish, through WIEWS, information on the implementation of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Second GPA) and Target 2.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).² In addition, the Commission recommended that the new WIEWS platform highlight the indicators of the Second GPA relevant to SDG indicator 2.5.1, i.e. *Number of plant and animal genetic resources for food and agriculture secured in either medium or long-term conservation facilities*,³ and enable National Focal Points (NFPs) to report annually on this indicator.⁴
3. Furthermore, the Commission requested FAO to consult the Members of the Commission and observers on options for further simplifying the Reporting Format for Monitoring the Implementation of the Second GPA (Reporting Format)⁵ and to prepare a proposal for review by the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Working Group).⁶
4. This document provides a report on the status of the restructuring of WIEWS, the use of WIEWS for monitoring the implementation of the SDG and introduces the simplified draft revised Reporting Format, as endorsed by the Working Group at its last session.⁷ The draft revised Reporting Format is given in the document *Draft revised Reporting Format for Monitoring the Implementation of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.⁸

II. BACKGROUND

5. WIEWS is the information system established by FAO in 1993 for the preparation of periodic, country-driven global assessments of the status of conservation and use of PGRFA. Since October 2014, WIEWS, through its online Reporting Tool, has also been used for country reporting on the implementation of the Second GPA. Since December 2016, WIEWS has served as the platform for reporting annually on the plant component of SDG Target 2.5.
6. With its 2014, 2016 and 2017 datasets, WIEWS is presently the largest source of data for monitoring over time the status of the global diversity of PGRFA conserved in genebanks. The 2017 dataset alone includes detailed information on over 4.89 million accessions of 6.9 thousand genera and their 50.7 thousand species secured under medium- or long-term conditions in 575 genebanks of 90 countries and 16 regional and international centres. Eight countries and two regional centres contributed for the first time to the reporting process in 2017. Compared to May 2016 the WIEWS data coverage of *ex situ* conservation has increased by 27 percent in terms of reporting countries (19 additional reporting countries) and 36 percent in terms of accessions (additional 1.2 million accessions documented).⁹

¹ CGRFA-16/17/Report Rev.1, paragraph 57.

² CGRFA-16/17/Report Rev.1, paragraph 57.

³ Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; Target 2.5: By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed

⁴ CGRFA-16/17/Report Rev.1, paragraph 69.

⁵ CGRFA-15/15/Inf.9.

⁶ CGRFA-16/17/Report, paragraph 56.

⁷ CGRFA-17/19/9.1, paragraph 29.

⁸ CGRFA-17/19/9.2/Inf.6.

⁹ CGRFA/WG-PGR-8/Inf.1 Rev.1, page 28.

7. WIEWS forms an important part of the global framework of databases on PGRFA. In November 2017, the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Treaty) invited Contracting Parties “to use FAO WIEWS, Genesys or other existing information systems that the Global Information System is built on, for the notification of material that forms part of the Multilateral System.”¹⁰ The Governing Body further requested its Secretary to link the Global Information System (GLIS) to the PGRFA data on *ex situ* collections and on-farm management in WIEWS.¹¹ The Governing Body also recognized the value of country reports on the Second GPA implementation to measure progress in the context of Article 6, Sustainable Use.¹²

8. The Working Group, at its last session, recognized WIEWS “as one of the globally most comprehensive inventories of accession-level *ex situ* collections of PGRFA”. It recommended that the GLIS of the Treaty build on WIEWS and that WIEWS and GENESYS of the Crop Trust cooperate. It also called upon GLIS, WIEWS and GENESYS to make an effort to cooperate in order to avoid duplication.¹³

III. STATUS OF THE RESTRUCTURING OF WIEWS

9. Since the adoption of the Second GPA, WIEWS provides the platform for its monitoring and reporting framework adopted by the Commission. WIEWS has been restructured to not only facilitate reporting on the implementation of the Second GPA by the National Focal Points (NFPs) and key PGRFA stakeholders, but also to make such information accessible to the public through a user-friendly interface. WIEWS is now available in all FAO official languages.

The Second GPA Monitoring Framework

10. The new WIEWS portal provides a synthetic overview of the national, regional and global status of the conservation and use of PGRFA. The overview is based on a customizable graphical representation of the Higher-order Composite Indices (HCIs) showing progress towards the three PGRFA targets adopted by the Commission in 2015.¹⁴ The HCIs show progress in the implementation of the 18 Priority Activities of the Second GPA and the 63 monitoring indicators, as rated by the NFPs.

11. Summary and detailed data for each indicator can be accessed through either the HCIs graphical representation or the menu item, *Priority activities and indicators*, on the WIEWS Data tab.¹⁵ Data on the indicators can be viewed in tables, charts and maps¹⁶ by country¹⁷ and selected geogrouping (e.g. regions, world)¹⁸ and by stakeholder, as applicable. Summary data sets of each indicator and NFP rating, as well as details provided by countries may also be downloaded from WIEWS. Metadata sheets describing the methodology used for the elaboration of each indicator, including data requirements and available data outputs, are also accessible. Design and look-and-feel of the interface for accessing the Second GPA indicators are similar to the interface of FAOSTAT, one of the most accessed agricultural databases.

Monitoring PGRFA under the SDGs

12. In July 2017, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a global indicator framework (GIF) to monitor the implementation of the SDGs.¹⁹ FAO is the United Nations (UN) custodian agency for Indicator 2.5.1 whose plant component is equivalent to Indicator 20 of the Second GPA monitoring framework. With the adoption of the SDG global indicator framework, and

¹⁰ IT/GB-7/17/Resolution 4/2017, paragraph 2.

¹¹ IT/GB-7/17/Resolution 5/2017, paragraph 5.

¹² IT/GB-7/17/Resolution 6/2017, paragraph 2.v.

¹³ CGRFA-17/19/9.1, paragraph 27.

¹⁴ <http://www.fao.org/wiews/data/domains/monitoring-framework/en/>

¹⁵ <http://www.fao.org/wiews/data/domains/en/>

¹⁶ In line with the guidance received from the Working Group, CGRFA17/19/9.1, paragraph 28.

¹⁷ Different country lists based on membership to FAO, the Commission or the Treaty can be selected.

¹⁸ Six different regional groupings, namely FAO, M49, SDG, MDG, CGRFA (Commission), and ITPGRFA (Treaty) can be selected.

¹⁹ A/RES/71/313

the FAO custodianship of Indicator 2.5.1, WIEWS has acquired a new and essential role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

13. At its last session, the Commission recommended that FAO invite countries to report annually on the SDG Indicator 2.5.1 and requested FAO to assist countries in assessing their national reporting obligations and improving data and capacity to report on this indicator. It also requested the Secretariat to continue collaborating with the Statistical Division of FAO and to inform the Commission of any relevant developments, including the final decision taken by the UN Statistical Commission on the global reporting mechanism for the SDGs.²⁰

14. As requested by the Commission, the indicators of the Second GPA relevant to the SDG Target 2.5 have been highlighted under WIEWS and a form for the annual data reporting on SDG Indicator 2.5.1 has been made available on the WIEWS home page to facilitate reporting. The form includes an annotated list of mandatory and recommended descriptors for reporting on the plant component of the indicator and an Excel table for data recording. The form is available in English, French and Spanish. Countries already publishing *ex situ* collections data that are compliant with the requirements of the SDG Indicator 2.5.1 have the alternative option of communicating the address for downloading the data to FAO.

15. Countries, regional and international organizations reported on the status of *ex situ* conservation in the context of the monitoring of the Second GPA as at 30 June 2014. In addition, they provided annual reports on SDG Indicator 2.5.1 reflecting the status of *ex situ* conservation as at 31 December 2016 and 31 December 2017. FAO was therefore in a position to submit three reports to the UN Statistical Commission.

16. As requested by the Commission, WIEWS features a section specifically dedicated to the information on SDG indicator 2.5.1 for 2014, 2016 and 2017, where:

- (i) an overview page²¹ allows access to a range of summary data by year, region, sub-region and country (as well as regional and international centres), which can be customized for selected crops, genera and their crop wild relatives;
- (ii) maps²² display geo-referenced genebanks and their holdings by year, accession, genus and species; and
- (iii) an advanced search²³ allows the retrieval and download of accession-level information for each year, country and/or multiple holding institutes, crops (including or excluding their wild relatives), genera and species. Additional search parameters include accession number, biological status, type of storage, country of origin, and status under the Multilateral System of the Treaty.

Organizations

17. The WIEWS portal also provides access to information about over 17 700 organizations involved in the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA.²⁴ Each organization has an assigned WIEWS code, which corresponds to the first descriptor of the FAO/Biodiversity Multi Crop Passport Descriptors and is widely used among genebanks while exchanging materials and information. Simplified and advanced search functions for the organizations' datasets are available for data retrieval and download. A text file with the full list of organizations is also generated every day and available for download from the WIEWS home page.

²⁰ CGRFA-16/17/Report Rev.1, paragraphs 69-70.

²¹ <http://www.fao.org/wiews/data/overview/en/>

²² <http://www.fao.org/wiews/data/ex-situ-sdg-251/maps/en/>

²³ <http://www.fao.org/wiews/data/search>

²⁴ <http://www.fao.org/wiews/data/organizations>

Future improvement of WIEWS

18. With the completion of its restructuring, WIEWS will provide countries with user-friendly access to data reported under the Second GPA and SDG 2.5.1. WIEWS will further be improved through:

- the development of a search and retrieval function for crop varieties reported by countries;²⁵ and
- the development of a country profile, summarizing all information provided.

19. Efforts are also being undertaken to implement the request of the Governing Body of the Treaty to link the GLIS to PGRFA *ex situ* collections and on-farm management data documented in WIEWS.²⁶

20. The Secretariat continued collaborating with the Statistical Division of FAO. In particular, an e-learning course to facilitate the application and analysis of the two indicators of SDG Target 2.5 has been produced in English. The e-learning course provides background information on PGRFA, data reporting and the use of the new WIEWS portal to retrieve information. A Spanish version of the course is under development and, subject to the availability of additional resources, versions in other languages may follow. FAO's SDG webpage²⁷ also features SDG Indicator 2.5.1 based on WIEWS data.

IV. SIMPLIFICATION OF THE REPORTING FORMAT

21. The framework for monitoring the implementation of the Second GPA agreed by the Commission in 2013 is based on 63 indicators and 51 questions.²⁸ The 2013 monitoring framework was used to assess progress in the implementation of the Second GPA during the period 2012–2014. In 2015, NFPs were invited to answer the 51 questions and provide an expert judgement (rating) on the level of achievement for each indicator through the WIEWS on-line Reporting Tool. As of March 2016, 43 countries had reported to FAO. Based on the results of the application of this framework, a summary and a detailed assessment of the implementation of the Second GPA during 2012–2014 were made available to the Commission.²⁹

22. Noting the need for a greater number of country reports in order to have a more comprehensive assessment of the global state of the implementation of the Second GPA, the Commission decided to extend the deadline for reporting until December 2017 and requested FAO to prepare a proposal for simplifying the Reporting Format, for review by the Working Group.³⁰

23. As requested by the Commission, FAO consulted Commission Members and observers on options for further simplifying the Reporting Format. NFPs were invited to provide comments on the Reporting Format and the on-line Reporting Tool, as well as suggestions for their simplification. Inputs from 15 countries were received. A draft revised Reporting Format, prepared in the light of inputs received, is contained in the document, *Draft revised Reporting Format for Monitoring the Implementation of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.³¹ The draft revised Reporting Format, as given in the Annex to that document, was reviewed by the Working Group at its last session. The Working Group recommended that the Commission endorse the revised Reporting Format for the next reporting cycle on the implementation of the Second GPA.³²

²⁵ Information on over 20 000 varieties, including a synthetic description of each variety is currently available.

²⁶ IT/GB-7/17/Res5, paragraph 5.

²⁷ <http://www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals/indicators/251/en/>

²⁸ CGRFA-15/15/Inf.9.

²⁹ CGRFA-16/17/Inf.17.1 and CGRFA-16/17/Inf.17.2.

³⁰ CGRFA-16/17/Report, paragraph 56.

³¹ CGRFA-17/19/9.2/Inf.6.

³² CGRFA-17/19/9.1, paragraph 29.

24. A comprehensive list of frequently asked questions to assist countries in reporting on the implementation of the Second GPA using the revised Reporting Format is under preparation and will be made available on-line through the WIEWS Reporting Tool.